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PIEDMONT NEWSLETTER—OCTOBER 2013

Piedmont Sailors—Here is a summary of our 2013 Reunion in Sea-Tac, WA Sept. 25-29. This was prepared by Director and Recorder Kent Thomas, Overland Park, KS; YN 49-52.

Sailors from the USS Piedmont and their guests gathered in Seattle (Sea-Tac, WA) at the Sea-Tac Airport Comfort Inn & Suites for their 24th annual reunion Sept. 25-29. About 74 attended part or all of the reunion.

Wednesday was registration and "get reacquainted day", and as shipmates checked in they were greeted by Bill Kastens, president of the Piedmont Reunion Association, and his daughter, Ruth Kastens from Lander, WY. Sailors met old and new friends in the hospitality room of the Comfort Inn, fittingly close to Sea-Tac International Airport. Thanks to Jack and Marge Chesnick and Willie and Aslaug Williams, the room was stocked with beverages and snacks that day as well as the remainder of the reunion. Wednesday evening's group dinner was catered by ACT 3 Catering Service and included roast beef and cheese Hoagie sandwiches plus meatballs, chips, pasta and Caesar salad.

Thursday began with a free breakfast provided by the hotel Thursday through Sunday and included eggs, sausage, biscuits and gravy, cereal, bagels, sweet rolls, waffles, juices, coffee and hot chocolate; enough to satisfy any hungry sailor. The first bus coach tour began at 8:45 a.m. Thursday and included an hour-long ferry ride to the Port of Bremerton to visit the USS Turner Joy, a destroyer (DD 951) turned museum, and the well known Navy Museum. The Turner Joy was honored for extraordinary service during the Vietnam War, and was credited with firing the first and last rounds of that war. Many of the Piedmont sailors toured the ship, some going below decks to check out the various facilities and departments. The Turner Joy was commissioned on Aug. 3, 1959 and decommissioned Nov. 27, 1982, the same year Piedmont was decommissioned Sept. 30 and then sold to the nation of Turkey for duty until 1994. We were on our own for a leisurely lunch Thursday and it was a beautifully warm and sunny day to walk along the pier and visit nearby restaurants. A barbecue diner on the dock appeared particularly popular. We reboarded our two coaches at 2:45 p.m. and returned to the hotel in Sea-Tac via several highways. Several sailors and guests gathered in the hospitality room until dinner was catered at about 6 p.m. The evening menu was "Taco Night" with taco shells and tortillas, chips, salsa, rice and salad.

Following the breakfast buffet Friday morning, our second day of bus coach tours began at 9:15 a.m. First stop was The Museum of Flight, a very extensive and impressive facility. Here we saw more than 40 historic aircraft, tracing the history of the first century of human flight. Also featured was the William E. Boeing Red Barn, the birthplace of The Boeing Company in its original manufacturing plant. Included was a factory workshop and exhibits on the early history

of American aerospace. There also was a theater featuring the stories of the men and women involved in the air wars of World War I and World War II. Another attraction was the Charles Simonyi Space Gallery, detailing how astronauts learned to live and work in space. Also nearby were the first jet Air Force One and the West Coast's only Concorde superliner. For lunch Friday, Piedmont sailors and guests went their merry ways at the vibrant and bustling Pike Place Market, chocked full of restaurants and quaint shops of many varieties. Unfortunately, the weather was cold and rainy and not conducive to leisurely walking around. Some vowed to return to Pike Place on Saturday's activity-free day.

A long and highly interesting coach tour of Seattle took most of Friday afternoon. Some of the sights we saw and facts learned about Seattle were these:

- Starbucks headquarters.
- A shipping container complex said to be the seventh largest in the world.
- Safeco Field, where the baseball Seattle Mariners play their games.
- Century Link Field, home of the football Seattle Seahawks.
- Interstate 90 starts at Safeco Field and extends to Boston's Fenway Park.
- Columbia Tower, the tallest building west of the Mississippi River.
- Seattle is the largest city throughout the northern United States.
- Seattle receives very little snow so golfing and sailing are possible year-round.
- The city's convention center is so close to the well-traveled Interstate 5 that the superhighway is limited to two lanes of traffic for a short distance and thus is a bottleneck.
- University of Washington football stadium is so close to the water that many fans travel to the games by boat.
- Three Seattle businesses have endured since the 1890s: Eddie Bauer, United Parcel Service (UPS), and Nordstroms Dept. Stores.
- Seattle's original city was built at water level, with the current downtown located above the original.
- Second generation commercial buildings are brick or stone.
- Chinatown reflects robust Chinese culture and history.
- Seattle is said to have more bicyclists riding to work than any other U.S. city.
- World-renowned Space Needle.
- Microsoft and Amazon technology giants are huge in Seattle.
- With about 600,000 people, Seattle has only about 60,000 children, (More dogs than kids, said one of our guides).
- The state of Washington has passed legislation permitting gay marriages and recreational marijuana.
- Beautiful Puget Sound.
- Fisherman's Terminal, where all craft are working vessels.
- Olympic Sculpture Park.

We were back on our coaches at 3:50 p.m. and returned via I-5 to the Comfort Inn.

Following a short break, our annual business meeting began, with Bill Kastens presiding. Board members introduced themselves and Bill gave a treasurer's report showing a balance on hand as of Sept. 9, 2013 of \$16,816. Kastens has been paying for reunion bills on his credit card and will be reimbursed after the reunion. The report was compiled and submitted by Ruth Geraghty, the Piedmont Association's secretary-treasurer. Ruth's recommendation that annual dues remain at \$10 was approved.

Willie Williams, vice president, proposed that Rapid City, SD be the location for our 2014 reunion in early September. He said hotel costs would be similar to this year's, with free airport shuttles and complimentary breakfasts. Ellsworth Air Force Base is located in Rapid City, and Willie commented "they really like the military" in that area. Bill called for a show of hands to select Rapid City, and approval was nearly unanimous. Three suggestions were made for the 2015 reunion: Albany, N.Y., Buffalo, N.Y., and Boston, Mass. More input concerning these locations will be gathered in 2014.

In other business, Bill said that Piedmont T-shirts will be available in 2014 as well as Piedmont license plates. Also, a Piedmont memorial plaque is being prepared and will be placed in the Memorial Garden at the US Navy Memorial complex in Washington, DC. Bill and Willie asked if anyone knew whether the Piedmont had qualified for World War II service-connected ribbons. No one responded. The Piedmont earned four ribbons for the Korean War and one for Vietnam. Bill asked for nominations for Association officers, and the group chose to reelect the current slate: Kastens, president; Williams, vice president; Ruth Geraghty, secretary-treasurer; Jack Chesnick, director; Warren Hopkins, director; Ron Orszag, director, and Kent Thomas, director and recorder.

Soon after the business meeting ended, another delicious buffet dinner was catered by ACT 3. This time, we went American: hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken breasts, corn on the cob, potato salad and fruit salad. Following dinner, the Piedmont's annual raffle was conducted, under the leadership of Jack and Marge Chesnick. Ticket sales were sufficient to return 60 percent of the money raffle to lucky ticket holders with the other 40 percent large enough to cover hospitality room expenses.

On Saturday, our only organized activity was the closing banquet that evening. Sailors were on-their-own during the day, but once again, fun and games were limited by cold and rainy weather conditions. For the banquet, we went Italian and enjoyed a buffet of lasagna, pasta and chicken at the nearby Old Spaghetti Factory.

A number of people were recognized during the after-dinner program. First was the Missing Sailors Memorial ceremony at which Jack Chesnick presided. He reported the following Piedmont Sailors had died since last year:

Frank Alioto, San Francisco; Leonard Bescan, Grafton, OH; David Clark, Charlotte, NC; Paul DeHate, Hemet, CA; Terry Derby, Harlan, IA; George Gillo, Orlando, FL; Francis Gregory, Pinehurst, NC; Maynard Johnson, Northfield, IL; A.J. (Jim) Jordon, Muskogee, OK; James Julian, Jacksonville, FL; John Konczyk, Douglasville, GA; James Lickei, Omaha, NE; Howard Luedtke, Winter Garden, FL, and Don Parry, Mediapolis, IA. May they all rest in peace.

In addition, Monica Kastens, wife of President Bill, died this past July 8. She served in both the Waves and Spars (Coast Guard) and worked with Bill for many years in organizing Piedmont reunions.

Two Plank Owners attended all or part of the reunion: George Burger, Yelm, WA; and Bob Minick, Glendale, AZ.

Sailors attending their first Piedmont reunion were: Vern Anderson, Fallon, NV; Stephen Babjar, Lebanon, OR; Ernest Capron, Hillsboro, OR; David Engelbert, Highlands Ranch, CO; Chester Haynes, Custer, WA; Nick Musso, Hudson, FL (also the sailor traveling the longest distance to attend); and Horace Brown, Harvey, LA.

CDM Harold Henkel, Virginia Beach, VA, retained the honor of being the oldest Piedmont Sailor in attendance. He turned 95 in July 2013. George Burger held the honor of most years on our ship-- 6 1/2 years from two Piedmont duty assignments. Finally, Max Stumborg of Wildwood, FL, has attended the most reunions--23.

Bob Massey, Huntsville, TX, Assist. Repair Officer for the Piedmont in 1972-74, spoke of his experiences aboard ship and told about the Veterans Museum of Texas, located in Huntsville. The mission of the museum, of which he is a director, is to honor veterans; preserve memorabilia, artifacts and history of past wars; and to educate all concerning our patriotic heritage and sacrifices made to preserve our freedoms. The USS Piedmont exhibit is housed in the Huntsville museum.

Bill Kastens thanked Warren and Joan Hopkins for their leadership in planning this year's reunion in Seattle.

Banquet attendees gave Bill and, in memoriam, Monica Kastens a large ovation for their commitment and contributions to the Piedmont Association for many years. Also recognized was Ruth Kastens, who accompanied and helped Bill with the Seattle reunion. She enjoyed the activities so much she says she will attend the 2014 Black Hills Reunion.

In closing, Bill thanked everyone for attending and wished all a safe return to their homes. Most of the Sailors and friends attending the reunion took leave Sunday and many farewells and good wishes were extended to all those who hope to gather in the Black Hills of South Dakota in 2014.

HERE ARE SOME UPDATES TO THE SEPT. 25, 2013 MEMBER ROSTERS PASSED OUT AT THE REUNION:

NEW MEMBER:

BROWN, Horace J., 1109 Teakwood Dr., Harvey, LA 70058 504-366-7574 MMC 71-74

E—brow9614@cox.net

ADDRESS CORRECTION:

FORBES, Richard, 1213 Hart Blvd., #202, Monticello, MN55362

OTHER COMMENTS:

JOHN SCHONE, Eau Claire, WI, sent me his final newsletter which I have shared with our Piedmont sailors down through the years. He says, "My get-up & go gets up and keeps going, but seldom returns!!" He thinks reaching his 90th birthday in October might have some connection. MARGE CHESNICK, Raleigh, NC, had a second knee replacement surgery May 1, 2013 but was able to get around quite well at the Reunion.

DAVID ENGELBERT, Highlands Ranch, CO, (first time reunion attendee) had a 40 year career with King Soopers (Div. of Kroger) in Denver. After serving as Store Manager for 27 years, he retired 2 years ago. He and Judy enjoy their cabin in Grand Lake, CO along with hunting and fishing. He, his Dad, and brother restore older model cars. David has two restored 1969 Chevy Camaros, a restored 1972 Chevy Nova, and a very rare 1987 Chevy Monte Carlo Aero Coupe SS. They have just finished a 1939 Chevy Business Coupe that was customized into a Street Rod. Dave and Judy have been married 39 years.

GEORGE MEANS, Waunakee, WI, has been unable to attend recent reunions due to health problems of vertigo. He and Charlotte do hope to attend the 2014 reunion in the Black Hills.

JOE PIETROSANTI, Binghamton, NY, PLANK SAILOR, and a very faithful attendee is suffering with his first attack of gout.

PIEDMONT GIFT ITEMS:

I still have available Piedmont hats(\$10); shirt patches(\$3); and license rims, letter openers, hat and lapel pins, and tire gauges(all for \$1 each). Write your check to Piedmont Reunion Assoc. and send to me with your order. If you order by email to me, just send your check directly to Ruth Geraghty. All prices are postage paid.

Thank you again for all your messages of sympathy and love for Monica. She is greatly missed.

Bill Kastens, President

USS PIEDMONT AD-17 REUNION ASSOC.

