The following article is a reprint from the Branson Daily Independent, Sept 15-16, 2004, written by Staff Writer John Sinpers. John visited us and interviewed several of our members and wrote this nice article about our Association and ship.

The Japanese never realized it, but the brains for all of America’s offensive operations for the later part of the Pacific campaigns of World War II were aboard the USS Mount McKinley (AGC-7) and former members of her crew from that war, the Korean War, Vietnam War and Cold War met at the Radisson Hotel this week to fellowship and rekindle memories.

Although the Mount McKinley was originally laid down as a transport named Cyclone in July 1943, it was renamed Mount McKinley and commissioned in Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on May 1, 1944. It entered service as a command ship and in that capacity directed some of the important invasions in the Pacific campaign against the Japanese, those which ultimately led to Japan’s surrender.

“If the Japanese had realized that we were carrying all of the brains for offensive operations against them, they would have sent more Kamikaze aircraft against us as we would have been more of a prize than sinking a battleship,” original crewman and plank owner Andrew Ulitchney said. “When we were a Okinawa the United States Navy lost more ships than in any other battle in the history of our country. We had more than 1,500 ships in that battle and I am glad we did, as we felt a little sager in the middle of that many ships.

“One time Kamikaze aircraft crashed into three of our ammunition ships and we had to move away as there was so much shrapnel flying all over the place.” he said. “I watched as a Japanese torpedo plane came in and dropped a torpedo toward one of our cruisers, but the torpedo hit the water and bounced completely over the fantail of the cruiser and hit nothing.”

Jack Allen, another plank owner and Purple Heart recipient, explained that the Mount McKinley was the flagship for the 5th Fleet and 7th Fleet and was the command ship for operations at Peleliu, Leyte, Luzon, and Okinawa.

“I was wounded when I was on our 3-inch guns and there was a lot Kamikaze aircraft going after the ships,” he said. “I think I was hit by 20 mm shell shrapnel.

“I was in the first invasion of WWII in North Africa and I was in the last invasion of the war in Okinawa,” he continued. “It was very good duty on the Mount McKinley and we all have maintained friendships over the years and formed our association that meets every year. I was president of the association for three years and vice president for two more. These are a great bunch of guys that have served this country throughout WWII, Korea and Vietnam.”

Chris Koon went aboard the Mount McKinley after the Inchon landing during the Korean War, served in the Navy for 21 years and had a lot of memories of that war.

“In 1951, we were the first ship to go to the city of Nagasaki since the atomic boom was dropped there during WWII,” he said. “When I first went into the city, I saw a lot of the Japanese boys playing marbles. I also like to play marbles as a kid, so I joined them playing marbles there in the dirt and I guess I really lost tract of time. I had someone tap me on the shoulder and turned around to see a Shore Patrolman standing there along with about 100 Japanese adults. They were just enjoying watching this American sailor playing marbles with the city’s kids.

“The Mount McKinley was the best organized and operated ship I have ever seen,” he added. “Throughout my career in the Navy, I always used the procedures of the Mount McKinley on the other Navy ships that I happened to serve on when I was a Chief.”

Continued on page five
Donations to the Association

Thanks to these members for their donations to the USS Mount McKinley Association during the last three months of 2004.

P. J. Funk and Bob Skyles

Total Donations $170.00

USS Mount McKinley Association
Statement of Financial Condition
As of December 31, 2004

Income:
Ship’s Store Sales                               3788.50
Less Cost of Goods Sold                   3082.66
Gain on Ship’s Store Sales                  705.84
Advertisement                               125.00
Dues-Regular                                 5112.00
Dues-Allocated Pd Life                      416.00
Total Dues                                  5528.00
Donations                                    885.91
Interest                                     107.90
Miscellaneous Income                         10.00
Total Income                                7362.65

Expenses:
Newsletter                                  4894.06
Postage                                      539.45
Supplies                                     703.52
Telephone & Bank Charges                   229.40
Plaques & Awards                             28.94
Web Service                                  28.94
Total Expenses                              6440.37
Net Income-Operations                       922.28
Reunion Income-2004                        10556.00
Reunion Expenses-2004                      10602.61
Reunion Income over Expenses                -46.61
Reunion Deposit 2004 Made 2003               500.00
Total Income Year to Date                  1375.67
Cash January 1, 2004                        18014.21
Ships Store Inventory January 1, 2004       3829.12
Add Income as of December 31, 2004          1375.67
Add Prepaid Life Dues -2004                 5173.00
Total                                       28392.00
Cash-Bank Of America ( See Note 1)           7017.24
Cash-Zurich Money Market                   18073.71
Total Cash December 31,2004                25090.95
Ships Store Inventory, December 31,2004     3301.05
Total Assets                               28392.00

Note 1, Includes prepaid life dues of $5898 not available for operations
Will be allocated to dues income over life expectancy period.
Submitted By: William K. Ellis, Treasurer

Visit us @
www.ussmtmckinley.com
Greetings and Happy New Year. I have high hopes this will be a good and encouraging year for all of us. Our country is facing some serious challenges right now and with our support I am confident the outcome will be positive. Let's continue to pray for and support our military and leaders.

It is again time to pay dues. If you need to pay your dues this year, please consider paying for 2 (or more) years. This really saves Bill Ellis and Dick Armstrong lots of work and it also saves the Association money. Another option is to join many of your shipmates by becoming a Life Member. No matter your decision, please remember to send your dues in right away.

We are getting close to the time when we send out the Reunion notices to the newspapers. If your paper has not been getting and/or publishing these notices, send me their name and address so we can include them on our mailing list.

It is not too early to start planning to attend the next Reunion which will be held in Charleston, SC., September 7-11. Dennis (Pops) Pilny has this all arranged and it promises to be another outstanding Reunion. Mark your calendar for those dates. I look forward to seeing you then. ......... Dwight

I served onboard Mt Mac from mid 1963 to Nov. 1997 as an EN1 in "A Gang". I made two cruises aboard. I was onboard when we landed the Marines in Da Nang and Hue. In 1965 I was TAD to Viet Nam for 6 mos. on a mobile training team. I made Chief in Nov. 1967 and was transferred to NTC Great Lakes to become a company commander. I retired as SCPO in 1979. I would like to hear from some of the "A Gang" guys if you are out there. Doyle R. Osborne (Ozzie) arkansas_oz@cox.net>

"To the USS Mt McKinley Association, Although Louise and I are no longer able to attend the reunions we still feel we are part of each one. Your cards each year signed by each attendee means so much. We still feel so close to each of you. Dick and Viv keep us informed of the Mt McKinley's activities. (This thru e-mail.) Do Billie Allen and John Smith still try to get the best of one another? A special thanks to Les Mayer, Skip Skipper and Al Lowe for their special visits. May all of you have a Merry Christmas. Bob and Louise Skyles No 070C

I was on the Mt McKinley when it left San Diego for Japan, and was aboard during the invasion of Inchon. I would like to know what the 1st class bo’son name was of the 1st div. Don Wilson don.wilson3@worldnet.att.net
Avis Reunion special

Avis Rent A Car Systems, Inc. has contacted me and is offering special reunion pricing to our members attending the Charleston reunion, September 7 – 11, 2005 for anyone wishing to rent a car. Avis has assigned a specific discount number for our event. The Avis World- wide Discount (AWD) Number is J994240. Please, if you would like to take advantage of this special pricing use this AWD number when calling Avis directly at 1-800-331-1600 to receive the best car rental rates available.

Christmas Mail  By: Emil Evans ET2

Below are three pictures taken by Emil of the following incident. The following is his description of what happened.

In early December 1950, after more than two months at anchor in Inchon harbor, we were all looking forward to the arrival of a helicopter with some Christmas mail. I believe Ray Clemons (#201), the ships mailman, was on the poop deck waiting for the mail bag to be dropped and I was on the third deck above Radio 3 watching all this happen.

I had a new camera, a “Kodak Retina” and I was anxious to shoot a test roll of film to see if I had it doped out. All this was before there was a “Helo Pad”, so it was actually a “over and drop” exercise for the pilot in moderate but bluster wind conditions.

In the first photo I caught the chopper through some of the rigging, the cargo door on the port side was open and the mail bag is just barely visible. In the second shot the chopper is closer to the deck and partly hidden by a 50 cal. Gun tub. I scrambled to the ladder to get the third shot because the chopper had been dumped by a gust of wind!

First thoughts were of all that mail, my long awaited cookies and fruit cake soaked in sea water, letters soaked beyond readability, and other selfish rumblings, but then reality came back and we sweated while we watched the pilot on co-pilot pop up and get plucked from the drink. I can’t explain why no more shots were recorded but the roll of film somehow went un-developed to nearly ten years. After a long delay (fifty years) I stumbled on these photos “among my souvenirs”, sorry for the dallying!

Emil Evans

The following article and photo description were also submitted along with the one above by Emil. Apparently Emil wants to make sure that all you “other” swab’s know that ET’s can also do some serious drinking.

Some wag once said that ET’s never drink water and this is proof that they really do. Seated in the Yokosuka PO Club from left to right are Emil Evans #146, Larry Dennett #192, Walt Glazebrook and Charles Tiller. The last two I was unable to locate. Larry Dennett is now deceased. This was taken about July of 1950.
By the time you read this, it will be another new year! I wish all of you a prosperous and healthy 2005!

As you know, the next reunion will be in Charleston, SC. I am in the process of getting contracts for all of our tours and the next newsletter will give all the details and information you’ll be needing. It looks like this is going to be one of the most interesting and entertaining ports-of-call.

As you may also know, this will be the last of the previous five years of reunion destinations. At Branson, our officers and board of directors have chosen three of the next five sites. They are; 2006 Dayton/Wright Patterson, 2007 Harrisburg/Gettysburg, 2008 Reno NV. At our meeting, it was also suggested that we try to move the reunion dates back a bit more into late Sept. or early Oct. I will be exploring this when setting up contracts for the hotels at these sites.

Also at our last officers meeting, Ken Boenitz revealed the end results of all his research. He has completed a day by day log of the movements of the USS Mount McKinley. It is a very detailed and chronologically correct work that should be a must for anyone who sailed on her decks. Over the years our memories weaken and we tend to forget some events or we confuse them with others. This book will jog your memories and give credence to your recollections. Look for it to be on sale in the ship’s store very soon. See the article about it on page 6.

Here’s looking forward to a great and healthy new year!

Continued from page one:
Koon does have a funny memory from his time aboard the Mount McKinley when they were in port and the crew had shore leave.

“One of our guys came back aboard the ship and was trying to hide the fact that he had two bottles of booze on him,” Koon said. “the Warrant Officer bosun saw him coming aboard and knew that he was trying to hide the two bottles. He told the man that he was going to turn his back and that he better hear two splashes in the water. Well, he did, but when he turned back around the sailor was running down the fantail without his shoes, but with his booze.”

Pat Tracy was a Corpsman aboard the ship after the Korean War from 1953 until 1955 and enjoyed his tour of duty.

“We always seemed to have at least a two-star general onboard and it sure was great duty for me,” he said. We always had two doctors onboard and had a surgical team ready to come to us if there was a medical emergency.

“We sure are enjoying our reunion here in Branson and 93 members and 91 guests here with us in the Radisson Hotel,” Tracy said.

“Next year we will be having our reunion in Charleston, SC., not far from where the ship was first built. Next year will also be the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII.”

The McKinley earned four battle stars during WWII and eight stars during the Korean War and also served during the Vietnam War earning the Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation. The ship also was the command ship for the Crossroads atomic bomb tests and the command ship for the Cuban Missile crisis during Oct. 1962.

The Mount McKinley was stricken from the Navy Register and scrapped in Mar. 1970, but these veterans will continue to honor their gallant ship for as long as any of them live.

“The Mount McKinley was one of the most distinguished ships in the history of the Navy,” Robert Immordino, a crewman from 1945 until 1946, said with pride. “Few people realize that this distinguished ship was mostly built by former housewives, seamstresses and society matrons during the war and we are proud to have served on her and honored that the ship went through three wars in service to our country.”
The following is in response to our “Thinking of You” card we all signed at the reunion for Frank Abbate.
Thank you and my shipmates from the McKinley for your thoughtful support. It sure feels good. I’m not at death’s door, I just can’t get around very well. As you may know, I re-enlisted after the war and went on to serve for 20 years of active service and an additional 10 more in the fleet reserve. Therefore, I have many shipmates, however, my fondest memories of Naval service are from the Mt McKinley. We were young and those experiences are longer lasting. One memory reminds me how lucky I have been. It’s how I came to be assigned to the Mt McKinley. I was part of a pre-commissioning crew (I think it was the HOOD) at Newport, it was winter time in 1943, and you may remember how cold it was there. I went swimming at the pool several times and I contracted pneumonia. I was hospitalized and by the time I recovered and was discharged from the hospital, the HOOD had sailed. Since I didn't have any training for sea, I was reassigned to the Mt McKinley, the crew of which was in training at the time. About a year or so later, the McKinley was in Manus harbor, tied up next to the USS HOOD. I was telling some of our shipmates what I just told you. The McKinley didn’t stay there very long. I believe we left Manus within a day or so. We were just over the horizon when we heard a very loud noise. It was the HOOD. It was an ammunition ship! It took all hands when it exploded and caused tremendous damage to the harbor. One can only imagine our fate if the ship had not left when it did. If I were a suspicious sailor, I could rationalize the McKinley was spared because I was aboard and not scheduled to go. Ha-ha.

A thank you from a shipmate

By: Frank Abbate

Cruising in the Mac

Ken Boenitz has been researching and detailing the movements of the USS Mount McKinley from its commissioning in May of 1944 all the way to its decommissioning in May or 1970. His new book is a marvelous compilation of facts and information taken in most part from hours and hours of work in Washington DC researching and verifying all the information he could locate. Ken revealed his work for the first time at the Branson reunion and has made the book available to the association for sale through the ship’s store. Presently we are in the process of getting copies made and will be offering the book very soon. We may also be offering a digital version on CD for those of you interested in that form of media. Due to lower production cost, it should be available at reduced cost. Everyone that has seen this book wants one!

Dues, Dues, Dues!

It’s that time again and Dick asked me to remind all of you that Jan 1 is dues time. If your envelope has red on the label and you have a dues notice inserted in the newsletter, then you need to update your dues. We ask, please make payment for two years if at all possible, by doing so it really helps to cut down on work for our guys. Dues remain at only $12.00 per year. Make payment to Bill Ellis, his address is on page 2. Please help by paying as soon as possible so we don't have to keep sending out notices.
Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will sit in a boat all day drinking beer!

New Members

994 Douglas Cole
RMSN, CR Div., 1964 – 66
1917 West Main St.
Inverness, FL 34452

995 David G Hoefke
EM3, E Div., 1966 – 68
7850 N Silverbell Rd. 114-131
Tucson, AZ 85743-8219

996 Robert L. Brouse
QM2, N Div., 1953 – 55
362 N. Plum St.
Lebanon, PA 17046-3806

997 Charles C DeWire Sr.
MM3, Eng Div., 1953 – 54
55020 Barbados Bay
Boynton Beach, Fl 33436-1911

Lest we Forget,
These former shipmates who departed us this past quarter:

We offer our sympathy’s to the families of these shipmates.

Herb O’Quin 047C
QMC, N Div., 1946-47  Died July 25, 04

Edward N. Smith (non-member)
Lt, Photo Lab, 1944-45

Steve Talnadge 033C (P)
CWO3, 1944 – 46  Died in 1980’s
"Lights Out on the Mess Decks"
There was a time when we stood port and starboard watches [8 hours on, 8 hours off] while we were anchored in Danang Harbor, South Vietnam (1967 - 1968). I remember very clearly one particular night that I was relieved from my watch at the Electrical Distribution Switchboard - 5 minutes late.

Standing 8 hours of Switchboard Watch in a hot, humid engine room, switching generators, and examining ships load meter needles fluttering back and forth - you get mighty hungry. When I arrived at the Mess Desks for my midnight rations ("mid-rats"), I was advised by the cook on duty that the "Mess Hall is Closed". This particular cook [still his name unknown] went by the book and sent me away without food.

I immediately went down to the Electrical Switchboard and turned off all the electrical power and lighting in the Mess Hall. I then stayed down below with my watch relief until I got a call from the Mess Hall, which indeed came in no time at all. The cook from the other end of the line wanted to know "what happened to all the lighting on the Mess Decks?" I answered: "for a sandwich, you can have all your power and lights back on"......

When I returned the cook put together more than just a sandwich: a 4 egg to order breakfast, with a slice of ham, strips of bacon and toast. He mentioned to me: I never knew you were a "sparky" [ie: an Electrician Mate]. Needless to say - we became quick friends and I never heard the "Mess Hall is Closed" again.

In all honesty I should also point out where credit is due. EM3 "Skip" Eckman proudly pointed out those particular electrical breaker switches to the Mess Decks on my very first switchboard watch alone in the Engine Room. As you can tell, that valuable information became very handy much later on the "Mt. Mac".

Also as my memory comes back to me. During that particular cruise [Danang Harbor 1967 -1968]. We had several onboard fires. One or two Electrical Distribution Switchboard fires in the Engine Room. An overflow from refueling at sea, spilled Bunker Crude all over my MG Sets [440v Motor - Generator Sets] in the Engine Room. Also upon applying Shore Power at Subic Bay.

Phase rotation or something was incorrect and blew the heavy steel Shore Power Connection Box completely off the vertical outside bulkhead located near the EN's [Engineman] Shop. I believe several other fires with electrical motors developed from that mishap too.

There were also some good times. The Mt. Mac had an honest to goodness Movie Projection Booth, were we showed movies on a huge canvas screen erected amidships on the boat deck. Watching and projecting movies during the cool dark nights was great. I also remember a contest to find out who could take the highest jolt off of a 400v Megger Test Set. Also, if anyone chases down EM3 "Skip" Eckman - ask him about his tattoos and where they are at?…

David went on to serve with Boat Support Unit 1 (BSU-1). The rest is history and three tours later in South Vietnam, Mekong Delta supporting the Navy Seal Teams. He's one of our newest members.

I immediately went down to the Electrical Switchboard and turned off all the electrical power and lighting in the Mess Hall.
When you go into court you are putting yourself in the hands of 12 people that weren’t smart enough to get out of jury duty.
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A 60’s era photo of the McKinley maneuvering at sea.

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