



# NEWSLETTER

## Late Summer 2009 Supplement

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### ***What is a Plank Owner? Let's see.....***

This issue of our newsletter honors USS Bristol DD-857 Plank Owners who served valiantly during World War II. Currently, our roster of Plank Owners include: Roy "Shorty" Brannon, Ralph "Bud" Cullum, Garland Dalton, Wallace Dann, William Dobbins, Jack Draper, John Duncan, John Hardt, Melvin Hess, Jim Lovell, George McDermott, Leroy Peterson, Wallace Rankin, Leo "Moose" Sangiolo, Henry Supinski, and, William Whigham.



Melvin Hess



George McDermott



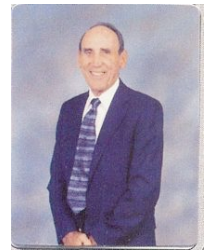
Roy Brannon



Roy Brannon



Leo "Moose" Sangiolo in Hiroshima



Leo Sangiolo



Wallace Rankin



Dalton Garland



Jim Lovell



James Lovell



Jack Draper



Wallace Dann



John Hardt



John Hardt

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**John Hardt** writes.....

In January 1944 as a 17 year old farm boy from Colorado, I joined the Navy and went off to Boot Camp. After completing boot camp, I was sent to Treasure Island, California, where I was assigned to the Armed Guard. I served aboard the ship SS Mexico Victory carrying ammunition throughout the Pacific area. When I left this ship in December 1944, I was assigned to the USS Bristol where I served until May 1946. I left the ship in Maine and shipped to Shoemaker, California for discharge.

I went back to Colorado and back for more education. I then worked for Western Electric in Denver installing new phone systems in Arizona and Texas. Then in January 1949 a friend who was a former BM 1st class and I decided to go to California and joined the Army. It turned out to be a good decision as I met Doris and she and I were married in December 1950. We moved many times in the years that followed and we had two children, a daughter, Jane, and a son, Philip.

I served in both Korea and Vietnam before retiring in March 1971 at Ft. Belvoir, VA. as a Command Sgt. Major. We stayed in Alexandria, VA and after retiring from the Army I joined the Civil Service where I worked for HHS and then for the Army as a Contracting Officer.

After retiring for the second time, we lived in Florida for 10 years before moving to Maryland to the Riderwood Retirement Community , Silver Spring, in 2006.

We are close to our son and his family, which includes our two grandchildren. As a Plank Owner, I have enjoyed the reunions we have attended and hope we can still make another one. It is not as easy for us to travel these days. Our grandson who is 12 years old, wrote a report about the USS Bristol for a class project this past year. He did research and obtained pictures and history about the ship. He interviewed his Grandfather (Me!) and I was quite proud of the job he did--which received an A from the teacher.

**Ralph “Bud” Cullum** writes.....

Hi; I am retired and living in Florida for the last 20 years. I was discharged in 1946 don't ask what month. I was a radio striker, cockswain of the whale boat, trainer on no3 5i inch mount. The thing I will never forget was getting lost in the middle of Tokyo bay with the Capt. and the Exec. I was known by every one as Bud Cullum

**George McDermott** writes...

George married Lois in 1949 and had 12 children, 6 boys and 6 girls. He worked for Com Ed for 37 years and retired in 1989. He belongs to VFW, EAA(experimental aircraft assoc.) and CAP. He enjoyed working with cadets in CAP for the last 17 years and was a Tach officer for his group at the Air shows in Oshkosh, Wi.



“Bud” Cullum, left, with his shipmate and fellow Radioman Stricker, Keith Conklin, deceased.



“Bud” Cullum



## The Greatest Generation

Today I went to Shoprite with my wife, Anne, to do the weekly grocery shopping. While there I spotted an elderly gentleman wearing a hat "Anzio Beachhead Veteran". I also noticed that he had two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star Medal. I just had to say something to him about his WWII service.

I was born in 1944 so I don't know from first hand experience about WWII. "Victory at Sea" and "You were there" were shown on TV during the 50s. Those shows, although well made, don't tell the entire story of the men, women, and children who sacrificed during the WWII years.

The term "The Greatest Generation" has been coined by Tom Brokaw in his book of the same name. When asked how he came to write "The Greatest Generation," he recounted a trip to Normandy in 1984. He went there to produce a documentary on the 40th anniversary of D-Day. He had looked forward to a week of stirring stories, evenings of oysters and Calvados, and long runs through the countryside. Instead, from the moment he stepped onto Omaha Beach with two veterans of the First Division, he had an out-of-body experience. Geno Merli, who earned the Medal of Honor, and Harry Garton, who lost both legs in combat, landed in the first wave at Omaha. Working-class products from Pennsylvania, they were soft-spoken and matter-of-fact. They described for him the horrors of that day and all the fighting that was yet to come. Listening to them, he was transported back to his childhood in the Great Plains during the '40s and '50s. In the heartland, men like Geno and Harry were always on call to help a neighbor overhaul a car, build a fence, sponsor a baseball team or Boy Scout troop.



Along with their wives they were always volunteering, organizing potluck suppers and bake sales to support community projects. They knew the price of every piece of produce and every cut of meat in the local supermarket. Most families he knew had war bonds tucked away to go with the savings account at the hometown bank.

As he began to write the wartime accounts of that generation, he realized how much they were formed by the deprivations and lessons of the Great Depression. During that period, life was about common sacrifice and going without the most ordinary items, such as enough food or new clothes. So many veterans told him they got their first new pairs of shoes and boots when they enlisted. When he recently interviewed Walt Ehlers -- a poor Kansas farm boy who received the Medal of Honor for his heroism at Normandy -- he lit up when he described the breakfasts during basic training. "Every kind of cereal you could imagine!" he said. "And pancakes and bacon and eggs."

As for basic training, he said putting up hay on his uncle's farm in August was much tougher. If you look at the old black-and-white photographs of the physicals conducted during induction, there's no obesity in that crowd of young men. In fact, some look malnourished. These are the same young Americans who went thousands of miles across the Atlantic, thousands of miles across the Pacific, and defeated the mightiest military empires ever unleashed against us. Their sacrifices at home and on the frontlines make our current difficulties look like a walk on the beach in comparison.

The surviving members of that generation -- now in their 80s and 90s -- are living reminders of the good that can come from hard times. They can teach us that, if we're to get through this time of crisis, a better nation with a fundamentally stronger economy, we'd better learn how to work together and organize our lives around what we need -- not just what we want.

So here is my Thank You! To you Plank Owners, who, I am proud to say are my shipmates: Roy "Shorty" Brannon, Ralph "Bud" Cullum, Garland Dalton, Wallace Dann, William Dobbins, Jack Draper, John Duncan, John Hardt, Melvin Hess, Jim Lovell, George McDermott, Leroy Peterson, Wallace Rankin, Leo "Moose" Sangiolo, Henry Supinski, and, William Whigham.

God bless you all and God bless America.

**REUNIONS BY MARTY WALSH**

Bristol Shipmates.

During the 2008 Bristol Reunion in San Diego California I had a discussion with several shipmates concerning our annual reunions. The shipmates had taken up my offer made at the organizational meeting earlier in the reunion to bring up suggestions or complaints. The crux of the discussion was a suggestion to change the agenda of the reunion to reflect a more informal schedule allowing for individual travel with a less structured format. Some members felt that the reunion was becoming somewhat stale and repetitious and that a change was needed. I agreed to look into the suggestion, to discuss it with other elected shipmates and to report back on the issue. I am not reporting back to the suggesting shipmates directly but to all shipmates via the newsletter because that is the appropriate forum concerning an issue that would directly effect all Bristol Association members. I would hope that this article might spark a response by email or snail mail from interested shipmates prior to the 2009 reunion in Milwaukee so that the issue can be fully discussed at the 2009 organizational meeting this October.

As an organization we have banded together because of a common bond, that being our service to our nation through time spent aboard the USS Bristol DD857. We were Officers and Enlisted members of the U.S. Navy. We served through the building and launch of the Bristol to its decommissioning. We worked top side and below decks, ate together, slept in the same compartments and toured the world as proud Destroyer Sailors. Based upon those facts a small group of shipmates created the Bristol Association for the purpose of locating, and organizing

Bristol Shipmates, including an annual reunion. The association as it is constituted today reflects the organizational efforts of the founders plus the response of those who were or remain as listed shipmates (dues paying I hope). I thank all for their efforts and cherish the Bristol friends that I have made since joining the association. I did not serve with, or know, most of the members of the association, their spouses or significant others but have become close to many because of my membership as a shipmate.

I attend the annual Bristol reunion to spend time with other shipmates. During the reunion we share meals and beverages while we trade stories of life and family. This is as it should be. From my own perspective I could care less if we were to gather in a Fire House, a Meeting Hall, a Home, a Park or a Phone Booth. The gathering of shipmates itself should be the focus with all else as an addendum. That being said, the entire membership is entitled to examine the issue and to change the process if so desired.

The association uses the services of "The Brat" to organize our annual reunion. We decide, after a vote, where we want to meet for our annual reunion and in turn pay the Brat to use their experience to work out the logistics. One of the benefits of using an outside service to organize the reunion is that it takes the burden off the shoulders of both the Bristol Association and the individual shipmates while at the same time structuring a credible reunion routine and payment for same.

When we were on active duty on the Bristol we were told when to get up, when to go to bed, when to eat, when to work and what would happen if we failed to follow orders. Today, we still follow orders. We pay our taxes, we follow driving regulations, we adhere to social

norms, we do the right things in the right order. As an organization we can change course though and might benefit by doing so. Talking about changing the reunion routine and actually doing so is harder than most would care to admit though. I have organized and run functions for large groups in the past and have found the job to be thankless. Getting more than 3 people to pay for and show up for an event at a distant location is a daunting task, one that I do only for family gatherings now.

We have several options as I see it for our future reunions. We can leave the planning and execution to The Brat, show up, and follow the schedule or we can attend the reunion, not sign up for the tours, form small groups for informal gatherings and do our own thing. Another option would be to go to a theme location like Branson Missouri for a set time period and let the membership avail itself of the amenities on an add hoc basis, meeting in small groups. A drawback to Branson in the past was the travel distance but on May 11 2009 Branson Regional Airport opened with service by Air Tran, <http://www.flybranson.com/index.php>. I used Branson as an example only but you could use Las Vegas, Disney or a cruise just as well.

In evaluating the reunion format remember that the further away from group events you get the less the the reunion becomes a BRISTOL reunion and the more it becomes a vacation. Think about the issue, comment on it and be prepared to discuss it at the 2009 reunion in Milwaukee. It's your organization, do what you want.

Marty Walsh



MILWAUKEE REUNION



House of Harley Davidson Milwaukee

Don't forget to send the Reunion Brat your registration for the Milwaukee reunion. If you have misplaced your reunion registration stuff, please contact the reunion BRAT by telephone at 360-663-2521, by email at info@thereunionbrat.com. You may also use US mail address: 50721 State Hwy 410E, Greenwater, WA 98022.

Reunion will be held at Double Tree Hotel in downtown Milwaukee. The room rates are \$99 per night, plus tax. Parking at the hotel is \$15 per day. Airport transportation runs about \$25.00 with a taxi. Registration will be \$145 per person and include the following:

- Welcome Package with name button, itinerary, list of attendees, & local information
- Reception Dinner Buffet
- Saturday Banquet Dinner & Program & Dance
- Sunday Farewell Breakfast Buffet
- Hospitality Room stocked with snacks & beverages & cocktail all 3 days
- Commemorative Keepsake
- Commemorative Lapel Pin
- All associated taxes and gratuities

Call the Double Tree at 414-273-2950 by 7 September 2009 to make your hotel reservations.

Optional tour are available and include:

City Tour & Harley Davidson Museum. Begins with a guided tour of the city highlights. Next you will proceed to the National Harley Davidson Museum, which chronicles the history of Harley-Davidson and cultural impact of motorcycles in America. The Museum has exhibits, you can design your own cycle, and tons of racing

memorabilia. Friday 0900-1500 Price \$38 per person.

Fireside Dinner Show. The midwest's best combination of fine dining and professional theater. Broadway musicals cast from New York talent. Production will be "The Sound of Music", Friday 1700-2330. Price per person \$91.

Come and join us as we share old memories and make new ones!

For more information contact:

Walter Marczak  
931-648-9843 by telephone or  
wmarczak@charter.net by email

Or contact  
The Reunion BRAT

360-663-2521 by telephone or

info@thereunionbrat.com by email.

Looking for to seeing you in Milwaukee. God Bless the USA!

Calendar

7 September 2009

Reunion hotel reservations due

8 - 11 October 2009

Milwaukee reunion

9 October 2009

0900-1500 Optional city tour and Harley Davidson Museum

1700-2330 Optional Fireside dinner show

10 October 2009

Reunion banquet

11 October 2009

Reunion memorial service

Contributors

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JOHN HARDT

BUD CALLUM

GEORGE MC DERMOTT