One last lonely voyage

. . . the clouds were shedding tears for the farewell of the USS Franklin, for all who had known her and for the shipmates whose spirits she was about to join.

On 17 February 1947 the commission pennant was hoisted down and presented to Commander Gary. It would never again fly from her mast. The Franklin was reserved for future use. The last Stars and Stripes to fly from BIG BEN was lowered, folded and presented to John Stites. Stites, Otherwise known as the "Old Timer," was the 44th man to report aboard BIG BEN in September 1943. Today, he is a retired senior chief machinist mate.

The end came for the gallant Franklin in 1966, when she was stricken from the Navy Register and sold for scrap. The Portsmouth Salvage Company bought her on 27 July 1966 for $229,000 and was given three years to salvage her. The armor plating was to be returned to the government. The federal government offered the carrier's bridge to Norfolk, Virginia. The city planned to build a museum to house it. Unfortunately, the museum and memorial to the ship were never built, and the Franklin would die within a few miles of where she was born. She was towed from Bayonne, New Jersey to a berth at Sewells Point, Virginia. There she waited for over a year while the Salvage Company constructed a berth at Money Point some 11 miles away to receive the 27,000 ton gray hulk.

Finally, it was time for the last voyage of the old warrior. Five tugs were assembled under the command of Mr. James A Williamson of the Curtis Bay Towing Company. With one tug ahead and one astern and both made fast to the ship by hawser, the voyage began. The three remaining tugs stood to by push to Williamson's command.

Slowly, at some five knots, the convoy cruised past the waterfronts of Norfolk and Portsmouth. They passed the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and Franklin's sister ship the Randolph CV-15 and traveled up the southern branch of the Elizabeth River.

No ship this big had ever made the journey this far, and passing under three bridges was the biggest obstacle. They passed under the Norfolk and

The Portsmouth Salvage Co. advertises the Franklin's being scrapped in 1969. Portsmouth Railway Bridge and the Jordan Bridge with ease. Ahead was a swing bridge with a 109-foot clearance. The beam of the Franklin was 92 feet, which allowed only 5 feet on each side. In 15 minutes they cleared the bridge with only a brief scrape when a drain pipe caught a couple of planks on the catwalk. Past the Naval Ammunition Depot at St. Julians Creek, the convoy slowly turned 90° around Money Point and made its way to the Franklin's final berth. Just before she was docked, a workman found a letter amidst the debris strewn around the hangar deck. The mimeographed letter had been signed by Chaplain Gatlin, and was addressed to the family of one of the men who had died on March 19. The letter was dated 19 April 1945.

As the carrier's bow was nudged into her berth, rain clouds which had held off for the voyage opened up. One might wonder if the clouds were shedding tears for the farewell of the USS Franklin CV-13, for all who had known her and for the shipmates whose spirits she was about to join.

EXPANDED BOARD HAS 6 NON-CREW

On November 15, 2008 all thirteen candidates for the Board of Directors were elected and are to serve until our next election in November 2009: The Board consists of —

Robert E. St. Peters, President
Ray C. Bailey, Vice President
Beth C. Rowland, Secretary
Robert Ladewig, Treasurer
Robert E. Baines
Prentice H. Baptiste
Sheila Hartley

Jeannette Haugk
Harry Munzing
Sam N. Rhodes
Frank Turner
Janice Stuart
Melissa Yates

The 22nd Anniversary of USS Franklin CV-13

Board Membership is Open to All Museum Members

Board membership is no longer restricted to crew members. In fact, in the interest of perpetuating the Museum we have to have younger people on the Board. So, if you are interested, follow these criteria:

A) be at least twenty-one years of age, B) be a current paid up member of the Museum Association, C) make an effort to attend the reunions, D) submit a 250 word essay on why you wish to serve on the Board including any experience or ability you can offer. This essay is to be mailed to Ray C. Bailey, 3511 Byrd Street, San Diego, CA 92154-1611

MUST BE MAILED NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 1, 2009

Board Election Procedure

This is the procedure for electing candidates to the Board of Directors which was approved in June at the reunion in Kansas City.

OCTOBER — During the second week of October a ballot will be mailed with a separate listing of the candidates and their profile. The ballot will be mailed only to each person who has paid their 2009 annual dues.

NOVEMBER — The ballot will be identified as such and the mailing address will be listed with the election date to be Saturday, November 14, 2009. Ballots received after that date will not be counted.

In Memoriam

DOTTIE BAILEY, wife of vice president Ray Bailey, passed away on July 30, 2008 following health conditions. She was an active participant at reunions and often went along with Ray in filming the activities. Cheery and buoyant, she will be remembered fondly by many museum members.

LOU CASSERINO, a member of the Board of Directors for several years, died after battling serious illness on November 11, 2008. He was a co-chairman for the Pensacola reunion and was an enthusiastic promotor of the Franklin lithographs. Lou was not bashful, always ready to voice an opinion and so he will be remembered by his shipmates.

SAUL GILL, a long standing member of the Board died after struggling with serious illness on June 28, 2008. Saul was an active member of VFW Post 7327 in Springfield, VA and at his behest they made donations of more than $12,000.00 to the Museum Association. Saul was a soft-spoken shipmate, greatly respected and is deeply missed.
the prez sez . . .

Perhaps this is a bit late but we do want to express our thanks and appreciation to Annette Bownds . . . granddaughter of shipmate Leonard Hall . . . for chairing the 2008 reunion in Kansas City. Not widely known is that Annette planned her wedding at the time she was putting our reunion together. The reunion ended at noon on Sunday and that afternoon she was exchanged vows! Talk about a challenge.

Rob Florence has worked diligently these past months planning a memorable reunion in New York city . . . complete information and reservation details are explained on an enclosure "flyer" and you are encouraged to sign up early.

The election was successful, all thirteen candidates have been elected to the board. Directors and officers will meet on Thursday evening in New York with a full agenda to be discussed.

And we move along into our 22nd year, determined to keep the USS Franklin and its valiant crew part of the nation's history.

Bob E. St. Peters

Have A Story To Tell?

We are anxious to include noteworthy activities or events which would be of interest to Museum members. Yes, you may include pictures. Send your information to —

Robert Ladewig
331A Oak Hill Road
Lake Barrington, IL 60010-1686

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The Ship That Wouldn’t Die

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2009 DUES STILL $10.00

Yes, the annual dues remain as originally budgeted, just ten dollars.

MAIL TO: Robert A. Ladewig, Treasurer
331A Oak Hill Road • Lake Barrington, IL 60010-1686
Check payable to — USS Franklin Museum Association

In Memoriam

The Great Commander called them home to sail the crystal sea,
Where they will steer with steady hand throughout eternity.
No longer will the high seas roll,
The sky will be clear and every day will be a day of happiness and cheer,
No storm shall cross their valiant prow and calm will be the sea,
In that bright place where all is well and kindly is the freeze,
They are at peace with our shipmates who have gone before.

— Word was received that these crew members were absent from muster since the 2008 reunion —

Louis Casserino S1/c 6-Div.
Paul J. Dalton WT2/c B-Div.
William R. Dressel F1/c B-Div.
Marston R. Dringman ARM2/c VT-5
Saul A. Gill WTS3/c S-Div.
Samuel J. Harty SK2/c B-Div.
Kenneth R. Hill AM3/c V2-Div.
Leo M. Jacobsen Sgt. VMF-452
John Kieliszak F1/c B-Div.
Frank Lepore MM3/c M-Div.
L.g.) George M. Orner VF-13
Richard A. Pels AMM3/c
Keith B. Roberts WT3/c B-Div.
John E. Smith MM3/c
Harold L. Thomas EM3/c E-Div.
Robert A. Williams AMM3/c

People looking for people

DID YOU KNOW . . .

EUGENE P. BUCK ART1/c K-Div.
Patricia Buck (widow) would like to hear from any of the crew who knew Eugene (aka Brooklyn).

Mrs. Patricia Buck
1112 Swan Lake Drive
North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582

CARL J. SPALDING RM2/c K-Div.
(aka Carl Spalsinske). Edith Spalding (widow) would like to hear from any of the crew who were his shipmates.

Mrs. Edith Spalding
1110 Yardley Road
Yardley, PA 19067-7804

USS Franklin monument
dedicated in West Liberty, Ohio

Shipmate Phillip B. Black, SF3/c, of the R1 Division, reports that the American Legion Post Woodard McGovern #426 of West Liberty, Ohio Dedicated a memorial honoring all veterans of the two counties. Our fellow Museum member purchased and had a special marker honoring those shipmates who perished on March 19, 1945 also dedicated at the same time.

A big screen movie
about us?
It's a possibility.

During the reunion in Chicago there was talk about making a movie of the attack on the Franklin and how the crew managed to save the ship. Peter Prato enthusiastically advised how he would develop a team . . . and he did. Peter and William Byron Hillman are partners in this venture.

In November, Bob St. Peters received a letter from Hillman, an update on the project. In October the Director of Naval Operations West read the screenplay then granted written approval and endorsement for Naval assistance.

A major agency is reading the screenplay and a well known law firm is reviewing the total package. So wheels are turning. Plan is to meet with a large production company with access to a "put deal" at one of the major studios.

So, if you think you have acting ability and want to be in this big screen picture just one bit of advice, as they say in the casting business, "Don't call us . . . we'll call you."

LOOK! WE'RE ON THE WEB!

It was just a couple of years ago that Phil Gentry designed a USS Franklin web site www.ussfranklin.org

and it is simply awesome! Tap in and sign the log ... you may even leave a message.