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**2<sup>d</sup> Edition —July 2021**



A Society of Distinguished Naval Veterans  
Web Site: [www.USSSamHouston.org](http://www.USSSamHouston.org)



# The Raven

**An Official Publication of the USS Sam Houston Veterans' Assn.**

**FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

**Shipmates & Associate Members:**

What a mess we had over the past 16 months! I hope that you and your families did not encounter any major setbacks during the period. I'm aware of a couple of deaths and illnesses among our members that were attributable to COVID-19 and hope that the grand total does not exceed those incidents. Many uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 Crisis caused me to cancel our 2020 reunion in Omaha although that decision disappointed the few who would have attended. I rescheduled the reunion for 2021, then a few variants of the coronavirus were identified. This situation generated a new set of uncertainties concerning the efficacy of the vaccines toward the potential diseases of those viral variants. Rather than add these new uncertainties into the mix of factors involved with having the 2021 reunion, I cancelled it too.

As a prudent Reunion Planner, I must take into account the safety of reunion attendees. In essence, I do not want reunion attendees to become involved with situations where increased exposure to the coronavirus would exist—situations that would be related to travel in addition to reunion activities. One major issue is the choice of many citizens not to receive the vaccine. That decision not only endangers themselves but others around them, and these individuals are not wearing signs that identify them as being unvaccinated. Also, one never knows when restrictions will be lifted or eased and to what degree, not to mention their being reinstated. During a reunion, this would wreak havoc during our tours as the tour schedules would be upset. Two things are certain: 1) all military reunions require socializing and camaraderie, and 2) having to maintain a social distance and wear a mask are not favorable to item 1.

Hopefully, we'll be able to have a "normal" reunion in 2022. Please plan to attend, and I look forward to an enjoyable event with you. I'll distributed the "Reunion-Information Packet" (RIP) for the 2022 reunion in late February or early March 2022. Mark your calendars now for that reunion which has been scheduled for 08-10 Sep 2022: Thurs. morning through Sat. evening as usual.

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## OUR 2022 REUNION

Essentially, everything about the cancelled 2020 and 2021 reunions will occur at our 2022 reunion:

- Same city: Omaha, Neb.
- Same host hotel: Comfort Inn & Suites Omaha Central.
- Same tour selections.
- Same banquet entrees.
- Same prices for everything—so far.
- Same span of days: Thurs. morning through Sat. evening.
- New dates: 08-10 Sep 2022.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend if feasible. I won't distribute the 2022 Reunion-Information Packet until late February or early March 2022. If you wish to review the activities of that reunion, refer to the 2020 RIP if you have it. If not, I will send you a copy for reference; just let me know if you would like one.

I'm hoping for a large turnout because this will be our first reunion to occur in the central region of the country. In the fall of this year (2021), I might send a brief survey to our members to get an idea of how many members might attend. I'll use that information to update our room block, if necessary, to ensure that everyone can be placed in the host hotel.

**Bill Kiederling** [EM2(SS), Gold, 1969-1972] who had arranged our tour schedules for the 2020 reunion will do so for the 2022 reunion. Many thanks to Bill for his help.

If you have any questions or concerns about the 2022 reunion, please contact me. I'll provide you responses based on information known at the time.

**Howard Dobson**

## HUMOR: AN OLD FARMER'S ADVICE

Your fences need to be horse-high, pig-tight and bull-strong.  
Keep skunks and bankers at a distance.  
Life is simpler when you plow around the stump.  
A bumble bee is considerably faster than a John Deere tractor.  
Words that soak into your ears are whispered . . . not yelled.  
Meanness don't just happen overnight.  
Forgive your enemies; it messes up their heads.  
Do not corner something that you know is meaner than you.  
It don't take a very big person to carry a grudge.  
You cannot unsay a cruel word.  
Every path has a few puddles.  
When you wallow with pigs, expect to get dirty.  
The best sermons are lived, not preached.  
Most of the stuff people worry about,  
ain't never gonna happen anyway.  
Don't judge folks by their relatives.

Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.  
Live a good and honorable life, then when you get older and think back,  
you'll enjoy it a second time.  
Don't interfere with something' that ain't bothering you none.  
Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.  
If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is stop diggin'.  
Sometimes you get, and sometimes you get got.  
The biggest troublemaker you'll probably ever have to deal with,  
watches you from the mirror every morning'.  
Always drink upstream from the herd.  
Good judgment comes from experience, and a lotta that comes from bad judgment.  
Lettin' the cat outta the bag is a whole lot easier than puttin' it back in.  
If you get to thinking' you're a person of some influence,  
try orderin' somebody else's dog around.  
Live simply, love generously, care deeply, speak kindly, and enjoy the ride.  
Don't pick a fight with an old man. If he is too old to fight, he'll just shoot you! (No Shit!)

## INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATIONS

Since the previous newsletter was issued, **Dave Middleton** [FTB2(SS), Gold & O'72 & Gold, 1971-1975] contacted me about the existence of an international organization of submariners: *International Community of Submariners Associations*. He requested that I inform our members about the organization. The group involves many nations and has yearly reunions in different countries around the world. Some of our members who travel internationally might want to join this association.

The website for the group "<https://submariners.org>" lacks much detail. Consequently, Dave sent me a 2-page document that has the necessary details about the organization. It's on the following 2 pages of this newsletter. If anyone who receives hard copies of our newsletter wishes to join this group, contact me for a hard copy of the document on the following 2 pages so that you will not have to lose pages of your newsletter. Please contact Dave if you wish additional information about the group; his contact information is on the roster that I distributed with this newsletter or you can contact me for that information.

**Howard Dobson**

**Why Join the ISA-USA?**

The Purpose of the ISA-USA will be: to Perpetuate the memory of those who have lost their lives in submarines and to further promote and keep alive the spirit and unity that exists among all submarine crewmen, to foster friendship and goodwill internationally, remembering always our belief in the freedom of thoughts, words and deeds.

As a member of the ISA-USA you will benefit in many ways.

1. Be part of a 50 year tradition of international friendships of submarine sailors. Check out [www.submariners.org](http://www.submariners.org) for the history of this association
2. Travel to foreign countries to participate in conventions that usually include fifteen to twenty countries in attendance.
3. Establish friendships with submariners in foreign countries.



Members include submarine veterans from E-3 to O-10.

Members include currently active submariners, both enlisted and commissioned.

Members include spouses of submariners and adult children of submariners.

Members include submarine veterans from numerous foreign countries.

Members include workers on submarines and others with a strong interest in submarines.



**International  
Submariner's Association  
United States of America**



International Friendships Run Silent and Run Deep

**WWW.ISAUSA.ORG**

**INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATIONS (cont.)**

Annual conventions of submarine veterans from many different countries.

**Recent past conventions:**

- 2009—San Diego, USA
- 2010—Hyfa, Israel
- 2011—Istanbul, Turkey
- 2012—Kiev, Ukraine
- 2013—Catania, Italy
- 2014—Athens, Greece
- 2015—Portsmouth, England
- 2016—Pula, Croatia
- 2017—St. Petersburg, Russia
- 2018—Gdańsk, Poland

**Up coming conventions:**

- 2019---Belgrade, Serbia
- 2020----Karlskrona, Sweden
- 2021 -- Greece

Each host country's submarine organization treats visitors like VIPs. Attend special tours, dine in special places and see naval installations normally off-limits.

**Application for Membership  
International Submariners  
Association -  
United States of America**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Rank \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Boats \_\_\_\_\_

Boats \_\_\_\_\_

(Actual boat experience is not necessary for membership)

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Alt. Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print clearly)

Spouse/Significant \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted \_\_\_\_\_

Life membership \$50.00 Includes Vest Patch and ISA/USA Pin

Member of USSVI:  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Mail application to:

**ISA-USA**  
c/o Bud Cunnally  
4704 Coppola Drive  
Mt Dora, FL 32757-8069

Budcunnally@verizon.net

\* Dues are subject to change; Foreign membership—add \$5.00 for international postage.

## PROOF OF SSBNs PATROLLING THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

**VADM (ret.) Ron Eytchison** (LT, Gold, 1964-1965) submitted the article and picture below. He added the following description:

“Here’s a mid-patrol port visit in Naples when I was CTF 64 in 1986. I don’t remember which BN it was.”

I was unable to decode his statement; so, I asked him for more details. Below is his more understandable description:

“Sorry for the acronyms. The ‘BN’ (SSBN, ballistic missile nuclear submarine) was a 640 Class boat, the name of which I don’t recall. ‘CTF’ is Commander Task Force and 64 was the Ballistic Missile Submarine Force, Sixth Fleet. Because the SSBNs were always at sea and unseen, we decided to bring one into Naples for a mid-patrol visit to show that, ‘Yes, these boats really were there!’ for the benefit of our NATO allies and, incidentally, the Soviets. I invited the NATO South Admirals to have lunch onboard and tour the BN. So, in the picture L-R are French, Greek, CINCSOUTH (Italian), Turk, boat’s CO (name forgotten), me, British, and Captain Stubbs (my NATO Chief of Staff). I was also CTF 69 (Attack Submarine Force, Sixth Fleet), CTF 66 (Area ASW Forces, Sixth Fleet), and COMSUBMED (NATO Submarines Mediterranean).

“Back in 1965 when I was Chief Engineer of Sam Houston Gold, we made a Mediterranean patrol but no liberty.”



## WARREN MUTZ ON ETERNAL PATROL

Someone, I forgot whom, informed me that **Warren Mutz** [MM1(SS), Gold, 1968-1972] had departed for Eternal Patrol. Warren was the ELT when I was aboard. He approved my ELT prerequisite during my qualification for EWS.

**Bruce Fulbright** [MM1(SS), Gold, 1965-1970] was probably the person who informed me about Warren's fate because I later asked him if he had any pictures of Warren. Bruce sent the following message and picture:

"Best I can do on pics of Warren; I'll keep looking. I'm surprised I don't have something of him and me at the EM Club in Dunoon.

"Warren is the handsome fellow on the right next to the "pink" motorcycle. That's me on the left with the red bike which I still have and ride this day. Now obviously, this is post-Navy. At the time, Warren was working at Indian Point as an Operator: Reactor Operator, I think.

"The story on the 'pink' bike: Warren was the president of a local group of motorcycle enthusiasts called the Huns. One of their club's rules was that you had to have your motorcycle on the road on or before April 15th of every year or be faced with a daily fine. No excuses! Now April 15 was a very special day for the Huns called "Road Day" where everybody showed up with their recently reworked, overhauled, cleaned up, etc. motorcycles at the clubhouse, and weather permitting, rode thru the local townships to allow all the citizens to know the bikers were back. The pain of winter was nearly gone, and summer was on its way. Rather noble of them when you think about it! Earlier in that particular year, Warren had worked with a local paint shop for a new paint job and had selected a color called "coral" that he thought would represent well the bad-assed biker image and be a credit to his on-road experience as club president. Well, the story goes that somehow the paint delivery got delayed and the paint job wasn't done until the night before "Road Date." Also coral obviously didn't turn out quite like Warren thought it was going to! Try, if you will, to imagine showing up at the clubhouse as president of a bad-assed motorcycle club on Road Date with a pink motorcycle!

"Fortunately for Warren, he had much previous experience suffering these sorts of adverse experiences at the hands of shipmates like you and me and others. And in successfully dealing with them from his many years as a Submarine Sailor, he was able to survive the ridicule about the pink bike! . . . LOL."

*Ed. Note: For a complete list of all shipmates reported to be on Eternal Patrol, refer to the Distribution Roster included with this newsletter mailing.*



## BRUCE FULBRIGHT & HIS HAIR

**Bruce Fulbright** responded to the article from “The Shaft” in the previous newsletter regarding the lengthy time that he spent primping while aboard the boat. Bruce said “in response to the recent post in the newsletter, if there is ANY doubt in anyone's mind that I said this; I want to validate that I did. And Mike ‘Harley’ Davidson ratted me out! But I will dispute the 3 hours. LOL.”

The article of concern appeared in “The Shaft—Patrol 25” and follows:

*Dear Shaft, would you believe B. Fulbright spent three hours in front of a mirror combing his hair, twisting his moustache, and even flexing his muscles before he spoke.*

*Guess what he said: “I sure hope my girl loves me as much as I do!”*

*Ed. Note: I can believe every word of that article! Patrol 25 was my first patrol, and although I did not witness that particular incident, I did witness a couple of similar incidents in which Bruce was combing and recombining his hair and twisting moustache for hours in front of the mirror in the Berthing Compartment Head! Thus, I have no trouble believing that what he said upon speaking during the Shaft-reported incident is unaltered and 100% accurate!—Howard Dobson.*

Bruce’s reply:

*Amazing how this kind of stuff follows you around . . . LOL. Certainly, testimony to the memory and mental capacity of boat sailors!*

*So to continue: Yeah, I'm vain as hell, and to this day remain so . . . likely to the point of being a pain in the ass about it.*

*Let me just say this little clip does bring back some really nice memories, actually brought tears to my eyes, so much has happened since then, and it's good to be reminded of those times.*

*Now the "hair": a gift from my mother's Native American genealogy of which to this day I'm rather proud and wear it long to honor her memory.*

*Some photos attached from then and now (actually 2019) at my local watering hole, the Last Chance Saloon are included.*

*THANK YOU, HOWARD, FOR THE MEMORY; TRULY APPRECIATED, MY BROTHER.*



## **MORE HUMOR**

### **MY LIVING WILL**

Last night, my kids and I were sitting in the living room, and I said to them, "I never want to live in a vegetable state and depend on some machine and fluid from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug."

They got up, unplugged the computer, and threw out my bottle of wine!!!!

*The little bastards.*

---

### **OLD LADY & HER WINE**

An old woman was sipping on a glass of wine while sitting on the patio with her husband and she says, "I don't know how I could ever live without you."

Her husband asks, "Is that you or the wine talking?"

She replies, "It's me, and I'm talking to the wine!"

---

### **REVENGE**

May the fleas of a thousands camels infest the crotch of the person who screws up my day,

And may their arms be too short to scratch!

---

### **IDLE EXERCISE**

My tossing and turning in bed all night should count as exercise!

---

### **NECESSITY & INVENTION**

Did you know that line dancing was started by women waiting to use the bathroom!

**Art Allum** [EM1(SS), Blue, 1960-1964, Plank Owner] submitted the above humor.

---

### **FUN FACT**

**January 21, 2021, at 9:21 p.m. was the 21st minute of the 21st hour of the 21st day of the 21st year in the 21st century!!!**



## PICTURES AT A CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY

Unfortunately, **David Klinger** (CAPT and CO, Blue, 1977-1981) departed for Eternal Patrol on 24 Dec 2020. Although CAPT Klinger was never located after the SHVA was formed, I managed to contact his daughter Karolyn [Klinger] Welch after having learned of Dave's passing. She sent the following pictures related to a Change of Command Ceremony after the boat was reclassified as an SSN.



*No one is identified in these pictures. I'm guessing that the officer on the gangway in the left picture is CAPT Klinger because of the 4 stripes on his sleeve. Similarly and on the gangway below might be **John Hyland** (CAPT & CO, SSN, 1981-1983) because of the 3 stripes. (John might have been a CDR at that time.)*



*These and other pictures that Karolyn sent me caused much confusion concerning CAPT Klinger's period of service aboard the boat. What I had on the roster differed from what Karolyn believed which both differed from the list of COs that appears in the Decommissioning Booklet. To help solve this conundrum, I called John Hyland to ask him whom he relieved. He said "CAPT Klinger."*

*With this certainty, I was able to determine that the related info in the Decomm. Booklet was wrong. It even lists a CO who would have skippered the boat between Klinger and Hyland!*

*If anyone can identify any of the individuals in these pictures, let me know.*

## BOAT PATCH

Karolyn Klinger also sent me a picture file of the patch below. Apparently, the patch is associated with the decommissioning of the boat. Anyone know anything else about the patch; e.g., its designer?



## ROGER SCHLIEF CELEBRATES HIS BIRTHDAY

In early March 2021, Roger Schlief, Jr. contacted me about purchasing a ball cap for his dad, **Roger Schlief, Sr.** [ETR1(SS), Blue, 1961-1965, Plank Owner]. The son wanted to surprise his dad during a birthday party planned for his 82<sup>d</sup> birthday. After realizing that Roger was a Plank Owner, I convinced the son to purchase a Plank Owner Hat Pin as well. Below are pictures of Roger at his birthday party.



**"RAVEN ON" EXCERPTS**

This page and the following two are excerpts from the 9/25/1971 edition of "Raven On" submitted by Mike Kearney [ETN2(SS); Blue & O'72; 1971-1974].

THINK

Your shipmate is an individual, just like yourself. His personality is a little different, and his likes and dislikes are probably different from yours, however, he would like to receive the same considerations as you do.

Personal characteristics should be considered in all dealings with others. Gullibility of an individual should not be a basis for harassment or the entertainment of others.

Communication between individuals is required to understand and respect traits and personal characteristics. Discussion sessions, or so-called "rap" sessions will greatly improve everyone's understanding of others.

We are a small but distinct grouping of individuals. A minor 'Excuse me' or 'Thank you' will go a long way in relieving unnecessary tension.

WONDERING

\* \* \* \* \*

DEAR 'GANG,

How are the leave chats coming? It's a real shame that you can't take all those days you earned. Just think about those days at sea, and your doubtful wife waiting patiently at home, expecting you on leave. Sorry, Gang!

DISAPPROVED  
OUTSIDE LEAVE PERIOD

\* \* \* \* \*

OVERHEARD IN MANEUVERING

ENGINEER: ANYBODY WANT A CUP OF COFFEE?  
MR. OLIVER: PLEASE, SUGAR.  
ENGINEER: ?????????

THE OMNIPOTENT SPEAKS

Gracious Saturday to you, dear friends (and foes), shipmates, and other motley eccentrics of the SAM HOUSTON undersea excursion association. The mighty OMNIPOTENT has returned for still another issue of the RAVEN ON with a grave warning of a dastardly plot against the crew. I make reference to the innocent-looking, fiendishly-devised, cunning medium of submarine retention --- the infamous "sticky buns"! The great OMNIPOTENT has most cleverly unearthed a devilish conspiracy to retain SAM HOUSTON crew members on board by force feeding these calorie-laden steeping stones to corpulence to the entire crew, thus increasing each individual's girth to unacceptable proportions, rendering them incapable of exiting the confines of this submarine via any normal sized hatch.

Awaken and unite against this foe, SAM HOUSTON! Beware of the sticky, gooey, chewy, habit-forming emanations of the galley to which the sweet tooth must ultimately overcome.

SPINACH!! Spinach and glazed luncheon loaf! Such items are the only suitable forms of nourishment which may be ingested with a pure conscience.

Speaking of "sticky buns", I must not forget to mention the one with the "black-beret" jelly topping. I make a reluctant reference, of course, to the one and only ENGINEER, who in previous RAVEN ON issues has asserted himself in a manner such as to attempt battle with your beloved OMNIPOTENT. Well, kind Sir, I presume you have completed warming up and are prepared to launch your initial attack- or perhaps the last "Stump Hole" was an aggressive move. Whatever the case, the pencil of the OMNIPOTENT requires no sharpening- it is poised to strike at any time. Besides, I raise and train killer woodpeckers for just such occasions! STUMP....beware!!!!

THE OMNIPOTENT

**"RAVEN ON" EXCERPTS (cont.)**

WARNING !

Because of a recent experience a few friends and I had during upkeep, I feel it necessary to warn those shipmates of mine who may find themselves, after an evening at King Cobra, stumbling through the open spaces of Naval Base Rota.

As you know, Naval Base Rota encompasses a large area much of which is open land. Land such as this is ideal for supporting small animals, with the rabbit being the object of concern.

The rocket ship star, with it's numerous peculiar properties, transforms the peaceful rabbit into one capable of an unprovoked attack usually to the victims facial area.

My friends, heed my warning, for you may very well come across a rocket ship rabbit on your next evening outing

Sincerely  
DOC HACKER

\*\*\*\*\*

FROM: WE WHO CARE.

TO: THOSE WHO OBVIOUSLY DON'T

VIA: RAVEN ON

SUBJ: NOISE; REDUCTION OF

1. It has been noted by several of us who are concerned with the problem of noise that since Chief Duke published his letter in Raven on, the boat overall has gotten noisier than it was before noise problem areas were brought to the attention of the biggest source of unnecessary noise aboard Sam Houston-We the crew!

If, by chance the select few of you dunderheads think this is all a big joke, perhaps you should read over the rules of the game again and discover your error.

This game is being played for keeps children, and the sooner we all get it through our heads that our team can lose just as readily as the other, and that that added little bit of unnecessary noise caused by some crafty uncaring and totally stupid shipmate who has no more concern for his life than ours can be the deciding factor. The point has been brought to light and many of us have taken steps to minimize the amount of noise we make while it seems that some of the others onboard are striving to make up the difference, and succeeding! Another interesting and thought provoking article in Raven On's last edition was written by "WONDERING" That story had a lot of meaning for us all if we are not to blind to see it. or if we are not so concerned with running down the very few people we have on Big Sam who go out of their way to make our patrols a bit more pleasant like the editor and staff of our newspaper.

The question we should all ask ourselves is: Would it take me any longer if I stop a moment to think this out before I go charging through a door and slam it behind me? The answer is NO! Would I be any better off if I closed the reefer or freeze box door more softly? The answer is YES! Especially if you forgot to remove your hand or head. This may not be as ridiculous as it sounds for many of us who are either to blind or to stupid to be concerned about our own lives. It is not just for the sonarmen that we should consider the noise we make, they are not the ones who are ultimately hurt. Consider this;

1. We make noise.
2. The bad guys hear us.
3. They come snooping around to see who and what we are.
4. We are so noisy we can't hear them approaching.
5. Our courses meet and we collide.
6. Maybe we sink, maybe them too, big deal.
7. Who suffers most? not us, we're maybe dead.
8. How about our loved ones back home, wherever that may be?

4

But they wished you had been a bit

**"RAVEN ON" EXCERPTS (cont.)**

quieter or stopped to think before you did.....oh well, the point is it is not to late yet! The play has been called, we have the ball, lets do something with it.

\*\*\*\*\*

**POEM**

When its spring time in the valley and the rivers swiftly flow when the trout are swimming gaily and the bass are moving slow you'll sit and dream of fishing forget pal you'll be on patrol when you ganna go a hunting your on watch, you just can't go I'll fish and hunt without you you see - it's my last patrol

\*\*\*\*\*

**IN MCC**

**KELLER:** Carney why don't you have any hair on your chest?

**CARNEY:** Well everybody keeps grabbing the front of my poopie suit and their afraid to come out.

\*\*\*\*\*

Is it true that our CO problem comes from burnin acetylene to check for freon leak?

conserned AMRI watchstander

\*\*\*\*\*

Is it true that if all 1306's are approved on big sam, there won't be any auxilarynen left to make next patrol?

**A WORD TO THE WISE**

**CONVERSARION IN RADIO**

**RM3 TOWNSEND:** Man! that snipes can tell some stories huh?

**RMC HUGHES:** Yeah! if bullshit was music he would be a full symphony orchestra!

\*\*\*\*\*

We of the crew support chief Duke's article on the need for a quiet ship... ..it is imperative that the air-lock door by sonar be shut very easy so as not to wake the sonar operator.

**PLEASE COOPERATE CREW!!!**

\*\*\*\*\*

Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people. Let us dare to read, think, speak, and write.

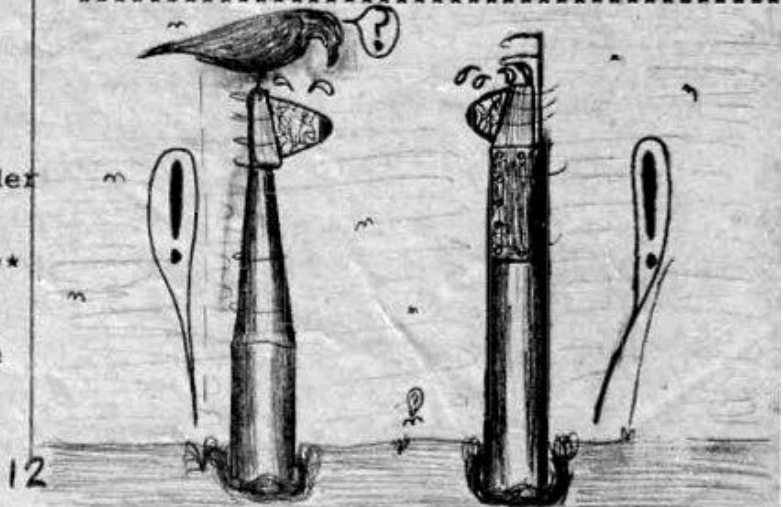
**JOHN ADAMS**

\*\*\*\*\*

Why does Falkner visit the Doc so often?

How come Falkner like's it hear so much?

\*\*\*\*\*



12

## MILITARY CHAPLAIN'S CAUSE FOR SAINTHOOD ADVANCES

*Although this article relates neither to USS Sam Houston nor the U.S. Navy, I feel that it is worthy of sharing with the members of the SHVA.*

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops voted June 17 to advance the cause of canonization for 1st Lt. Father Joseph Verbis Lafleur, a World War II military chaplain, prisoner of war and a Knight of Columbus whose courageous witness in the Pacific theater of the war brought many souls to Christ.

Stationed in the Philippines, Father Lafleur was offered a chance to escape when the Japanese invaded in 1941. When he found out his unit, the 19th Bombardment Group, would not be leaving too, he replied firmly, "Then I shall stay here. My place is with the men."

Father Lafleur would spend more than two years as a prisoner of war; he died in 1944 helping his fellow POWs evacuate a torpedoed Japanese prison boat. For his service throughout the war, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, a Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

### COURAGEOUS WITNESS

Joseph Verbis Lafleur was ordained a priest April 2, 1938, at 26 years old, and in 1941, he answered the call to join the military as a chaplain. While stationed in Albuquerque, N.M., Father Lafleur's commander noticed his exceptional performance. The young chaplain's next posting was to Clark Field, a U.S. Army airfield in the Philippines.

Eight hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese planes bombed Clark Field, destroying almost every American plane parked wingtip-to-wingtip on the strip. Ninety-three men were killed and 143 wounded.

Father Lafleur ministered to the wounded and dying, exposing himself to bullets and shrapnel to give absolution and help doctors administer medical care.

Col. E.L. Eubank of the Army Air Force witnessed Father LaFleur's actions and recommended him to receive the Distinguished Service Cross, the second-highest military honor. The citation reads, "First Lieutenant LaFleur's intrepid actions, personal bravery and zealous devotion to duty exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself, the 5th Air Force and the United States Army Air Forces."

The 19th Bombardment Group was later attacked by Japanese planes while evacuating to another island by ship. Father Lafleur crawled through a hail of bullets to rescue a wounded officer on deck. He was the last man on the boat after assisting with the evacuation of the other soldiers.

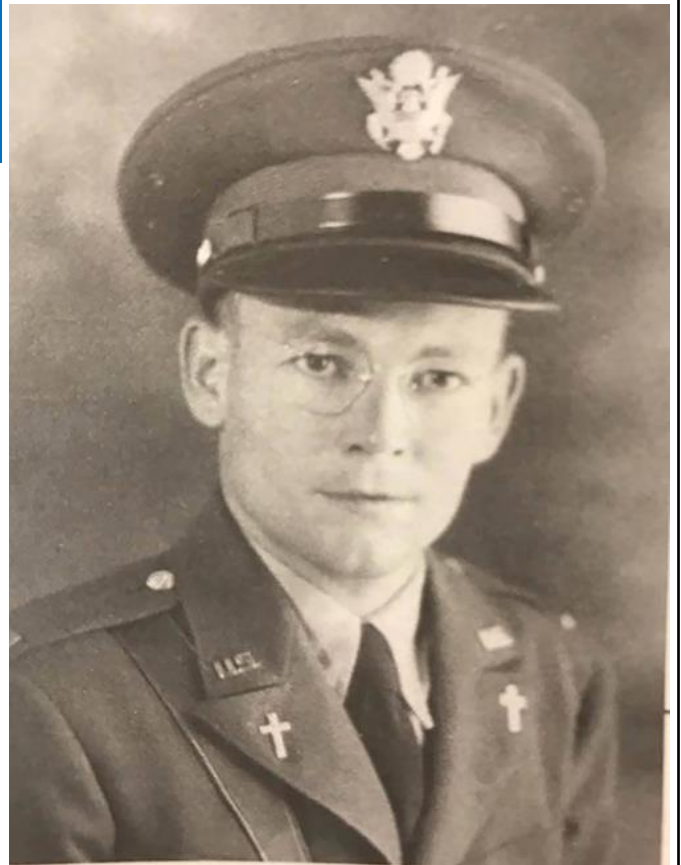
After U.S. and Philippine forces surrendered to the Japanese following the Battle of Bataan, Father Lafleur and the rest of the 19th Bombardment Group were captured. The military chaplain spent the rest of his life as a POW.

### A SAINT IN PRISON

Father Lafleur bounced from prison camp to prison camp until arriving at the Davao Penal Colony in October 1942, where he worked beside his fellow POWs in the rice fields and helped them in any way he could.

He sneaked into the compound hospital to tend to sick prisoners. He shared his food with the sick and wounded, and even traded his watch and eyeglasses for food and medicine. He refused medicine for himself, even during bouts with malaria, saying someone else needed it more.

Even more important, Father Lafleur continued to be a spiritual leader. He personally constructed a chapel out of bamboo and wood named The Chapel of St. Peter in Chains and celebrated Mass each morning before the men headed out to work. One soldier recalled that Father Lafleur conserved the wine for consecration by using a medicine dropper.



*First Lt. Father Joseph Verbis Lafleur is pictured in his Army Air Corps chaplain's uniform in 1941. Credit: U.S. Army*

## MILITARY CHAPLAIN'S CAUSE FOR SAINTHOOD ADVANCES (cont.)

Father Lafleur's witness had a tremendous impact: Nearly 200 American prisoners converted to Catholicism because of his influence.

Bill Lowe was one of the men who converted. His interest in Catholicism began after Father Lafleur helped evacuate others into lifeboats before the American-Philippine surrender. He saw in the military chaplain "something that I wished I had," adding that "his demeanor was so convincing that this led me to pursue to become a Catholic."

"If there ever was a saint, Father Lafleur was one," Lowe would later write.

### I WILL BE WITH YOU

Father Lafleur's sense of duty led him to volunteer to take the place of a POW bound for a Japanese airstrip in Lasang, Philippines. He did this despite being physically weak due to lack of food.

Before he left for Lasang in March 1944, Father Lafleur wrote a final message to his family on the label of a can of milk. It read in part, "I do not have to go, but if I didn't and something would happen, I would never go back to the States as I could never face any of you again. I would feel as though I had not done my duty."

While at Lasang, Father Lafleur continued to inspire the prisoners with his acts of courage. In one instance, Japanese guards with bayonets surrounded Father Lafleur and other POWs during his daily rosary service. A guard kept the bayonet at the military chaplain's stomach. Father Lafleur didn't move except to make the sign of the cross. Eventually, tensions subsided and the guards left.

As American forces advanced, the Japanese decided to move the prisoners to mainland Japan. Father Lafleur and hundreds of POWs were loaded into a ship—them *Shinyo Maru*—which had no white flag to denote it was carrying prisoners.

Without that signal, it became a target for Allied forces. On Sept. 7, 1944, the *Shinyo Maru* was torpedoed by USS *Paddle*. During the attack, Father Lafleur led his fellow prisoners in the ship's hold in praying the rosary.

Suddenly, the hatch was opened. Father Lafleur began evacuating the prisoners as the Japanese threw grenades into the hold. Other prisoners were shot on deck as they tried to dive into the water. Only 82 prisoners out of hundreds survived.

Father Lafleur was not one of them. He was last seen standing near the ladder trying to help others escape.

As he wrote in his final message, "If I am not [here], I will be with you anyway and I will have a reserve seat up in Heaven. I am sure Our Lord will let me roll back just one little cloud so I can look down. And from up there I will have a more beautiful view and a more perfect understanding of what is going on."

Father Lafleur, a member of Council 2281 in Abbeville, La., is one of many Knights who are either canonized or on the path to sainthood.

*This article dated 6/28/2021 appears on the website of the Knights of Columbus and is reprinted with permission.*

ENJOY THE SUMMER  
AND  
STAY SAFE