

The Riverine Reporter

Sea Tigers Association

A publication of the 458th Trans. Co. (PBR)

SUMMER 2010
Vol. 2 #2

Editors: Don Cook
& Mike Hebert

Greetings to all former 458th members (DUKW's, LARC's, BARC's, PBR's, Whalers, and associated Military Police). This is the June 2011 issue of the newsletter and subsequent issues will be published quarterly.

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

This has been a "roller-coaster" spring. I know you all watch the news and especially the weather across the country. All the tornados and now the flooding that is going on. I'm sure that we have 458th members in some of those areas. Let's keep all the people in those parts of the country in our thoughts and prayers.

I would like to share a couple of things that have happened recently:

1) We attended a send-off ceremony for our Grandson, Dylan, who is being deployed to Iraq with the Minnesota National Guard. After being over there myself, it was quite emotional for me.

2) I recently went on an Honor Flight – Honor Flight is a non-profit organization that takes World War II veterans to Washington to see the World War II monument and other monuments, free of charge. I was very honored to go as a Guardian for my 90-year old uncle. Guardians have to pay their own way. If you ever get the chance to do that, go for it. You do not have to be related to a World War II veteran to go as a guardian. It is very rewarding to be with those old boys and to hear their stories. I have never heard my uncle talk so much about his time in the Army. It was a great time for both of us.

Denny Hull, President

SECRETARY'S RAMBLINGS:

Just a reminder to get reservations in at the hotel and send in the registration form to me. The sooner we get the registration forms back the sooner I can start to nail down numbers. By the looks of fuel prices it appears they will at least stay steady, if not go down by then, barring any major catastrophes, that is. By the time the newsletter comes out we should only be about 3½ months from the reunion. I encourage all to try to attend. See you there. If anyone has questions please contact me at (605) 339-3381 or (605) 351-0145.

Bill Northrop, Secretary

MEMBER NEWS:

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the 458th Sea Tigers Association:

Carlos Lozano (1970) - Served on "Stoned Genie" with Chris Lowe and Jim Sanders. Carlos resides in Monterey Park, CA.

Charles Petch (1968), of Lenox, MI - Attended Mare Island with Bill Northrop.

Leslie R. Russell (1958-1961) – Served on DUKW's at Camp LeRoy Johnson. Leslie lives in Benton, AR.

William Bassett (1965-1966) – Bill was a 2nd Lt. with the 458th stationed at Cam Rahn Bay. Currently resides in Los Altos, CA.

Edward R. Aldrich of Morris, IL. – Ed served with the 720th MP's (Bushwackers) then transferred to river patrol with the 458th on both Whalers as well as PBR's. His time in country was 7/69 – 7/70.

James McGuigan has sent in lifetime dues. Thanks, Jim!

Thank you all for your support of the 458th Sea Tigers and *Welcome Aboard!* For those of you who are not yet members, please be aware that our organization depends entirely on your support. At the present time we have 220 in our contact list and only 114 are paid members. **Please** take a moment to send in the application form at the end of this newsletter. It will be very much appreciated!

● **This newsletter is funded solely by one of our very generous, anonymous members. We wish to express our sincere thanks and gratitude for his continued support.**

● There are still rooms available at the Grand Gateway Hotel in Rapid City, SD. The 2011 reunion will be held September 13 – 17. Make your reservations today!

CORRECTION:

The telephone number for Grand Gateway Hotel listed in the Spring Newsletter was incorrect. Those wanting to make reservations for the 458th Sea Tigers reunion in Rapid City, SD can reach the hotel at **(866) 742-1300**. Ask for Robert Hodet, Hotel Director of Sales at ext. 624. Ask for the 458th Transportation Company Sea Tigers Reunion Block Rooms.

Reservations for hotel rooms must be received on or before August 20, 2011. Rooms are \$79.00 plus taxes. Upgrades are available and priced accordingly.

Cancellations can be made up to 72 hours before intended arrival. There may be exceptions in case of emergency.

For those of you wanting to extend your stay, the hotel has offered the above rates good for 2 days before Sept. 13, 2011 and 2 days after Sept. 17, 2011.

There will be quite a few interesting and exciting activities at this year's reunion.

An all-day adventure is planned for Wed. Sept. 14. A 7:00 AM departure from the hotel will be followed by breakfast, then a tour of the

Southern Hills: Mt. Rushmore, Crazy Horse, an 1880 Train Ride, and a Chuckwagon Supper and Cowboy Music Show.

On Thurs, Sept. 15 the Northern Hills will be featured with tours of the Black Hills National Cemetery, Cavalry Museum at Sturgis, National Fish Hatchery at Spearfish, and a stop at Deadwood.

Friday, Sept. 16 is highlighted by an evening banquet at the hotel. Entrée choices are Roast Sirloin of Beef Au Jus or Herb Roasted Chicken.

Remember, you can bring as many guests as you like! Send in your Registration Form today! For further information contact Bill Northrop @ norwill6@sio.midco.net or by phone: (605) 339-3381(home) or (605) 351-0145 (cell).

Don't pass up this chance to re-unite with old friends and get acquainted with new ones. We have all had a great time at past reunions!

● The Vung Ro Bay website at 458pbr-vungrobbay.com is currently under reconstruction after having been damaged beyond repair by someone who should not be allowed near computers! (*ME!*) Attempts to make minor changes resulted in disasters, only to be compounded by trying to repair the damage. I finally decided to just delete the entire site and start all over! The good news is that sometimes out of catastrophic events new ideas emerge. The web site has now doubled in size and will feature photo albums from Vung Ro crew in addition to stories of the 458th in Vung Ro. My apologies to those who tried to access the site recently. It will be finished and up and running again soon.

Mike Hebert

SICK CALL:

We are pleased to report that Pete Sellers went through successful back surgery on March 7th. Pete is enduring physical therapy three times a week and wearing a brace to assist his muscles and nerves with healing. According to medical staff, he is doing very well in his recovery. Best of luck to you, Pete!

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The candidates for the upcoming election of officers are:

TREASURER:

Pete McGuirk – Incumbent
Chas Lowe
Bob Brower

SECRETARY:

Bill Northrop – Incumbent

Voter ballots will be mailed to all dues-paying members in the next couple of months.

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WEB SITE ACCESS:

Some members are having difficulty getting access to various parts of the 458th Sea Tigers web site which require passwords.

The username is: **seatigers**

The password is: **buddy**

Jet Drive Landing Craft

The Royal Netherlands Navy has begun production on the next generation of landing craft with the development of a 48-foot LCVP powered by twin Volvo Penta D9- 575 diesel engines coupled to twin Ultrajet waterjets.

The new landing craft are capable of transporting 8 tons of deck cargo and 35 combat troops with gear.



A total of 12 will be built for the Dutch Navy. Speeds of 32 knots empty and 18 knots fully loaded. Imagine that passing your PBR!



Small Craft Insignia (SCI)

by Bob Brower

A few years ago a group of your 458th brothers worked to have the SCI awarded to members of the 458th, albeit unsuccessful. The request died in HRC Awards, a valiant try, nonetheless. It was believed at the time, that that was that and we would never again be working the issue again....WRONG. The conversation resurfaced about 5 months ago with Charles Mitchell, an MP who was stationed with the 458th PBR on the Dong Nai in 1968.

Charles had come across an Army CW5 who had been awarded the SCI. Contact developed and the CW5 gave us information that moved us to join hands to promote the possible awarding of the SCI to members of the 458th PBR who were the boat captains (coxswains if you wish). Furthermore, other information has been developed leading toward a plan to establish our claim. A position paper has been roughly cobbled together and our board is supportive dependent upon a more formal and thorough review of the paperwork.

To help in this effort, we need to identify our boat captains. These are those who had charge of the PBR's in the field. Trained at Mare Island (NIOTC) or not, given charge on a continuous basis, a boat and crew.

Contact Bob Brower via e-mail
PBR_J7844@comcast.net



REFLECTIONS

by Tom Wonsiewicz

... continued from Spring 2011 issue

The lure for the locals was irresistible – dunnage, and lots of it. The ordnance cargos were securely packed in the holds with massive amounts of lumber to hold them in place. The VN stevedores, under the watchful eye of the Coast Guard, were “supposed to” offload the dunnage onto a barge and keep it out of the river. Right. It was a heck of a lot easier just to toss it overboard. So the stage was set. A seemingly endless supply of Grade A lumber floating on the river was being chased and scooped up by a flotilla of sampans. Who could really blame them? There was enough scrap wood on each ship to build a village.



Cat Lai Public Wharf (Ferry – top right)

There would be crack downs. Our patrols would bring in the “looters” and the VN police would haul them off. It made little difference – they were back the next day. I recall one woman and small child hauled in three times in two days. We made an effort to give away the wood in a controlled fashion. It was bedlam. The local politicians were lining their pockets.

Snap!

Shortly after the small freighter was mined, we were cracking down hard on the sampan traffic. After hauling in the same person three times, one of the guys lost it.

With the locals safely aboard the PBR, he locked and loaded his M-16 and proceeded to

turn the sampan into toothpicks. While certainly not authorized, I can still see what he did as the logical result of trying to do his job. That sampan wasn't going to be a problem again. The toll of the 12x7 duty, in a sweltering climate with little chance to unwind just became too much to bear. What he did was wrong, but it was understandable.



Perpetrators

The locals were turned over to the police, but the poop hit the fan. We were reprimanded and were to pay for the destroyed sampan. I don't recall how that was accomplished.

That experience taught me how close, in a combat zone, we all are at the edge of what civilized people do.



Awaiting Arraignment?

... continued in Fall 2011 issue

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DUKW's OF THE WORLD

by Mike Hebert

While no longer used by the US military, the revered old Army DUKW of World War II fame has survived through the years and is now in use around the world in various forms:

- Australia boasts one of the world's largest private World War II era DUKW collections at **RainForestation** in Kuranda, Queensland. This tour company operates a fleet of 12 DUKW's to transport tourists through the tropical rainforest and across a small lake.



Rainforest Tour DUKW

Owners Charles and Pip Woodward purchased their first DUKW in 1975 and restore them as needed. Surprisingly, a lot of parts are still available from General Motors. Those that are not, are fabricated on-site by two full-time staff engineers.



DUKW undergoing total restoration

- (Visit site at www.rainforestation.com.au)

A LITTLE HUMOR

Courtesy MyBoatClub.com

Very early one morning a sailor noticed something floating towards the deserted island that had become his home since his ship sank six months ago.

As the object came closer, he realized that it was a very large wooden barrel. He very soon thereafter noticed that hanging onto the barrel was a very scantily clad woman! In fact, she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen in his entire life!

Arriving on the shore the woman left the barrel and slowly and suggestively walked towards the sailor. When she got next to him, she whispered into his ear, "I have something you want!"

The sailor pushed her aside and broke into a dead run towards the breaking waves yelling "Don't tell me you've got beer in that barrel!"

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RECIPE FROM HOME

by Virginia Hebert

Simple Sloppy Joe's

- 1 to 1½ pounds of ground beef
- 1 8-ounce can of tomato paste
- ⅓ cup tomato catsup
- 1 tbsp. Worcestershire Sauce
- 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 8-ounce can whole kernel corn (optional)

- Brown ground beef, then add all above ingredients. Heat to boiling, then simmer about 15 minutes.
- Lightly butter both sides of hamburger buns and broil until golden-brown, (or toast).
- Spoon sloppy Joe's over hamburger buns



NEWS FROM THE PAST

from The Army Reporter, March 1969

Thanks to Wayne Kirby, Vung Ro Bay ('69)

• **MP's Kill Viet Cong Skindiver**

VUNG RO BAY - The explosive-laden body of a Viet Cong diver, clad in a scuba-type diving suit with mouthpiece and long, stiff plastic tubes attached for undetected underwater breathing, was recovered in the bay here, by MP's from the 127th MP Co. and men from the 458th Transportation Co. The VC apparently had been killed by concussion grenades dropped in the Vung Ro harbor by MP's on a harbor security mission.

MP's regularly toss concussion grenades into the water during patrol activities in the bay when VC diver activity is suspected

A helicopter on routine patrol above Vung Ro spotted a floating object in the water off the shore of Echo Beach in this small, natural harbor 180 miles north of Saigon.

A river patrol boat (PBR) approached Echo Beach and spotted the body, floating face down, with a box the size of a C-ration case floating next to it.

Sgt. Jack Teatsworth, one of the MP's on the PBR, stripped down and plunged into the bay in an effort to swim close to the floating body and suspected explosives without endangering the other men on the PBR. His efforts were rewarded by the discovery of a Russian-made floating sea mine.

The mine had been concealed by the floating box, which was magnetically attached to the mine and contained 75 pounds of TNT-type explosive, all attached to the diver by means of a tightly secured rope of short length. Sgt. Teatsworth separated the body from the explosive package by cutting the rope.

Then, the body and the floating bomb were lassoed and towed near the PBR docking facility, where an explosive ordinance team from Phu Hiep disarmed the mine and destroyed it.

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CONFESSIONS OF THE 458TH

by Mike Hebert

We were very lucky in Vung Ro Bay. There was never any brass around. The head honcho was an E-6, and we all pretty much lived the good life. Most of us had our own little refrigerators in our rooms which were normally quite well stocked with Olympia beer, our favorite.

In the room directly next to me was Bob McCabe. He had a larger refrigerator than I did, I don't remember how or why, but he did. It was very, very well-stocked.

I remember entering the hallway to our hootch one afternoon. Bob had just returned from patrol and was absolutely fuming! It seemed as though his beer was disappearing faster than he could drink it.

Not knowing who the culprit was, Bob set about doing some detective work. After a few days, he had determined that it was none other than our NCOIC, the boss himself! (*since deceased – Ed*).

There was really no way to confront the perpetrator about this since we were both E-4's. However, determined to put a stop to these activities, Bob and I devised a plan...

One afternoon when everything was real quiet we took a hand grenade from the conex storage and gently transported it out behind the hootch. We unscrewed the firing mechanism, set the grenade aside, and pulled the pin on the handle, blowing the fuse.

Then we put the firing mechanism back together and screwed it back into the grenade. Bob and I went to his room, opened his refrigerator, and wired the grenade to the second shelf. Then we ran a small line from the grenade pin to the inside of the door.

Coming back from patrol the next day, Bob discovered that the pin was out of the grenade. Strangely enough, though, there was never any more beer missing!

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QUI NHON TODAY

by Mike Hebert

Reference material courtesy Haivenu-Vietnam

Qui Nhon is the little visited provincial capital of Binh Dinh province. Although it was recognized as a city as late as 1898, its history reaches back to the days of the Kingdom of Champa. In the 11th century, the Cham people migrated southwards and moved their capital city to a location about 30km north of the present-day Qui Nhon and named it Vijaya. It survived until 1471, when the citadel was sacked by the Vietnamese. The Cham people built many towers during their reign. In the fifteenth century, Qui Nhon became the home base of Emperor Le Thanh Ton.

There are a total of fourteen Cham towers and monuments in varying stages of decay around Binh Dinh province, but the most convenient are a mere 2km from Qui Nhon city center. The Thap Doi Cham Towers are surrounded by buildings, which diminishes their impact somewhat, but they are good examples of Cham craftsmanship.



Thap Nga Cham Towers

About 50km from Qui Nhon, the three Thap Nga (Ivory) Cham Towers are regarded as the best Cham Tower complexes in Vietnam.

Qui Nhon became an important naval and military base during the Vietnam War. The small fishing port was dredged and expanded by the U.S. military in 1965. Its strategic role led to heavy fighting in the surrounding area. The entire port was dredged again in 1977.

The port facilities are still in use with the piers that were once used by the Army LCU's now used for general cargo. The former PBR dock area appears (from Google Earth) to be used by fishing vessels and private boats.

Today, Qui Nhon is an expanding port city with a population of about a quarter of a million people. Located halfway between Danang and Nha Trang has, until recently, isolated the city from the main tourism routes. However, air links to Danang and Ho Chi Minh City has made it more accessible with service provided through Vietnam Airlines, landing at Phu Cat Airport, an old American air base from 1966. A recently-built international hotel offers a relaxing break well away from the more travelled path.

Qui Nhon is a city short of attractions, but the Long Khanh pagoda is worth a visit. The 17m high Buddha is impressive, as is the "thousand eyed and thousand handed" Goddess of Mercy.

Qui Nhon counts fishing as its mainstay, and the seafood is reputed to be excellent. The approach to the city from the south on Hwy 1A looks like a beautiful, quaint little beachside town. From the north, however, the approach is congested with honking cars, belching fumes, and an endless line of ugly storefronts.

The beachfront area is small but uncrowded. The strip along An Duong Vuong St. has been demolished to make way for more upscale development in hopes of drawing tourists.



Circular Fishing Boats on Qui Nhon Beach



DENNIS AMBRUSO's PBR 721

Thanks to Pete McGuirk

Reprinted with permission: Dennis Ambruso

(Dennis Ambruso is a US Navy veteran who has reconstructed a PBR that currently operates from the Captain's Cove Marina in Bridgeport, CT- Ed.)

Here is the story about my acquisition and reconstruction of my boat, a 1972 production Mk II River Patrol Boat, hull number 721...

Coming from a family that has long enjoyed boats and boating on the Long Island Sound, I was very familiar with boats from owning and working on them, both from a design and mechanical standpoint. It wasn't until I signed up for the Naval Reserve – 3 days before my seventeenth birthday – that I was able to continue my fascination with boats – in the Navy. But let me back up a bit... I have to say from about the age of 12 to 17, I was a member of a great organization known as the Naval League Sea Cadets in Stamford, CT. It's the place I became acutely aware of naval history and the types of boats currently in service with the US Navy. At that time of my life, PT Boats were my true love, my only love, fast – sleek – and expendable - but their day had passed and they were now gone. But a new boat was out to replace it; the Patrol Torpedo Fast (PTF), and that is what I wanted. It was #1 on my dream chit as the boat I wanted to serve on as I went to active duty in June of 1965.

But in the usual way of the military, the Navy had different plans for me.

My dream was crushed when I was assigned to the *USS Colonial* LSD-18 stationed in San Diego. While serving on the *Colonial*, I could see San Diego's harbor filled with small boats of every shape and description: LCVP's, Mike boats, River Monitors, and a new little boat, the PBR. Later on in my tour of duty, while cruising around visiting various ports in South Vietnam, I got to see more of the little boats, the Mark I's, and then the newer versions, the Mark II's. It was the second time I fell in love! And I was determined that someday I was going to bring

my true love home, and make my dream come true.

And time moved on. Marriage, a child, a divorce, work-work-work, responsibility and obligations... I had grown up but was still a kid inside, a kid with a secret love ... And a dream.

So let's fast-forward to the 1990's. After spending a few decades of collecting militaria and re-enacting the American Revolution, the Civil War and then WW2, I had been able to use my skills to acquire and rebuild 6-pounder field guns, whaleboats, jeeps, armored cars, halftracks and tanks. And I still lived right on the shores of Long Island Sound in a turn of the century firehouse. So back to the fast-forward...

A 1991 issue of "Boats & Harbors" magazine says the US Government is selling PBR's ... well, PBR hulls. Stripped. No engines, no Jacuzzi's, no controls, no gun mounts, no radar, you know what I mean ... stripped. Hulls only, big ugly, deteriorated fiberglass hulls. But I was in love, and I could just sense my hands on her 31 foot sleek bottom...

So I bought one. On her stern she carried the manufacturers number 31 RP 721.

United Boat Builders in Bellingham, Washington built 31 RP 721 in 1972. Later, United Boat became Uniflite. She was the first boat built that year. In 1973 she was sent to Vietnam as part of a shipment of 8 boats. En route MACV cancels the delivery, and 31 RP 721 ends up in Panama training SEALs and crews until 1989, when she was sent back to the good old US of A and stripped for government auction. You remember those ads... get your Government surplus Willy's jeep for \$50.00...

So I made the commitment, and for about the cost of an engagement ring, \$2,300 bucks, I had her. She was mine, all mine, and one of my dreams had come true. And a new journey was about to begin.

... continued in Fall 2011 issue

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Don't forget to visit the following 458th
Transportation Company web sites:

www.458thseatigers.org
www.458pbr-vungrobay.com

We still need stories from your experiences in Vietnam! Please send submissions to one of the staff listed below.

Back issues of the newsletter are available. Just contact one of the staff listed below.

We appreciate your submissions, feature ideas, corrections & criticisms. Please submit info to:

Bill Northrop: norwill6@sio.midco.net

Don Cook: dccookjr6@cox.net

Mike Hebert: michaelhebert@cox.net

458th SeaTigers Officers

President: Denny Hull
Vice President: Robert Ness
Secretary: Bill Northrop
Treasurer: Pete McGuirk
Chaplin: Larry Kallod
Historian: George Paavola

COMING IN FALL 2011 ISSUE:

- Confessions of the 458th.
- Bob Brower's PBR Project
- "Reflections" by Tom Wonsiewicz
- Dennis Ambruso's PBR 721
- How to turn your old mailbox into a Honeywell grenade launcher

458th SEA TIGERS ASSOCIATION

Bill Northrop, Secretary
2600 E. 49th Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57103
Email: norwill6@sio.midco.net

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

email: _____

Military Info:

Unit: _____ Dates w/Unit: _____ Location: _____ Rank: _____

Please check this box if you **DO NOT** want information on this application shared with other members of our organization.

DUES (check box): 1 year; \$20.00 3 years; \$45.00 Lifetime; \$195.00

Please submit verification of service with application. We will need any of the following: copy of orders, copy of 201, photos, or a member who can vouch for you.

Thank you for your support!