

# U. S. S. LOWNDES - APA 154

December 2002 Newsletter

Wm. "Bud" Kautz, CCBW – 34782 Hiawatha Trail, McHenry, IL 60050 (815)344-6326  
e-mail REDLABELBUDDHA@aol.com

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The Indianapolis, IN reunion was a very successful one due to the efforts of Walt and Jackie's son, Marty and daughter-in-law, Rowana. Ironic that a whole horde of "Anchor Clankers" had to defer to Army personnel to arrange for a Navy reunion. Must say that the Army training opted for a great get together of the Lowndes crew members, spouses, family members, and friends. At the Nashville reunion Walt and Jackie had volunteered Marty and Rowana to undertake the task of setting up our fourteenth reunion. They all did a terrific job in making arrangements with the Indianapolis Athletic club, tours including the Indy 500 mile track and museum, Scottish Rite Cathedral, World War Memorial and American Cabaret Theater. All this plus lunches and dinners at various establishments. Also a tour of Brown County, IN tour that Jackie Umbarger arranged for several shipmates and spouses to enjoy the many scenic views that Jackie said would make the trip worthwhile. At the Saturday evening banquet time was taken out for the "Give-away prizes event". The success of this affair was due mainly to the efforts of Mary Gebhart and Jan Trober, Daughters of Earl and Frances Robertson. They made sure that everyone received a prize.

*Ed. note: Wonder what they have cooked up for 2003 in Biloxi? Sure it will be interesting.  
More from Jan regarding the 2003 reunion in this issue.*

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## The following were in attendance at our Fourteenth reunion in Indianapolis, Indiana:

- |                        |                           |                          |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Lavada Boyer           | Bud & Jean Kautz          | Wally & Jackie Richards  |
| Howard & Lois Chappell | Ed. King                  | Earl & Frances Robertson |
| Jim Chilcote           | David & Joanne Long       | Dallas & Lorene Stratton |
| John & Leby Dyer       | Don & Shirley Lorenzi     | Bill & Amelia Taylor     |
| Mary Gebhart           | Margaret McGrody          | Jan Trober               |
| Mike & Pam Hennessey   | Leo & Margaret O'Brien    | Marty & Rowana Umbarger* |
| John & Marilyn Hess *  | Keith & Lorraine Richards | Walt & Jackie Umbarger   |

\*1<sup>st</sup> timers

**Representing 13 states**

Hoping for a greater turnout for our Fifteenth reunion in Biloxi, Mississippi in 2003.  
Please make note of the dates: October 2<sup>nd</sup> thru the 5<sup>th</sup>.

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David Brinkman has created a CD-ROM regarding the history of the U.S.S. Lowndes. This CD contains many photographs of the Beach Party and candid photos of shipmates, history of the ship, personal accounts of the Iwo Jima campaign, videos of several reunions. Anyone desiring a copy of this CD please contact David. The cost is \$5.00 per CD or 5 CD's for \$20.00. David has indicated that a portion of this money will be returned to the Lowndes treasury.

*Ed. Note: I have watched this account of our ship and shipmates and have found it to be extremely interesting and certainly worth the small cost involved.*



## Leo O'Brien

Thanks for another happy reunion of the USS Lowndes. A special thanks to Walt and Jackie and their son Brigadier General Marty Umbarger and his gracious wife Rowana. They were the perfect hosts in every way. They were patient and solicitous to our every need. Walt and Jackie were kind to take the early arrivals, O'Brien's and Lorenz's on a private tour of Brown County. We made a brief stop at the Umbarger feed and grain business in Bargsville. For city folk we were impressed by the number and size of the silos and the whole operation. Walt's two boys now run the business. Then we visited the town of Nashville, Indiana with all it's shops and restaurants and busy narrow streets and lots of pedestrians and customers. This was a very special treat for which we thank Walt and Jackie. Our stay in Indianapolis was ideal, right in the middle of the city and just across the street from the Veterans Memorial. Being early arrivals we visited it on our own and really appreciated the effort put into this museum. There were displays and uniforms and artillery from some very early wars in the area up to the present time. This should be a must on any visitor's list of things to see and do in Indianapolis. And yes, we visited the Scottish Rite of the Mason's Cathedral which was very impressive; and the Speedway which brought back memories of old time racing, but I think I was most impressed by the USS Indianapolis Memorial and the banks of the beautiful canal. I could not help but think that the USS Lowndes was down in those same waters before the Indianapolis was sunk late in July with a loss of 811 sailors. Thank God we had escorts. Thanks to Earl Robertson's daughters, Mary and Jan, they made for a lively banquet. Marty Umbarger wound up the evening with his eloquent words to remember the crew of the Lowndes and that our generation of Americans. He left me with a proud feeling. Thanks Marty. We hope to be in Biloxi in 2003.

*Ed note: I believe Leo's statements above has expressed the feelings of the ship-mates, spouses, friend and relatives who had the good fortune to attend this reunion.*

## Herb Kears

I guess you have figured out that I didn't make the reunion in Indianapolis this year. Maybe next year. Since I last wrote about 25 years ago,(it seems) many things have happened to me. A year and a half ago my sister, whom I lived with, died of Alzheimer's and I ended up with the house and car, both of which I sold. Four months after she died, I moved to Oceanside, California, where I reside by myself. Enclosed are my dues that I owe.

My new address & phone number:

76 Oakwood Ln  
Oceanside, CA 92054  
(760)433-2407

## 102 AND COUNTING



News-Press photo by Dan Swanson

Florance Richard celebrated her 102 birthday at Beverly Healthcare, 1420 N. 10th St. on Tuesday. She is pictured with her daughter, Virginia Duncan of Nebraska City. Richard, who was born on a farm near Dunbar, taught school at Meadow Grove, Madison and Crete, before coming to Nebraska City in 1943. She said she always worked hard, went to bed early and tried to live a good life.

Jerry Michlalski had back surgery and will spend some time in the hospital cards can be sent to:

Brackinridge Hospital  
601 East 15<sup>th</sup> St.  
Austin, TX 78701

Or to 8706 Mountainwood Circle  
Austin, TX 78759



## **Lebby Dyer**

What a great time we had at the reunion. Indianapolis sure has changed since we lived there back in the '50's. I think I could live there again if they had warm winters?? We enjoyed everything, so much fun to see everyone again. Really missed those that were not there. Hope everyone can make it to Biloxi, MS. Thanks to all the Umbargers for making such a nice reunion. We arrived back in Florida on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October.

## **Don Lorenzi**

We arrived home safely. Thanks to everyone for a great time at Indianapolis. The reunions seem to just keep getting better.

## **Walt Umbarger**

Weather here in Florida is hot but cools down somewhat at night, but it beats the weather back home, temperature wise. Lots of friends already here but lots more to come. At our age some of them will not be here this year, lots of new friends to get acquainted with. Jackie and I are getting to the top of the list, or should I say the bottom of the list, whichever, but we find all of them very nice people. Had a message when we got home from Jerry Michalski. They sent their regrets about missing the reunion. She informed us that she has to have a colonscopy in November before they get to her back problems. Taking lots of pain pills to get around.

## **Mike Michalski**

Jerry is scheduled for back surgery on December 30, 2002. The doctors estimate it will be a 12 hour operation for Jerry. Then a long period of rehabilitation.

*Ed. note: We wish the best for Jerry and hope to see them in Biloxi.*

*See page 5 for more regarding Mike.*

## **Tommy O. Lewis**

I was a shipmate on the USS Lowndes. My sister-in-law found the web site for me and I was excited to find out about the ship's crew. I am unable to travel and telephone communication is difficult because of my hearing. My daughter is typing this for me because I do not have a computer but she will print your response and I will be excited to respond. Looking forward to hearing from former shipmates.

Tommy O. Lewis  
5316 Lynch Dr.  
North Little Rock, AR 72117  
(501)945-3950

*Ed. note: Tommy was also a member of the Beach Party.*

## **Jan Trober**

Want to say that I really enjoyed this year's reunion in Indianapolis. I had an absolute blast. I love talking and visiting with everyone. For me it is like going to a family reunion and visiting Aunts & Uncles that you don't get to see very often. Marty & Ro have become like cousins and I had a great time talking and laughing with them. We stayed up a little too late after the banquet and might have gotten a little rowdy. I really hope that they will get to attend the next reunion in Biloxi. And speaking of the next reunion in Biloxi I have tentatively set up the dates as October 2<sup>nd</sup> through October 5<sup>th</sup>. Ray Casey at National Planners said the weather is usually great that time of the year. He also said that the hotel we will be using is right on the beach. And the cost should run around \$68.00 per night. I also want to express to those shipmates who have never attended a reunion, to please come even if it is just once. Next to family, few bonds are as strong as those formed by shipmates. I have been amazed when speaking with different members of the Lowndes that so many did not know each other on the ship. And yet their lives have been woven together with the fabric of life at sea and combat that has made an everlasting bond that has not faded with time. Bring your wives, your sons and your daughters that they too may hear the stories, meet the men and briefly glance into history and learn what life was like for a sailor aboard the USS Lowndes.

*Ed. note: Rowdy? They don't know what rowdy is!*

## **Ed. McKellar**

I should be scolded for not keeping in touch. This has been and still is a bad year for me. Margaret and I took a long sail on the QE 2 (87) days and I have been under medical treatment ever since. Have to say I am very much improved. It seems there are brain cells you use up faster than they are replaced and for a while I was a basket case. Just now getting used to a new medicine that will replace those cells. Enough about my health and recovery. Now, about my Naval history. I joined the Navy 1, June 1932 and have been on the Navy pay roll for over 70 years. See if any of our shipmates can top that. I started out as a yeoman (now called personnel men) but found I liked the commissary branch better. I was a cook, baker, butcher and while I was a Chief (PA) waiting assignment I made Warrant Pay Clerk and was immediately sent to put the Lowndes in commission as its commissioning officer. Clark O. Martin was my boss "and an excellent one." We started out with 4 supply officers and ended with just C. O. and myself, as we were the only regular Navy. For several months prior to decommissioning I acted as pay master. As you know, the reason we had so many doctors, we were the relief hospital ship. Our ward room was used as an operating room and we stayed in port with the hospital ship. We could watch the Marines progress every day. We were about the only APA to see the flag go up on Mount Suribachi. Keep the letters coming and give my regards to C. O. and Max Cole and the rest at the reunion.

*Ed. note: this letter was received Aug. 23, 2002. Too late for inclusion in the August newsletter.*

## **Bill Ramsey**

There's not too much to tell for this year. Just the usual things that happen to 80 plus year olds. I started out this year with a slight stroke which took about 6 months to get myself back to normal and the latest was a cataract operation that was most successful and now I can read signs again. Rosemary had some time with the doctors which was a result of a congestive heart condition but now seems to

be normal as long as she keeps the activity to a reasonable level. I was eating dinner with one of the residents of our community not long ago and in our conversation discovered that her husband had been assigned to one of the attack transports in our squadron that took troops into northern Japan. It's really a small world. He had died about 2 months before and I'm sorry I didn't get to know him. I think the ship he was on was the USS Newberry

*Ed. note: Bill that was the APA 158.*

## **E. Max Cole**

Have to admit it: the old mule ain't what he used to be. I have to say with regret that I couldn't make the reunion at Indianapolis. It was my birthday weekend, too! I did want my presence to be there some way, so the \$100.00 check I've sent to be given to a lottery winner. After my birthday, I will be 3 years from 90, and this brings with it – for me, anyway – a broken knee ligament, together with arthritis. My right shoulder is acting up again after years of being OK with an earlier operation. I am now legally blind, and my eyesight seems to be getting worse. But what can a guy expect when he discovers he's older than Walter Cronkite? Here's hoping all went well in Indianapolis and sincerely hope I can make it next year. A knee operation may help things, and that seems to be the main trouble, getting around. Sorry my letter didn't get there in time. Should have mailed it earlier, but I kept thinking I'd get there myself. So it's a good idea to keep the money for next year in Biloxi.

*Note: Max' check came too late to be included in Jan and Mary's "Prize give-a-ways" and will be used for next year's reunion with Max' permission. We certainly hope that he will be able to attend the 2003 reunion. Take care.*

## **J. Trober & M. Gebhart**

We would like to take this Opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the attendance prizes and helping make it a success. Also thanks for making each reunion memorable to us.



## David Brinkman

I talked to Mr. Joe Rosenthal for almost 40 minutes. He left 3 messages at my work number over a weekend. He was very interested in learning more about the Lowndes' duties on the beach. His memory is very good. I guess because he's had to talk about it almost daily for the last 57 years. He told me I did the right thing contacting him about the photo taken on Iwo Jima.

*Ed. note: There is more regarding this subject on page 8.*

## Frank Miller

Sorry we missed the good company at the reunion this last year, but looking and hoping for the year to come. Taps are played to often here. I am still on the VFW Honor Guard and give the honors an average of three times a week. We all still feel it is our honor to be able to do it for our fellow veterans who have given so much for our country.

## Maggie Frieden

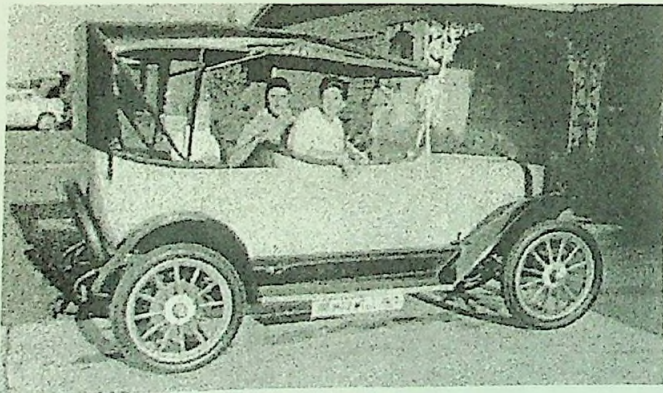
We are the same old dull people. Work, eat and sleep. The grain has been harvested a week ago the last week in November, so now they have been hauling it out. I thought for sure we would get to come to the ship's reunion in Indianapolis, but wont you know that is when the biggest part of the harvest started. Our son who is in the National Guard full time said he and I would go, but it didn't workout due to the old ding bat over there. The National Guards were frozen to their stations. Our son hasn't had to go yet, but all the other boys have been sent to Fort Knox. Von didn't have to go because he was in the process of being transferred from Warsaw, IN to the South Bend Brigade. I hope none of the troops have to go over. Do you think that Saddam Hussein is related to Adolph Hitler? I must bring this to a close and hope for world peace and all that good stuff.

*Ed. note: I'm not sure what Lorene means when she writes "Old" friends.*

## Mike Michalski

Bud: You wrote me asking about the 1917 Maxwell I had. It wasn't a big car as you described, it was about the same size and looked like the steel Model T ford touring car. Steel, meaning the radiator shell was steel and it was painted black as were the fenders. The car was four cylinders with floor mounted shift lever between the front passengers. Enclosed is a photo I just found. It was cream color and had natural colored light oak spokes and wheels. We belonged to the Antique Automobile Club or Horseless Carriage Club. We had annual tours in different cities. We hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> tour of that organization too. Like the Lowndes the members were from all walks of life, lawyers, business owners, you name it. But we had one thing in common, we all liked the old cars and the entire family participated and dressed accordingly from the turn of the century to the flapper era of the late twenties.

*Ed. note: I remember Mike relating to me that he and Jerry dressed up in dusters to go on a scavenger hunt. They also had to operate the windshield wipers manually, at that time they were not operated by vacuum or electric. Below is a copy of the photo Mike sent.*



## Lorene Stratton

We enjoyed the Ship's reunion, black eye and all. It is always nice to see old friends. I had no damage to my eyes so had cataracts removed from both eyes. It is wonderful how bright everything is now. Of course the black eye has faded away. Was quite a conversation piece.



## Louis Bull

Sorry for my lack of correspondence lately. My wife and I just had twins (November) and we have been overloaded. My father, Calvin Thomas Bull was on the Lowndes. He passed away in 1992. He never talked about the war with me, but after many years I am trying to learn as much as I can about his experiences (especially at Iwo Jima and Okinawa). I am proud of my father and all those who served in WWII, especially those on the USS Lowndes. I am planning to scan my father's diary and send an electronic file for the web site. I have a few pictures that I will also send as soon as I can find the time. Would appreciate any information from his former shipmates. My address is:

6001 E. Berry Ave.  
Greenwood Village, Colorado 80111  
(303)770-6335

## David Brinkman

Louis Bull, Great diary/log by your dad! It includes information and details I haven't seen in other logs. I see why your Dad and my Dad may have become friends...Baseball. Louis has given permission to put the diary on the Web Site. I have created a CD-ROM version of the Lowndes Web Site and placed it on a CD-ROM that can be played in any Pc with Windows 98 (or newer). It contains several hundred photos and pages of the Lowndes history and newsletters. Unlike the internet version, I have included files from St. Louis, Pennsylvania and Myrtle Beach reunions and video and audio/music from WWII. This is a demo version as I still need to fix a few things and add more reunion video. Just put the disc in and it should automatically start. I should have very shortly a complete version of the CD-ROM and could make copies for the reunion group.

*Ed. Note: Walt Umbarger brought his lap-top to the Indianapolis reunion and displayed the disk in the hospitality room. It brought quite a few chuckles from the attendees. Thanks David. See page 1 for additional details.*

## Bill Taylor

It was good to see everyone at the Indianapolis reunion and to enjoy their company as we took part in all the activities that Rowana and Marty set up for us. Our Lowndes crew certainly benefited from the tribute that Marty and Rowana gave to their parents. The reunion activities were very well planned and I thought the food was excellent.

## Jackie Umbarger

Walt and I made a trip to Atlanta, Georgia on the week-end of December 15th to witness the pinning of Marty's promotion to Major General in the National Guard. It was pretty impressive. The actual promotion date was November 19<sup>th</sup>. That is when the Senate confirmed his nomination to MG. A big

## "CONGRATULATIONS MARTY"

You deserved it.

*Ed. Note: A very personal thank you to both Bill Taylor and Marty for all the help they afforded this old and decrepit editor at the Scottish Rites Cathedral and the Indianapolis War Memorial. It was greatly appreciated.*

*By the way, Happy belated 81<sup>st</sup> birthday Walt. (12/22).*

## Lois & Howard Chappell

We want to thank Walter and Jackie for a wonderful time in Indianapolis. Everything was so well planned and of such interest. We can only imagine the hours spent planning it. We want to thank you again for all the help with Howard and his wheel chair, your son and his sweet wife were always there when we needed them, it isn't every day we have a "General" pushing Howard's chair. Thank you again. We are looking forward to next year.

*Ed. note: It's always great to see Howard and Lois' smiling faces.*

## **The Robertsons**

Marty and Rowana, thank you for being such a terrific Co-host and hostess. Because of you our visit to Indianapolis was a very memorable one and are looking forward to Biloxi, Mississippi in 2003. Hope to see you there. Earl has had his day of aches and pains and I'm still being pestered with arthritis.

Ps: Marty take care and keep yourself safe on your overseas tour.

*Ed. Note: Earl and Frances, hang in there.*

*Received word from David Brinkman that his mother Roberta Weaver Brinkman (widow of Fred) passed away on Nov. 18, 2002. Born July 13, 1920 in Richmond, VA. Attended Richmond Business College. She moved to St. Petersburg, FL in 1947 where she met her future husband and they were married in 1948. They moved to Columbia, SC and supported her husband during his career with the Chamber of Commerce. Survivors are Daughter, Teri Brinkman Stevens; Son, David and wife Odessa; Sister Dorothy Weaver and brother Raymond Weaver; and "the apple of her eye" grandson, Jeremy Brinkman.*

## **A few highlights about the site of the Lowndes 2003 reunion:**

Welcome to Mississippi named from an Indian word meaning, "Father of Waters". Also nicknamed the "Magnolia State" and referred to as the "Bayou" State. Mississippi was organized as a territory April 7, 1798 and became a state in 1817. Biloxi was originally occupied and used as a hunting grounds as early as 8000 BC. In 1838 Biloxi was incorporated as a township and is the oldest town in the Mississippi Valley, the area reflects a strong ethnic heritage representing the 8 flags flown over it in the past 300 years. In 1848 the Biloxi Lighthouse was erected and in 1908 the first Mardi Gras Parade took place in this city. For the hardy souls among our group who want to let loose of a few bucks there are 9 casinos in the city. There are also many attractions to visit.

*Ed. Note: I must apologize for the lateness of this issue of the newsletter. Just too many distractions going on before and after the holidays.*

*Fred Brinkman hosted the 1996 reunion in Myrtle Beach, SC.*



-----Original Message-----

**From:** Brinkman, David N

**Sent:** Monday, September 30, 2002 4:35 PM

**To:** 'dbrinkman@sc.rr.com'

**Subject:** Conversation with Joe Rosenthal

All,

I just had a nice conversation with Joe Rosenthal this afternoon. He's a wonderful Gentleman and provided some very important information regarding his photograph of the pillbox which my Dad (and I believe Jerome Frieder and Wesley Follétt) had identified (in notes from 1945) as the Lowndes Yellow Beach evacuation station. Mr. Rosenthal seems to be in good health at the age of about 93 and still has a sharp mind and good memory. He received my package with copies of my Dad's photo and notes and tried to contact me over the weekend. His eyesight is very poor (He's legally blind) and can only read typed text under a magnification system so he was not able to read my Dad's handwritten notes. Before I told him what was in my Dad's notes, he said he had investigated the photo and found his original log he had written on Iwo. To my disappointment, the picture was taken on D-Day between 2:30PM and 3:00PM. This would mean that the corpsmen in the upper left portion of the picture are not Brinkman, Frieder, and Follett since they landed on D-Day+1. Mr. Rosenthal, however, did confirm that this was most likely an evacuation station on Yellow beach. I had already narrowed the date of the photo to D-Day or D-day+1 since these were the only two days with sunshine (it was cloudy and raining from the night of D-Day+1 through D-Day+5). I also calculated, from the sharp shadows in the photo, that the time was 2:45PM in the afternoon. I think some of the Lowndes beach party members were active on Iwo on D-day so the identification of other Lowndes members may be correct. Mr. Ronal Shy was identified and I talked with him a few weeks back (after sending him the photo and notes). In the photo, his back is to the camera so he can't confirm that that's him and he can't remember (after almost 60 years) any faces of the other identified crewman so he can't identify them. He did say that he remembered the evacuation station area to be very similar to that in the photo and that he was, actively, working that area on D-day. The two radiomen in the front center of the photograph would be the most likely ones to be identified since their faces are showing. Especially Ernie Ross. There's a strong similarity between the face in the Rosenthal photo and the Ernie Ross in the Beach Battalion photo (Note: I talked to Jim Ross a few weeks back and he said the Ross in the battalion photo was Ernie and not him. Later I found the signature of E. Ross on the back of my Dad's copy of this photo). Our big problem now is that the Reunion group has not been able to find the two identified Radiomen (E. Ross and Darrell Jensen). The reunion group, however, may be able to confirm that these men were on Iwo on D-Day.

In closing, it was real pleasure to talk to Mr. Rosenthal. No surprise that he says he gets many letters and can respond to only a few. He said he was intrigued by this one because it mentioned the variety of roles the Lowndes crewmen played on Iwo. He said he had the greatest respect for Navy corpsman but never realized, until now, all the other jobs performed on the beach and in the evacuation station area by the non-medical Navy ranks. He wants me to send him more information on this and I thought I would start by sending him a copy of the Lowndes "Recollections of Iwo Jima" which so many of the Lowndes members contributed stories to.

I told Mr. Rosenthal that it was a real honor for me to talk to him but he quickly turned the credit to men like my Dad, other Lowndes crewmen, and Marines on the beach. He said he just felt fortunate enough that he could be there to see them work.

Mr. Rosenthal now lives in a retirement residential area near San Francisco. Maybe we could have a reunion there one year and invite him.