

Turner Times



VOL. 9, ISSUE 2

WEBSITE: WWW.USSTURNER.ORG

MARCH, 2006

ON TO SAN ANTONIO

By Pete Varley, DC2, '66-'69

As we head into our 15th reunion, here's a little information about the city we selected to host this milestone event. San Antonio captures the spirit of Texas. Now the eighth largest city in the United States, it has retained its sense of history and tradition, while carefully blending in cosmopolitan progress. The city has always been a crossroads and a meeting place. Sounds and flavors of Native Americans, Old Mexico, Germans, the Wild West, African-Americans and the Deep South mingle and merge. Close to twenty million visitors a year delight in the discovery of San Antonio's charms.

For history buffs, San Antonio is a mecca. Native Americans first lived along the San Antonio River, calling the area "Yanaguana," which means "refreshing waters," or "clear waters." A band of Spanish explorers and missionaries came upon the river in 1691, and because it was the feast day of St. Anthony, they named the river "San Antonio."

The actual founding of the city came in 1718 by Father An-

tonio Olivares, when he established Mission San Antonio de Valero, which became permanently etched in the annals of history in 1836 as The Alamo where 189 defenders held the old mission against some 4,000 Mexican troops for 13 days. The cry "Remember the Alamo" became the rallying point of the Texan revolution against Mexico. Located in the heart of downtown, today The Alamo is a shrine and museum. A tour of downtown San Antonio will uncover centuries of history, including: La Villita, one of the original settlements comprised of Spanish soldiers and their families; The Spanish Governor's Palace, which was the seat of government when San Antonio was the capital of the Spanish Province of Texas; The San Fernando Cathedral, whose construction was started in 1731 by Canary Islanders; The Jose Antonio Navarro State Historical Park, home of Navarro, a central figure in the formation of Texas; Market Square, the largest Mexican marketplace outside of Mexico; and the Steves Homestead, a mansion open to the public in the King William Historic District.

Just northeast of downtown lies Fort Sam Houston, another "must-see" for history buffs. Military greats like Pershing, Stilwell, Krueger and Eisenhower all served at Fort Sam. San Antonio was also a training site of the Buffalo Soldiers, famed African-American cavalry fighters who helped bring peace to the Western Frontier a century ago. Today, Fort Sam is headquarters for the Fifth U.S. Army and the home of the Fort Sam Houston Museum and the U.S. Army Medical Department Museum.

Amidst the daily hubbub of the busy metropolitan downtown, sequestered 20 feet below street level, lies one of San Antonio's jewels - the Paseo del Rio. Better known as the "River Walk," these cobblestone and flagstone paths border both sides of the San Antonio River as it winds its way through the middle of the business district. The River Walk has multiple personalities - quiet and park-like in some stretches, while other areas are full of activity with European-style sidewalk cafes, specialty boutiques, nightclubs and gleaming high-rise hotels. The

(Continued on page 7)

\$ SHIP'S STORE ¢

The following items can be ordered from Carl Ackerman, 7436 Daisy Cir., Macungie, PA 18062, Ph: (610) 398-0145. All items are postpaid. Please make checks payable to Carl L. Ackerman.

- ▶ Up-to-date rosters — \$5.
- ▶ Turner baseball caps embroidered with Turner logo — \$16.
- ▶ Mesh polo shirts embroidered with Turner logo. Colors: Red, White or Navy Blue. Sizes M to XXL. All sizes come with a pocket — \$35. Sizes 2XL to 3XL — \$40.
- ▶ Sweat Shirts embroidered with Turner logo. Colors: Navy Blue or Gray. Sizes M to XXL — \$45. Sizes 2XL to 3XL — \$50.
- ▶ DVD of 1961 Med Cruise photos — \$10.
- ▶ Denim Shirts: Short sleeve, light blue with dark blue Turner Logo. Sizes M to XXL — \$45. Sizes 2XL to 3XL—\$50.
- ▶ Ship's patches: Both the Tiger and Double Eagle, 4" round with color embroidery. Also official Navy patch just like on the ball caps. Blue/gold lettering of "USS Turner DD/DDR 834" around gray destroyer profile. 3"H x 5"W. Cost is \$5 per patch.

FROM THE OF THE PREZ

In Philadelphia, at our Saturday morning business meeting, Tim Fesig became our Outgoing President. I, along with all our members, would like to thank Tim for his untiring duties as our President. GOOD JOB and WELL DONE TIM.

I would like to thank our first year attendees for joining us at the reunion. I hope all eleven of you join us for many more and we will see you in San Antonio this fall.

I personally would like to thank Pete Varley for putting together a very memorable reunion book. Pete did a fantastic job of outlining with pictures the great times that were had by all in Philadelphia.

To all of you who are reading this column and have not yet paid dues, I encourage you to get out your checkbook and forward a check to our treasurer, Joe Stepanek, for \$20.00 for one year of dues. You can look above your name on the

mailing label to see if your dues are paid for this year.

This has been a very busy time for we Floridians what with the hurricanes and a very unseasonable Florida winter. As I am writing this column, it is mid-February and we just came off of a week of 32 degree temperatures and a couple of days of a record breaking temperatures of 28 degrees. We had to pull out many of our stored Michigan jackets to get through it but now the sun and warmer weather is in sight.

The 2006 Turner Reunion is in San Antonio at the Holiday Inn-Riverwalk and the dates are September 13th through the 16th. The hotel is in a great location and close to many attractions and, of course, for the ladies it is within walking distance to shopping. I look forward to seeing everyone there.

— Grant

THE FRENCH LESSON

By William M. Kennedy, QMSN, '58-'59

The harbor of Monaco, as legend goes, was created when an ancient Titan stepped on the coast of Europe leaving his heel print in the seaside of Southern France. Eons later, some emperor or another granted the Grimaldi family the Principality of Monaco, which continues to exist after 700 years in its quiet splendor on the Riviera as a small independent sovereign state located between the foot of the Southern Alps and the Mediterranean. This horseshoe shaped harbor with its two breakwaters jutting out from each end of the heel was just the place for The USS Turner, my destroyer, to spend the 1958 Christmas Holidays.

We had spent the best part of our cruise, up to this time, plane guarding for the Forestall and the Randolph, the two carriers in our task force, and on picket duty off the coast of Leba-

non during the "Invasion of '58." We had all been looking forward to lots of shore leave and to much merriment during our stay in this resort of resorts over the holidays. Christmas was now over and I was back in Monaco after a week in Paris, "The City of Lights." Paris was grand in more ways than one can say. However, here I was back on the Turner with many memories and not much money left in my bell-bottoms.

We were to be in the harbor for several more days before returning to sea. The days were cool but clear with sun and blue skies, typical Riviera winter weather. I had not yet had an opportunity to see Monaco with its world famous Casino of Monte Carlo and its Grace Kelly Castle. Today was the first day that I had liberty since my return. Even though I had only the equivalent of about two dollars in francs left to my name, I decided to go ashore, a better choice than staying aboard my "tin can"

home on any day. I say go ashore since that was truly the case due to our two destroyers (What was the other can?) being anchored out in the middle of the small harbor. We had to take the motor whaleboat to the quay when going ashore.

It was after four in the afternoon on that bright, brisk day as I walked up the long sloping cobbled quay that led to the town from the waterfront. I roamed around the town, window-shopping and getting the lay of the land. Dusk was rapidly descending on the town. The sun was setting towards Gibraltar, low over Africa as I passed the Grand Casino thinking that I had just enough francs for a beer, just one beer, but not in the Casino. I look down the narrow street for a sign. There it was: a sign, THE TRACADARO (I am not sure that this was truly the name; my memory isn't what it used to be.) The sign hung over a door that appeared to open into a small bistro where a sailor might buy a beer.

I walked across the quiet, nearly deserted street; it was Monte Carlo but it was winter, off-season and supertime. Going through the door of the TRACADARO, I found myself in a rather small room that seemed to double as an entry hall.

I saw before me another doorway fully draped with a heavy curtain that seemed to say: "What do you want here sailor; what business have you here?" Turning, I saw another door to my right, an open doorway, opening onto a warm, cozy, squarish room inviting me to come in. I did!

It was the club's small, intimate bar room. A short, shining polished wood bar across the far wall of the small room backed, as most bars are, with a full mirror reflected the spirits and occupants of the place. Ah yes, the occupants, who were they? I could not believe it! There were, seated at the bar on tall leather topped

(Continued on page 6)



OUR TURNER TIMES

WHAT WE REMEMBER ABOUT OUR TIME ON BOARD

By George H. Crosson, QM3, '60-'62

It was the summer of 1960. The Turner was completing the FRAM process at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the Navy was filling out the crew. They assigned about 20 of us Naval Reservists to the ship. We all had a two-year active duty assignment on the ship. I still remember the chagrin of those on board who had three or four year tours and knew we would be getting off before them.

We were all assigned to the Deck Gang to begin our "careers." A First Class Bosun's Mate by the name of Gansbauer was in charge. One of his first orders was to obtain a sheath knife to use for cutting line. I went home to New Haven on a weekend pass and picked up a knife to bring back to the ship.

Returning to the Navy Yard, I was stopped at the gate by the Marine Sentry. He was about 6 feet tall and 2 feet wide and promptly searched my gym bag. He discovered the knife for line cutting, but to him it was a concealed weapon and he immediately escorted me to a holding room. Talk about being naïve, I just couldn't convince him I was following orders to bring it to the ship. There I nervously sat, contemplating all sorts of dire consequences that I would be facing in just my first month in the Navy. The Marines called the OOD and somehow, through his efforts, I was released from bondage. I found out during the next two years that he was one of our sharper officers.

Finally the FRAM was completed and we were off to "Gitmo" for the mandatory shakedown. Carroll Huffines, Bill Breigner and I made it to the Bridge Gang, while the rest of the reservists went to various duties on the ship. The Signalman and Quartermasters who made up the Bridge Gang were a harmonious group, which made life more bear-

able.

The ship was run very tightly and with enough intimidation that, at times, we didn't know if we should salute the Captain or kiss his ring. The bridge, of course, was his domain and was, therefore, kept in pristine condition. We used to chip in to buy cans of Brasso because the WWII brass cleaner we were issued just didn't cut it. We painted it, we swabbed it, we shined it, but I have to confess that I never got any warm, fuzzy feelings from it. We were now entrenched in the daily routine. Three section watches dogged daily, correcting charts, painting, cleaning and drill after drill after drill. I look back on it now and wish they had paid me by the hour.



It was now 1961 and time for a Med cruise. This was just what the doctor ordered – more sea time. In order to maintain our sanity, we indulged in some good-natured kidding on the Bridge. I vividly recall one event that occurred on the Midwatch. It was an exceptionally beautiful evening and I was zinging Lt. Shannon about how his Engineering crew never came up for fresh air and didn't he think he was fortunate to be on the Bridge with us.

"Crosson", he said, "I'm ordering you to report to the Engineering spaces for the next hour and I want you to make a complete inspection of all spaces." Meekly, I complied and the Engineering crew was waiting for me. I saw every inch of those spaces and came back to the Bridge a wiser and more humble person. I still smile whenever I think of that night.

We reached the Med in early winter and began our seven-month tour. Any opportunity to get off the ship and on dry land appealed to my sense of well-being. The Turner organized a softball team and I immediately signed up. Lt. Warren Nuessle ("You can call me Warren off the ship") organized and coached the softball team. This involved practice time, playing time and a lot of good times.

One hot afternoon in Naples, we had a hard practice and were parched. A young Italian entrepreneur of 12 showed up at the field with an iced bucket of cold beers. Needless to say, he sold out immediately and it was one of the best beers I ever drank.

The team was very successful under Warren's tutelage. He used a warm, friendly and humane touch in his coaching. He never humiliated or degraded a performance and was a breath of fresh air during that cruise. I incorporated these traits in my own coaching and teaching career and feel that my Jr. High students were the beneficiaries of my experiences.

During this cruise, I got to see the best Europe had to offer. Rome and its fountains, Paris with its lights, Athens and the magnificent Acropolis, along with many other cities.

We returned from the Med and I was down to my final six months. During the Christmas holiday, I went home and married the woman who has been my wife for over 40 years. We rented a small apartment at Atlantic Beach where we were close to the beach and Mayport.

(Continued on page 5)

OUR* TURNER TIMES – CONT.(Continued from page 4)*

In June, of 1962, 20 Naval Reservists gathered on the Fantail of the Turner. Captain Stronski came to wish us well and thank us for our contributions on the Turner. Then we all left to return to civilian life. I feel my marriage and the birth of my three children were the happiest days of my life, but that day on the Fantail runs a close second. To paraphrase a famous author, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

By March Tucker, IC3, '60-'62

This is a story of the origin of the Turner "Tigers" from my memory, such as it is. Prior to our deployment to the MED in Feb. 1961, it occurred to me that we would be out of touch with the States for a long period of time. Things like music may not be the same there as it is here. Therefore, I recorded the most popular radio station at the time, WAPE in Jax., the biggest and best rock and roll station. I recorded several afternoon shows in two or three hours clips on a reel to reel tape recorder which could be played back on the crew entertainment system. Additionally, I collected some records to bring along. I remember a collection of comedy records of "Brother Dave Gardner" and a few loose 45 rpm records.

After our arrival in the Med, and maybe enroute, I did a jury rig hook up of the crew entertainment system from the IC room. Many aboard were not aware of this system because it was seldom used. I started playing the part of a DJ and using the small library of music and such, acting the fool, had a radio station of sorts, I think I even called it by some name with Turner in it. Don't remember that part.

Some where, some how, the record "Hold That Tiger" was a part of the collection of songs that was played on our radio station. As memory serves me I believe the assistant

Engineering Officer asked me if I could pipe music topside and if I could rig a sound system that could be heard from a distance. I had no idea that the entertainment system I was using to entertain the crew also went to the wardroom and chief's quarters or I would have been less willing to make a fool of myself "over the air". Anyway, as a demonstration for the Captain, I rigged a sound powered phone connection from the IC room to the 01 level behind the bridge, carrying the signal from the record player to topside. Next I used a projector as an amplifier and a speaker attached and low and behold we had music topside. We lacked a big speaker to project the sound and I think I was authorized to order or procure or I may have "borrowed" one. but we got a big speaker. Now we had "big" sound topside.

From this point I remember trying several pieces of music as we high lined with other ships but the "Hold That Tiger" piece was reserved for the last song, just as we were going to break away from high-line. This became a big production that went beyond the music thing. The engineering dept. had to have a count down for the break away so that they could get the boilers up for a sudden surge of speed and the engine room would spin the throttle open at the right moment, the record "Hold that Tiger" would blast off and the Turner would surge forward and away from the neighboring ship, music blaring, rooster tail flying, exciting stuff. It was probably the equivalent of a jet doing a fly by with after burners.

The ship's reputation began to spread for this act. An Admiral or another ship's Captain sent our Captain a baseball cap with scrambled eggs on it by high line one day and soon after we were all wearing Turner Tiger baseball caps which were required top side during any high line

operation. I think we were all proud to be a part of this break from boredom and it was a good morale booster during a difficult time. So, now, you know the rest of the story.

I'm not sure if these two incidents happened within days of each other or were completely unrelated in time.

I think we were returning from the Med., going home at last. How this came about was probably as a result of a conversation between the bridges of the two ships involved. Someone challenged another someone and could have been the result of the Turner Tiger break away maneuver perfected in the Med. Whatever, two WWII tin cans line up side by side and drag race each other. This was done with some preparation so that the engineering dept. could be ready. Don't have any idea who the other can was but we got the jump on them at the starting gun. We were doing very well and it looked as though we were going to easily win when I overheard sound powered telephone conversations between the fire room and the engine room, like: "take it"; "you'd better take it"; "if you don't take it". The safeties on one or more boilers popped off and we lost the race.

While cruising along on a beautiful calm sunny day at about 20 knots the ship bounced up into the air. It was a very noticeable jolt like a car hitting a big pot hole in the road. No one aboard knew what had happened. I thought we had thrown a screw. We did an all stop and repair teams were sent to inspect the ship. While we were sitting in the water I saw a red patch of sea come up behind us. This was soon followed by a huge black object which turned out to be a whale. I don't think any permanent damage was inflicted on the Turner but it was a scary moment in her history.

THE FRENCH LESSON –CONT.

(Continued from page 3)

stools, our chief quartermaster, Chief Driscoll, my Chief, and, among the few others, Mr. Buck, our navigator and Chief Driscoll's boss. I was right in the middle of all my seniors, I said a quiet "Hello" thinking, "what trouble can I get into among all this Brass? I only have money for one beer." I ordered a *L'Ancre Bleu*, an Alsatian beer, which was also the name of my favorite bistro in Cannes, a place that I frequented whenever we were in that port. The *L'Ancre Bleu* was not really special, but the girls that decorated the place were. Well, that was another port and another time; however, the name always conjured up a smile on my face hence the Alsatian beer in my hand.

I had my one and only beer; now what? I knew that sitting with the Brass would be risky and seen as presumptuous at best. This was the Old Navy, the real Old Navy, and fraternization was not the thing. I looked around the room for a small corner to nurse my one beer when I saw the other open door, the open door from the bar into the nightclub. The club appeared empty but for some music playing in the background and plenty of empty booths where a fellow could rest his street weary bones and sip his beer. I went through the door, into the large room and sat down.

No sooner than that, I saw *Les Girls* across the empty dance floor. There you have it: a young American sailor with one beer and no money, an empty night club but for five really good looking, young French girls. I say girls because I was eighteen and though they were older, they were only a year or two older than I. The room and the girls were caressed by soft, romantic music, French soft romantic music, coming from the jukebox in the corner. *Five to one, I thought, just the right odds for Little Billy Kennedy. There has to be at least one possibility here, but what*

would it be?

I had to cross that empty, open dance floor to reach my objective. That distance, so Saharan, was growing longer and longer each second as I made my move. I reached the large circular corner booth where the girls sat chatting and in my best high school French spoke to the best looking strawberry blond with greenest sparkling eyes that you ever saw. The girl with the sparkling eyes was wearing an emerald green evening dress which displayed her other, oh so attractive, points to their fullest. *Bonsoir mademoiselle, comment allez vous?* Which I rapidly followed with, *Voulez vous desire a danse avec moi?* *Oh mais oui*, the young woman, and you can believe that she was a woman, responded as I led her onto the dance floor. *Comment appelez vous mademoiselle?* *Suzette*, was her response. *Vous parlez francais tres bien monsieur. Ah, mais no! Je parle francais tres peu*, I answered quickly with embarrassed, uncharacteristic modesty. And so it went, we danced and chatted, chatted and danced again as the other girls plugged francs into the jukebox keeping us on the floor. I was amazed and I was impressed with what a little education could do for a man. When the music finally stopped, *Suzette* led me over to the booth where her friends sat.

I was duly introduced to *Les Girls*: Marie, Claudette, Annette and Pauline rounded out their quintet. I was asked to sit as *Suzette* went on and on telling her friends about her American and his "French". By this time, one of the girls had retrieved my lonesome, now middling warm beer as all began to ask, tugging various items and parts of anatomy: *Comment se dit en anglais?* this and *Comment se dit en anglais?* that. After a few minutes the girls all had small notebooks and pencils out and were writing down my English an-

swers, each in her own individual phonetics. I was beginning to understand what attracted them to me; I could teach them English!

I was happy to do my best. However, I was afraid that I would prove a passing novelty and soon made my move to leave while I was ahead. *Ah, mais non monsieur*, the girls would not have it. Would monsieur like another beer? I explained that I had no money. This did not seem to be a problem for *Les Girls*. A second, cool beer appeared as we continued our instruction. *Les Girls* must have thought that I was weakening for after some time, supper was brought in as we continued a new round of *Comment se dit en anglais?* regarding the dinner place setting and the meal. On and on we went, *Comment se dit en anglais?* No one interrupted our lesson. The club remained empty of customers except for my ship's Brass at the bar

Les Girls were happy and I was happy. However, in this story, I was Cinderella, I had to get back to the quay before the last liberty boat left for the ship. The girls would only let me go after I promised to return the very next day, early or late, that I had liberty. I rose to leave; *Suzette* rose with me. *Les Girls* all gave me a knowing smile "good night". *Suzette* walked me to the quay giving me a big hug and a little kiss "good night" to seal our deal and to motivate my return. I did return, every chance I got until the day my ship sailed. *Les girls* took great care of their *Mesieur Le Professor Billy*, feeding and watering me so as not to lose a moment of "class" time. I provided *Les Girls* with my best effort in their English lesson. And, *Suzette* extended her best efforts in my "French Lessons." "*Bell-bottomed trousers, coats of navy blue, she loved the sailor and he loved her too!*"

Final Roll Call

Since our last issue we have learned that these shipmates have answered the call of the Supreme Commander:

Ausley, Wilton G.	66	SN
Boree, Curtis E.	64-67	BT1
Hunt, Bernard J.	55	YN3
Milne, Walter L.	45-46	ENS
Laundy, George W.	46-47	F2c
Martin, Mike R.	51	FN
Meek, Jr., Robert M.	62-63	BMCS
Merrill, David L.	DD-64 8	RM3
Silva, George P.	53-55	MR3
Spillman, Leslie R.	USS Moosehead	
Williams, Arthur M.	DD-648	

SAN ANTONIO-CONT.

(Continued from page 1)

River Walk stretches for approximately two-and-a-half miles. Rio San Antonio Cruises, the river's floating transportation system, provides a novel method of sightseeing and people-watching in downtown San Antonio. You can also dine aboard open-air cruisers as they wind their way along the scenic waterway. River taxis deliver visitors to Rivercenter, a dazzling three-level glass shopping, dining and entertainment complex, and to the newly expanded Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center.

As for the reunion itself, we have many interesting events planned as outlined in the registration material that was with this newsletter. *In honor of our 15th year, to thank you for your support over the years and for helping us celebrate, your Reunion Association either paying for, or subsidizing, a number of the events to help defray your cost. JOIN US THIS YEAR!!*

Mail Call

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

wondering if you could tell me any information on him and maybe forward this to anyone who served with him on the ship that might remember him. I do know that he was wounded on the ship and his back was broken. That is how he got his discharge from the Navy. I wish I could have talked him into telling me some stories about his service, but its too late now. I am starving for information on him and anyone who served with him as well. I do have some pictures of him at that time in his navy uniform if it would help triggering memories. I fully understand that most of the men who served with him are probably no longer with us, but I'm taking a desperate chance. Any help you can give me would be so much loved and appreciated. Thank you again.

Tammy McCleary
1012 AF HWY
Sullivan MO 63080

Editor—If any of you DD-648 survivors remember Alfred Bolin, and feel like writing Tammy a letter, I know she'd appreciate it. I gave her all the information on DD-648 that I could.

Hello Mr. Varley,

Yes, you finally found me, through my father's address. And I did serve aboard the Turner from August '64 through May '66 as a Radarman SN/3rd Class when I departed for SERE training. Of all the ships on which I served, old and new, that old "rat can" still gave me my sea legs and I will remember her always. Were you on board when we hit that hurricane off Cape Hatteras and split some forward seams on our way to Bloodsworth Island for gunnery? I think we had to pull into New York for repairs. I seem to remember seeing the Cruiser Boston to seaward from us with her ribs and frames standing out from the battering. Didn't we go down South prepped up for Apollo recovery? Got to be a Shellback that trip! Yes quite a grand old time. It seems amazing to me now that I remember those times after many ships and assignments over the years.

Didn't I learn the "trade" from Chief Radarman Craven? That name comes to mind from that era; I'm sure his bell rang by now.

Well, today, I'm a very busy Bridge Inspector, and will not be able to make any reunion unless it is held in the Southeast, though I thank you for the effort to notify me.

Best wishes and following seas,

H.E.(Gene) Holseth
Florida

I just ran across your web site and wanted to say "Hi." I took a midshipman cruise on the USS Turner during the summer of 1956. We departed from Norfolk and stopped by the Naval Academy to pick up some midshipmen and then departed in a task force of 16 destroyers, 2 cruisers, and 2 battleships with some oilers to Oslo. From there we went to Hamburg and then on to Guantanamo Bay. The callsign was NERK at the time, and my midshipman ID was C597914. Commander Turner was captain on my cruise. I was a member of the NROTC at the University of Texas, and my name is James H. Brown.

Keep up the good work –

