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ALAMO SCOUTS

Newsletter

The U.S. Sixth Army Special Reconnaissance Unit of World War II

ALAMO SCOUTS ASSOCIATION, Inc.



"The men of the Alamo Scouts were incredible soldiers and great guys. I was just happy to be one of them."

-Franklin B. Fox, Rounsaville Team

<http://www.alamoscouts.org>

ASA Charleston Reunion, June 8-12, 2011



Civil War Cannon.

On April 12, 1861, southern cannon in Charleston, South Carolina shelled the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter guarding the approach to Charleston Harbor, and ignited four bitter years of civil war that tested the mettle of our nation and left indelible scars on our national spirit. Scars so deep that they would be borne by the men in battle for their entire lives and be visited upon their sons and their sons' sons. One hundred and fifty years later, five warriors of another era, tested and true as their blue and grey brethren who fought at Sumter, Gettysburg, and hundreds of other places famous and obscure, gathered at Charleston with family and friends, to recognize their own call to arms 70 years past, to celebrate the collective fruits of their service, and to look to the future with hope. It was the best of times.

"This was a wonderful reunion," beamed Alamo Scout Bill Littlefield, speaking on the 20th gathering of the Alamo Scouts Association since 1980. "The atmosphere was fantastic and the reunion was one of the most congenial we've had."

"I'm blown away," added Charles Ouzts, son of Alamo Scouts team leader Wilmot Ouzts, upon attending his first reunion. "I wish I had come to a reunion years ago, but daddy rarely talked about the war."

Guests began arriving at the spacious Courtyard Marriott on the water's edge on Wednesday, and upon checking in, received a beautiful teal blue Alamo Scouts lanyard and ID badge made by Russ Blaise. Most then ventured out and explored the charm (and traffic) of Charleston. The sub-tropical climate quickly loosened joints and reaffirmed that air conditioning, whether in a hotel room or car, is one of the greatest inventions in history. By the evening, many guests



A view from our hotel.

had arrived and our rag-tag caravan traveled by foot and car to a nearby seafood restaurant for dinner. Our late arrival, 10 minutes before closing time, almost caused the overworked waiters and underprepared cooks to have nervous breakdowns, but despite a long wait and grumbling stomachs, all survived to eat another day.

The next morning, 36 brave souls boarded a tour bus and traveled to Middleton Place, one of the finest existing antebellum plantations in the south, and the place where British General Lord Cornwallis headquartered while chasing Francis "Swamp

Fox" Marion and the colonial militia throughout South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. After chasing down an open-air lunch at the plantation, the group was treated to a narrated driving tour of downtown Charleston and a stop at water's edge to view the splendor of southern living 1860s style, and to stand where the cannon fired on Fort Sumter in the distance.

The group then returned to the hotel around 4 o'clock and retired to the safety of their rooms and to the intimacy of the fully-stocked hospitality suite, where story-telling, hobnobbing, and socializing went on until Russ could no longer keep his eyes open and locked the door.



Time in the hospitality suite.

[Continued on next page]



ASA Board of Directors.

Korean War gas mask, which George promptly unsealed and played with like a Christmas toy to everyone's enjoyment!

Saturday's festivities began with a 10 a.m. business meeting. The first order of business was to elect Kathi Henderson, daughter of Alamo Scout Zeke McConnell, as the new Secretary of the ASA, replacing Terry Santos, who has been experiencing health issues. However, Terry is recovering nicely and was named ASA Ambassador, in which he will continue to represent the ASA at reunions and in a social capacity. Kathi and Russ reported that the ASA has 96 current members and is committed to increasing membership to over 100 by the next reunion. So, everyone recruit family members and friends. Russ also explained the need for the Alamo Scouts community to maintain privacy and to protect its members. Good OPSEC is a must!

Next, Audrene issued the Treasurer's Report and gladly reported that the organization is still in the black, but since many members purchased the attractive 5-year and 10-year memberships, the coffers might seem fuller than they are.

Lance concluded the meeting with the Historian's Report, and outlined what dusty old relics he dug up over the past year, which included almost 200 wartime letters from John McGowen, over 1200 pieces of ephemera from the last National Archives research trip, and locating new Scouts and others who operated with the unit during the war.



Group gathers for the ASA business meeting.

of the late, Robert S. Sumner), which always goes by too quickly, the group was joined by Charles Ouzts, Bruce Kittleston, and other Alamo Scout progeny. Jack Littlefield opened the ceremonies with a stirring benediction, then the feedbag was on! The food was catered in and consisted of chicken, beef, pork, and several delicious side dishes and dessert. Afterward, Navy SEAL captain Todd Veazie, head of the Navy SEALs Warfare Group, gave an informative and spirited 90-minute audio-visual presentation on the capabilities of the Navy's SWIC groups, which are responsible for supporting Navy SEALs teams in training and in the field. The audience was also treated to a special viewing of John McGowen and his team back in their salad days. Following a brief photo op, the festivities were over, and some guests retired to their rooms, while others reconvened in the hospitality suite for a nightcap and to say goodbye before catching early flights home on Sunday morning.



First timers, Earl & Kathy Coleman.

“Although our father died aboard the Sea Wolf submarine in 1944, coming to the reunion has helped us reconnect with him and with our new family,” said Nancy Mozingo.

“We will never forget this week,” echoed her sister Jenne Heffern. “It has helped bring us closure with the loss of our father. The Alamo Scouts were an amazing group of men, and we're proud that our father was one of them.”

Unfortunately, the reunion ended too quickly, and everyone had to return home, putting a bittersweet bow on our “yearly vigil feast.” But the beauty about our reunions is how we revisit the past and remember old friends; how we enjoy the present and make new memories, and how we look to the future in anticipation of both. See you in Seattle!

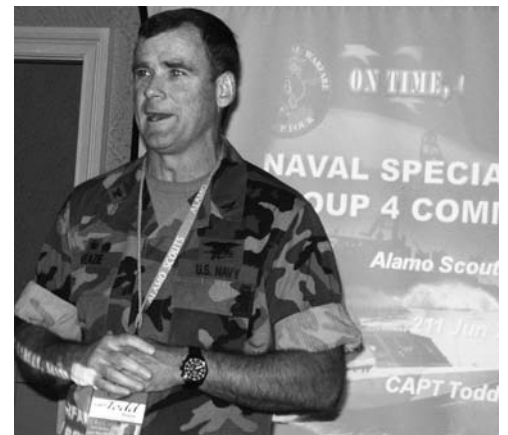
Friday was a free day, and many guests visited Fort Sumter, which was a short ferry ride away, and spent two enjoyable hours wandering through the ruins and basking in the historical relevance of the site. Others explored downtown Charleston and shopped, sampled the local cuisine, and took in the southern hospitality of one of America's signature cities. After a full day, most returned to the hotel and enjoyed the company, but George Eaton received a special surprise when Tim Williams presented him with a pristine, sealed, vintage



A visit to Fort Sumter.

Finally, Kathi made an impassioned plea to host next year's reunion in Seattle, which was overwhelmingly accepted. Tentatively, the reunion will be held about the same time (or a week later) than this year, so mark your calendars and begin saving your coins. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m., and everyone scattered to the four winds to visit, eat, nap, and prepare for the reunion banquet.

During the traditional Director's Reception, (in honor



Keynote Speaker, CAPT Todd Veazie.

ASA Reunion Attendees

Jack & Betty Geiger - Scout

Mary Beth & Ron Clayton (daughter)

Maria & John Checton (daughter)

John Geiger, Jr.

Bill Littlefield & Marilyn Plutae - Scout & Friend

Jerry & Laurie Littlefield

Jack Littlefield

Glen & Annette Groen - Friends

Sheila Hard - (Hal Hard's daughter)

Jo & Greg Churchill (Hal Hard's daughter)

Nancy & Charles Mazingo - (Howell Kopp's daughter)

Jenne & Frank Heffern - (Howell Kopp's daughter)

Bob & Rita Buschur - Scout

Mary & Jack Barga (Bob's sister)

Christine McGowen - (John's wife)

John McGowen (John's son)

Connie & Pricilla Vineyard - Scout

Josie & Dennis Asis - (Sabas' wife and son)

Bill & Sheila Boes - (Warren's son)

Linda Nellist - (Bill's daughter-in-law)

Audrene & Jim Burress - (Aubrey (Lee) Hall's daughter)

Earl & Kathy Coleman - (Lawrence Sr. son)

Kathi & Jack Henderson - (Zeke McConnell's daughter)

Bruce & Judy Kittleson - (Galen's son)

Ralph & Lee Anne Kleeberger - (PT Boat Crewman)

Megan & Tim Williams - (Tommy Thompson's daughter)

Charles Ouzts - (Wilmot B. Jr. son)

George Eaton - (WW II Historian)

Lance Zedric - (ASA Historian)

Russ Blaise - (William's (Bill) son)

Todd & Valerie Veazie (Guest speaker & wife)



Large tree on the grounds of Middleton Place Plantation.



Our tour guide tells us about Charleston.



L-R: Navy: Ralph Kleeberger, Scouts: Bill Littlefield, Jack Geiger, Bob Buschur & Connie Vineyard.

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

To the letter by Lance Zedric.

The ASA Historical Archive has struck pay dirt again! Jo Churchill and Sheila Hard, daughters of Alamo Scout Harold "Hal" Hard of Rounsaville Team, and Tim and Megan Williams, daughter and son-in-law of team leader George "Tommy" Thompson, have generously donated copies of Hal and George's wartime letters. All told, the period missives number over 400 and constitute a significant historical find. Coupled with some 180 letters of John McGowen's donated by John McGowen, Jr., and Christine McGowen last year, along with recent contributions of letters by Nancy Mazingo and Jenne Heffern, daughters of Howell Kopp, and others, the ASA Archive has amassed a broad body of primary sources which offer a valuable look into the training, operations, and daily life of the Alamo Scouts. While many of the letters home are intentionally vague and cryptic as to pass wartime censorship, they provide extensive general information and enough specifics to definitively place men and teams at exact locations, or verify what has thus far been speculation. More importantly, the letters offer an unflinching look at the personalities of the men in camp, and reveal the raw emotions felt by men at war thousands of miles from home.

Below are two letters from the Hard and Thompson collections. The first was from Hal Hard to his parents written on February 6, 1945, five days after he returned from the Cabanatuan POW camp liberation. The second letter was written by George Thompson to his future wife, Helen, on February 24, 1944, five days before the first Alamo Scouts mission:

"Dearest folks: I have a few minutes to write this afternoon but not much to write about I'm afraid. The rain that started two nights ago has continued with break of half a day or so. It just finished sprinkling a little and now the sun is coming out. I've seen more rainbows in the Philippines than anywhere I've been. Some real pretty ones too. There was one thing I wanted to tell you about. Did you hear (I presume you did - it's been in all communiqués and radio reports) of the 500 American prisoners rescued from a Jap concentration camp? Well, I thought you'd be interested in knowing that we were along on that job. It was one of the biggest thrills I have ever received. To see all those guys that had been there for three years. They were glad to hear from us too I can tell you. Of course, we met and had a chance to talk to some of them - there was a Major Hill that lived in Manila before the war and a Catholic priest that comes from Maryland... He's a young fellow, very interesting talker and he took all our addresses and is going to try and write all the folks. (Pardon the change of ink- it's all I could bum. Ha!). So don't be surprised if you hear from stranger some of these days. They gave a list of names over the radio of all the fellows and their hometowns. There were only three that I ever heard of from Michigan. Utica, Jackson, and Grand Rapids... Today I went down to see a Opu who is in the Hospital for awhile. He's O.K. but laying around in these Hospitals gets tiring and it's pleasant to have someone come in for a little while anyway. Well, all the fellows did manage to help me eat up all the groceries (except the turkey and chicken) that I received in those last packages. The only thing that was spoiled was a box of candy that Phyliss Munger sent me. - They were moldy. I hope, Mother, that you are continuing to take things easy and that your trouble - whatever it is - has left you for good. Just as healthy but a little more cautious. Your always loving son, Harold"

"Dearest Darling, All I have to say tonite is that I still love you & miss you like hell. That will ever be true even though I don't write it. Tomorrow I am returning to camp. I hope there are some more of your nice letters waiting for me. After my return chances are that I will be rather busy so I might not be writing too often. For awhile I thought that I might not get out of here. I was given tests for everything from syphilis to worms. All tests turned up negative. I thought they would because I have never felt better in my life. As yet I haven't gained back the few pounds of stomach which I lost during the last problem. Maybe that is why I feel so fine. Much to my regret we were unable to make ice cream today. The ice machine broke down. Guess I'll have to wait 'til I make my own at camp. I think the boys there will be very pleased to have a dish of the stuff so I'm taking plenty of the mix. Guess that's all for now, Darling. I'll try to write some time during the weekend. Love you, Dick"

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Clearly, each letter offers something different, but both provide valuable historical information. A special thanks to Jo, Sheila, Tim, Megan, Christine, John, Nancy, and Jenne for their time and effort. Given that over 200 men worked at the ASTCs as overhead, and that over 400 trainees were graduated, and that some 138 men performed a live mission, a lot of letters are still stuffed away in closets and in shoeboxes, each containing another small piece of the Alamo Scouts puzzle. The ASA asks that everyone sort through their old letters, scrapbooks, and photo albums and take the next step in preserving the history of one of the elite units in American history. Call or email if you have any questions or need help.

RECENT FINDS by Lance Zedric

FOUND: Joseph P. Novella

The internet is a beautiful thing, especially when hunting for Alamo Scouts that have been off the grid since 1945. "I lost contact with everyone," said Alamo Scouts Joe Novella, "When I got out of the service, I finished high school, and the day after I finished high school, I started college. Then I finished college, went to work, and got married. I've had a good life.

Novella graduated from the 8th Class and was placed on Hall Team, led by Aubrey "Lee" Hall. Hall graduated with the 1st Class, and served on several teams before receiving a battlefield commission five months in March 1945. The team consisted of Clifford Henrickson, Bill Swain, Curtiss Broussard, and Norman Boschert. "We didn't get to go on any live missions," added Novella, "But we did some serious damage to some nightclubs in Japan during occupation duty."

After a month in Japan, Novella returned to the 136th Infantry, where he had served with fellow Scouts Frank Fox, Hal Hard, and Francis Peeples. Joe and his wife live in Florida in the winter and spend summers in Michigan. Anyone wanting his address, drop us a line.



Joseph P. Novella

FOUND: Lt. Walter Pierce

In late February 1944, PBY pilot Lt. (jg) Walter Pierce had the distinction of picking up McGowen Team from Los Negros Island on the first operational Alamo Scouts mission. In March of this year, I had the distinction of locating him and being the first person to speak with him about the mission since 1944.

For years, I had tried to learn the name of the pilot that dropped off and picked up McGowen Team, but I only learned of Mr. Pierce through John McGowen's war letters, donated by the McGowen family. I also learned that Pierce was not the pilot who dropped the team off. That distinction goes to James F. Merritt, who passed away several years ago. In all extant accounts of the mission, Pierce was not been mentioned by name, but thanks to serendipity and John's loquacious letters, I learned of his last name only. It was a place to start, but looking for "Pierce" in America is like looking for a needle in a stack of needles. Finally, after doing a little historical detective work, I found an obscure reference to a "Walter O. Pierce who picked up a scouting party on Los Negros." Another couple months passed and I narrowed the list down to six people with that name. But there was no guarantee that any were living. So, I called several and came up short on all but one, which I repeatedly got an answering machine with no message. So I left my own message. Three months later I get a phone call from 94-year-old Walter O. Pierce, the pilot. He recalled the event clearly and had often wondered what had happened to the "Rangers" he picked up. In fact, he still has his original logbook listing McGowen and Barnes and a few details of the mission. The rest, as they say, is history.



Walter Pierce

FOUND: Lu Soon Pu

In early 1945, Alamo Scout Wilbur Littlefield was operating in the Pila, Laguna area on Luzon with Rounsaville Team, and had contact with the Wha Chi unit of the Hukbalahop. As with many, Bill made a lasting impression on Lu Soon Pu, a young Chinese soldier serving with the unit. "Our unit was the Wha Chi," said Lu, now 89 years old and living in Manila. "We met up with the Americans almost at the end of the war in 1945, and there was a person named 'Bill' who frequently visited the Chinese camp. He was about our age and was friendly. The Americans dropped food and clothing and I got an American suit jacket and shoes, which I wore with shorts. Everybody thought I was crazy by the way I dressed, but I didn't care."

Lu's daughter contacted our historian and supplied a story written by Lu, which is currently being translated by Ching Zedric. "Thank you for putting us in contact with Bill," wrote Pu's daughter in an email to the ASA. "My father is happy to hear that Bill is around and doing well. He made an impression on the Chinese in his group."

The following mission report and map, written by Alamo Scout Bill Littlefield, was recently found in the National Archives by the ASA historian. It recounts the team's mission to ascertain enemy strength and movement around Vanimo, which is situated on a small peninsula along the northern coast of New Guinea west of Aitape. The report is one of the few that is accompanied by an original hand-drawn map. Note that the team worked with soldiers from NEFIS, the Netherlands East Indies Forces Intelligence Service, which sent teams of agents behind the lines to work with indigenous populations. Good stuff!

