



Internet-Newsletter March 2007

AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE VETERANS SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER

*IF YOU SERVED IN THE
U.S. MERCHANT
MARINE, IN PEACE OR
WAR, YOU ARE
WELCOME TO JOIN
OUR ORGANIZATION.
WE ALSO WELCOME
THE U.S. NAVY ARMED
GUARD.*

OFFICERS: You may contact our officers below by clicking on their email address or go to our web site by double clicking on the web site address.

President...Robert E Ulrich 530 758 6570 email bulrich@pacbell.net
Vice President Kenneth Blue 530 477 1908 email ken1@nccn.net
Secretary Ramona Schmiedel 530 367 4445 email schmiedel@ftcnet.net
Treasurer Ray Westberg 916 728 6269 email scand1@surewest.net
Webmaster.Robert Ulrich Web Site Address <http://www.ammvsacvalley.com>
Electronic and picture editing by Bob. Writing by Bob, Ken, Ramona or whoever.

For larger print, at the top of the page, click plus..smaller click minus.
This issue..

Prez Sez Election coming up. Return ballot by May 1.

Minutes Feb Meeting (Mona's Tales)

Domike Presentation (Good job Don)

Sea Scouts in Peril in San Francisco (Sounds like the ROTC. This Stinks)

Congressmen who need to be contacted here in California. (Please contact yours.)

Roy's Tales (Hey boys, let me tell you a story.)

Pres Sez...Bob Ulrich

Still a few weeks before the National Conference in Tampa, Florida. We will vote again for **National Officers**. President **A.J. Wichita** runs for another term as President. Also running for president is our current Vice President **Joe Colon**. Among the main issues seems to be who will be allowed to join the AMMV as a member and the changes proposed to the By-Laws and the Constitution. You will find more about that in our News magazine.

At the moment there does not seem to be anyone running against **Don Trimbath** for Vice President. Don, of course, is a member of our Sacramento Chapter and serves Governmental Affairs Chairman. **Nelson Cauble** is seeking another term as National Secretary. No one is seeking the office of Treasurer left vacant by the death of Treasurer Jack Beherns. Former Treasurer Calvin Berry is serving as the interim Treasurer until that position is filled. There may be other candidates before the conference and at the conference as candidates may also be nominated from the floor. Your postcard ballot is included with this issue of the newsletter. Notice that it has a stamp on it for easy mailback but hold it until you study the issues.

Coming up in Tampa is a revision of **the AMMV By-laws and the Constitution**. This, I think, will be the hot button issue at the National Conference. It was printed in detail with changes in the **Winter** issue of the **National News magazine**. Maybe not the most enthralling reading but important none-the-less. Read it over and offer us an opinion. Your vote on the enclosed ballot is just an advisory vote. We will discuss it more at length at upcoming meetings and make a decision about whether to support it or not. Our delegate to the conference will be member George Heidel. George will take our decisions to the conference to cast our vote.

Now...about **the ballot**. This is the first time, to my knowledge, that we have tried an individual ballot. You will find it with this newsletter so don't discard it. We have stamped it so it is ready to mail back after you mark it. We must ask that you return these no later than **May 1st**. We printed April 15th. That's you're your tax is due but you can take a little longer. May 1st will give us time to count them for our delegate to know how he is to vote. You could miss the deadline with no punitive action, unlike the IRS and the Franchise Tax Board, but your vote might miss the count if it is late. We are trying to make an effort to give everyone of our members a chance to cast a ballot. Your signature at the bottom is optional. If you would rather your vote was totally private just leave the signature blank. The final ballot total will be certified by our Chapter board who will instruct our delegate.

It has been mighty busy around our house. We are remodeling the kitchen. Nancy does the wallpaper and paint and I handle the electrical, plumbing and manual labor. We have two bright young men installing the new counter top. They are doing so after removing what I thought was a totally beautiful tile job. I have thought that for 18 years now so maybe it is time for a new look. At any rate, I said to Nancy the other day as we toiled. "I am 80 years old and getting too old for this kind of stuff. To which she replied, you are 81 going on 82. I said "Oh well then. I think I will take a nap".

A sad note. Our Treasurer **Ray Westberg** lost his wonderful wife **Hank** a few days ago. She had been fighting Parkinsons and Pulmonary Fibrosis for some time now and finally lost the battle. She and Ray had been married for 62 years. They had five children.

Hank, short for Henrietta, attended meetings with Ray for many years until recently when she became too ill to do so.

There will be a **Celebration of Life** for Hank on **Saturday March 14th at 3pm at the Roseville Host Lions Club Building, 107 Sutter Avenue, Roseville, Ca.** Ray said that the family would prefer that any donations one might want to make be made to a charity. Our condolences go out to Ray, his son Ernie who is also a member and the rest of the family.

MINUTES OF THE AMMV GENERAL MEETING

February 18, 2009

Present were 20 members, wives and guests.

Sally Raanes brought in Valentine cookies for us to have with morning coffee or dessert.

Ken Blue regaled the group with his story about living in snow country and battling with his snow blower.

Treasurer Ray Westberg distributed copies of his report and a copy is in the Minute book.

President Bob Ulrich handed out copies of the article "Maritime Administration's Last Liberty Ship Reaches Greece." He announced that the National Park Service was attempting to oust the Sea Scouts from their facilities at the National Historical Maritime where they have been for 70 years. That the Navy League was taking an aggressive stand to attempt to prevent it and that we should also. Ulrich will handle the ad for the next National Conference magazine and the \$100.00 contribution toward the ad was approved. George Heidel is the only Sacramento Valley member who currently plans to attend the National Conference in Tampa next May. After discussion it was passed unanimously that Ulrich contact the Las Vegas Chapter to inform them that our chapter was enthusiastic about a conference there and that we hope they offer to host the 2010 National Conference.

After this initial business, Ulrich called the meeting to order at about 11:20 a.m. with the presentation of the colors, the salute to the American flag and an "Amen."

Sally Raanes requested sheet music for "Heave Ho" suitable for band. Ulrich said he had the arrangement for a full band and would copy it for her Bill Fairfield needs a copy, too, for his band that plays on the Jeremiah O'Brien. Kings Point tells us that we copy it without concern about copy write.

Ulrich reviewed the e-mail concerning the Philippine WWII Veterans being remembered in the recently passed Stimulus Bill with one-time lump sum distributions. (Merchant Marine Veterans' Just Compensations were, however, NOT included in the bill as our bill has not been passed. The Philippine Veterans bill was passed in the last session.) There was some discussion that the Just Compensations should be asked for in a lump sum. Fairfield said that "at least we have our foot in the door" and maybe this time, with the new Congress, we'll make it.

Blue introduced Don Domike and his friend and assistant, who presented Domike's slide presentation about the SS Peter Sylvester's sinking in the Indian Ocean in 1945. It was a touching personal recollection, plus a very well researched historical narrative. Domike went to a great deal of work gathering photographs, information about the German U-boat captain, maps, etc. He stays in touch with the surviving sailors who shared the lifeboat experience. (More elsewhere in this newsletter)

The group broke for luncheon from shortly after Noon until about 1:00 p.m.

When Ulrich called the meeting back to order, John Murphy said he had stopped by the National Cemetery in Dixon and that the Merchant Marine flag had not been flying. Ulrich explained that the cemetery does have the Merchant Marine flag which they have displayed at special events. That the VA guidelines allowed the Merchant flag to be "displayed at the discretion of the director and only at public events and not daily as with the other service flags. That eventually we hope this will be changed to allow the Merchant Marine flag to fly daily along side the others. (See resolution by Bill Marker at Portland, Conference described in Winter issue of News magazine.)

Murphy went on to ask the group to consider changing the meeting day. Ulrich said that the membership could think about it and it could be discussed at the next meeting.

Murphy also asked if anyone had sent in the \$100.00 donation to the Just Compensation Committee for a medallion, and if they had received one, yet. No one spoke up.

Discussion of the next National Conference followed. George Heidel will carry Sacramento Valley's proxy votes. Joe Colon and A. J. Wichita are vying for President and Sacramento Valley's Don Trimbath is running for Vice-president. There was discussion about the edited Constitution and Bylaws, as published in the newest edition of the National Magazine, the proposed full membership for wives, and the survival of the organization. Please read the proposed changes in the Winter edition of the News magazine. (More about election issues and by-law proposed changes at our next meeting)

Sally Raanes announced the Navy League luncheon March 16 on the Jeremiah O'Brien. Cost per person is \$20.00 and attendees are asked to bring raffle prizes.

Ulrich reminded the group that we had been invited to set up a luncheon for Sacramento Valley on the Red Oak Victory and could also consider a tour of the Old Town Sacramento Military Museum. The membership could think about both options for further discussion at another meeting. Ulrich also announced he had more hats for sale at \$10.00 each.

Blue handled the raffle drawings with only slightly less ado than last month, although he did tell a joke to lengthen the process.

At 1:55 p.m., Ulrich said, "Nothing else, folks. The meeting's adjourned.."

Respectfully submitted,

Mona Schmiedel
Secretary

Great presentation Don Domike.

If you missed last month's meeting you missed an absolutely excellent presentation by new member Don Domike. He talked about his 3 weeks in a life boat after being sunk in the Indian Ocean in 1945 while bound for an Indian port.. Don brought a friend who ran the graphics for him. Amazingly he had pictures of the rescue taken by the rescuing ship personnel. Sadly they lost several men, mostly Army men killed when the torpedo hit. His Liberty ship was loaded with mules, hay and Army personnel to tend them. Additionally they had the Navy gun crew and Merchant Marine crew. They were fortunate that they had plenty of water (probably stored for the mules) and their food lasted until the last day before rescue of his boat. Another boatload of survivors was still at sea in their boat for still another week before rescue and ran low on food. These are just details that come immediately to mind. It was a wonderful presentation and we are indebted to Ken Blue who discovered Don and brought him into the Chapter and to Don for his program.

National Park Director to Expel Sea Scouts after 50 years.

This might be time to get good and mad about Politically Correct Attitudes that affect us all. The Superintendent of the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Kate Richardson, is attempting to expel the Sea Scouts from the facilities normally used. This would lead to the demise of a program which has been training young people since the 1920's.

Here is part of a letter from Navy Leagues John Verdota.

Our program is predicated on the ability to haul and maintain our vessels at our site at little or no cost. Sea scouts could never afford to pay boat yards for the haul-out and repair work we have been doing at our own facility. And even if it were affordable, the use of professional shipwrights would deprive us of teaching opportunities that are the cornerstone of our program.

Furthermore, Superintendent Richardson proposes curtailment of our activities by:

- Limiting keys for building access from 30 to four. This severely restricts our all-volunteer program.
- Limiting hours of access to the Sea Scout Base. This will eliminate our traditional overnight activities.
- Mandating the relocation of 60% of our program vessels.
- Eliminating ongoing historic boat restoration projects.
- Locking Sea Scouts out of interior building space and locker space.
- Removing all signage from the Sea Scout Base, so the building cannot be identified as the Sea Scout Base.

If implemented, these restrictions will fundamentally change, and possibly destroy, the San Francisco Sea Scout program which has been successfully conducted for over 70 years. For almost a year, NPS has ignored our requests for discussion regarding our tenancy: left our moorings to break, putting our vessels on the beach; and harassed our volunteers. It is unfair, and without precedent, for Superintendent Richardson to impose such onerous terms without any input from Sea Scouts, and with such a unreasonable short time to comply. (the end of March, 2009)

To insure the continuation of critical program elements and the Sea Scout tradition at Aquatic Park, we intend to proceed as follows:

- Resist any attempt by NPS (National Park Service) to remove our program from the Sea Scout Base.
- Seek a long-term tenancy agreement similar to our prior Cooperative Agreement.
- Call upon NPS to live up to their responsibilities by providing maintenance for the facility and docks.
- Request ten safe moorings in Aquatic Park Lagoon and permission to set up and maintain those moorings ourselves.

It is our hope that NPS may be encouraged to work within the guidelines of their own General Management Plan of 1997 and to recognize the proven value to San Francisco youth, both now and in later life, of the Sea Scout program at Aquatic Park.

To offer advice and help, please contact John at 415.269.0357, jverdoia@yahoo.com or my mail at 35 Loraine Court, San Francisco, CA 94118

Comment: This stinks. It is suggested that you might wish to register your feelings with our two U.S. Senators. **Lets fight this.** The Navy League is fighting it so lets help them out. **Senator Dianne Feinstein** office in SF **415 393 0707** or in DC at **202 224 3841**. **Senator Barbara Boxer** home office **559 497 5109..DC at 202 224 3553**.

ANY OF THESE YOUR CONGRESSMEN. GO GET EM!!!

This message came in as an email from Perry Adams and was forwarded immediately to Sacramento Valley Chapter members who had email. We need the help of all of you so are repeating in our newsletter.

From: Perry Adams" padams49@sbcglo

The following California Congressmen have not signed on our HR 23, THE BELATED THANK YOU TO MERCHANT MARINERS OF WORLD WAR II ACT OF 2009. Is your Congressman on the list? If so, I urge you to please telephone him/her, email him/her, fax him/her today! Ask your friends and family to do the same. We want to reach our goal of 291 cosponsors by the end of the month. The toll-free telephone number into the capitol office building is 1-800-828-0498. The Congressman's local district office number is found in the front of your phone book under U.S. Government. This is most urgent, please do it tomorrow or Thursday and again next week Tuesday through Thursday. Similar messages are being sent to the other volunteers in 49 states.

Thank you and good luck!

Wally Herger, (R-2nd)
Dan Lungren, (R-3rd)
Tom McClintock, (R-4th)
Doris Matsui, (D-5th) signed last year
Lynn Woolsey (D=6th) signed last year
George Miller, (D-7th) signed last year
Nancy Pelosi, (D-8th)
Barbara Lee, (D-9th) signed last year
Ellen Tauschyer, (D-10) signed last year
Jackie Spier, (D-12)
Fortney H. "Pete" Stark, (D-13) signed last year
Anna Eshoo, (D-14) signed last year
Zoe lofgren, (D-16) signed last year
Sam Farr, (D-17), signed last year
Dennis Cardoza, (D-18th) signed last year
George Radanovich, (R-19) signed last year
Devin Nunes, (R-21)
Kevin McCarthy, (R-22)
Lois Capps, (D-23) signed last year
Elton Gallegly, (R-24)
Howard "Biuck" McKeon(R-25)
David Dreier, (R-26)
Brad Sherman,(D-27) signed last year
Howard L. Berman, (D-28) signed last year
Adam Schiff, (D-29), signed last year
Henry Waxman, (D-30) signed last year
Xavier Becerra, (D-31)
Diane Watson, (D-33) signed last year, black caucus member
Lucille Roybal-Allard, (D-34) signed last year
Maxine Waters (D-35) black caucus member
Jane Harman, (D-36) signed last year
Laura Richardson, (D-37)
Grace Napolitano (D-38)
Linda Sanchez (D-39) signed last year
Ed Royce, (R-40)
Jerry Lewis, (R-41)
Gary Miller, (R-42)
Joe Baca (D-43) signed last year
Ken Carlvert, (R-44) signed last year
Mary Bono Mack (R-45) signed last year,
Dana Rohrabacher, (R-46) signed last year
Loreta Sanchez, (D-47) signed last year
John Campbell, (R-48)
Darrell Isa (R-49) signed last year
Brian Bilbray, (R-50) VIP on the Vets Committee
Duncan Hunter, Jr, (R-52)
Susan Davis, (D-53) signed last year

IMPORTANT..Read below.

Received Mar 6th. NAUS UPDATE NAUS Attends Senate Democratic Steering Committee Meeting

On Wednesday, NAUS President MG Matz and Legislative Director Rick Jones attended a meeting of various military and veterans associations held by the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee.

Prior to the start of the meeting MG Matz and Rick Jones had an opportunity to talk to Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman about support for the WWII Merchant Mariners. **Additionally after the meeting they had an opportunity to discuss the Merchant Mariner situation with Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) who indicated that she was optimistic there could be progress on this issue this session.**

Roy's Tales...by Roy Stephens

How I got going to sea has got to be a bit interesting. I grew up on 7th Avenue in Oakland, we were 4 blocks from the railroad yard and on the other side of the rail yards was the Oakland Estuary. There were docks I could see,,it was the 9th avenue Terminals and I could always see ships tied up their and hear their whistles when they arrived and left...As a kid my buddies and I would go down to the dock and watch the ships from all over the world load and unload..The Estuary was where I learned to swim too...I learned the breast stroke ..the sewers still emptied into the Estuary and you had to push the turds and condoms out of the way...never bothered us...I decide there was a big world out there and I was going to see it..I got my seaman papers when I was 16..that was the minimum age...It turned into a problem for me, in as much as I was adopted at the ripe old age of 3 months..My birth parents were in no position to have a child, (more about them later) so my Great Aunt and Uncle took me in...When I went to get my papers they wanted a birth certifiicate..of course mine was in my birth name, not the adopted name..I had to take them a copy of my adoption papers and a notarized letter from my foster parents that I was who I was (does that make sense ?)..anyway now I had the means to go to sea, but no idea how to do it...came the War and I wanted to sail..I had friends who joined the Maritime Sevice and were stationed at Port Wanemi down south..it was only a few hours down the coast and I figured I could come home on weekend like they did and get to wear that cute uniform..The uniforms were the same as the Navy except for a patch sewn on the lower left arm..I signed up for the Maritime service in Sept 1942 and left for the base in Oct....the only thing was, they had opened a new base in Sheepshead Bay New York,,,and yes , they sent my poor ass there..

There were 300 of us and they loaded our butts on Sleeper Pullmans.. we were to have two men sleep in the lower and one in the upper...of course I ended up in the upper! They had the blinds pulled down in all windows and we were not allowed to pull them up...The Enemy might see the troop movement..(ridiculous) ...what do you do on a train for 4 days when you can't even watch the scenery ?...Played cards and lied to each other..The biggest excitement was when we came to a town and the train stopped, ladies would come aboard with coffee and sandwiches for us.... They were old ladies to us...maybe 30 years old. We are all young...this was my first time away from home..I had just turned 20 in Sept....

We arrived at Grand Central Station ..My God ! It was impressive. all marble and huge..They bussed us out to the base, which was still under construction....Sheepshead Bay is open to the Atlantic Ocean and if we had went any farther east, we would have been in the Ocean..We were set to start training the next day..I still to this day don't know what they were going to teach us....It has been so long ago and strange. being away from home for the first time..

On my first liberty I of course, went into the City..my first subway ride..Cost a nickel...I got off at 42nd and Broadway...Times Square ! I had seen pictures of it, but to see it live was too much.....It was and still is the heart of NY..I fell in love with the Big Apple..after a couple of week ends in the city I applied and was excepted as permanent personal, and given the rank of 3rd class Store Keeper..I liked the job, but I found out (continued next page)

after a few weeks that you can't party in NY on a seaman's salary ..I saw all the sights, the Empire State Building , went up to the head of the Statue Of Liberty (The torch wasn't open)..spent a lot of time on 52nd st, which at the time was the heart of the jazz industry..The Maritime Service was starting a school for Corpsmen and Pursers..It was their first attempt at such a school... I signed up for it....More about the school later...

About the author..Roy Stephens.. Roy is a long time member of the Sacramento Valley Chapter although we haven't seen him at a meeting in a long time. Roy has a electronic voice box so couldn't do one of our veterans interviews. He has been writing his recollections of his days at sea and is working with a writer. We chose here to run the notes as raw narrative just as Roy wrote them. With his permission we will be running more of his tales in the future. Roy can be reached at Roy Stephens <garffie@pacbell.net>
Bob Ulrich

That's it for this issue...
March, 2009