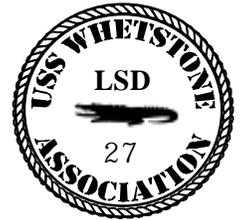




57th Edition



The Rolling Stone



Oct 2011

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Six Boys And Thirteen Hands...

Each year I am hired to go to Washington, DC, with the eighth grade class from Clinton, WI where I grew up, to videotape their trip. I greatly enjoy visiting our nation's capitol, and each year I take some special memories back with me. This fall's trip was especially memorable.

On the last night of our trip, we stopped at the Iwo Jima memorial. This memorial is the largest bronze statue in the world and depicts one of the most famous photographs in history -- that of the six brave soldiers raising the American Flag at the top of a rocky hill on the island of Iwo Jima, Japan, during WW II.

Over one hundred students and chaperones piled off the buses and headed towards the memorial.. I noticed a solitary figure at the base of the statue, and as I got closer he asked, 'Where are you guys from?'

I told him that we were from Wisconsin. 'Hey, I'm a cheese head, too! Come gather around, Cheese heads, and I will tell you a story.'

(James Bradley just happened to be in Washington, DC, to speak at the memorial the following day. He was there that night to say good night to his dad, who had passed away. He was just about to leave when he saw the buses pull up. I videotaped him as he spoke to us, and received his permission to share what he said from my videotape. It is one thing to tour the incredible monuments filled with history in Washington, DC, but it is quite another to get the kind of insight we received that night.)

When all had gathered around, he reverently began to speak. (Here are his words that

night.)

'My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin. My dad is on that statue, and I just wrote a book called 'Flags of Our Fathers' which is #5 on the New York Times Best Seller list right now. It is the story of the six boys you see behind me.

'Six boys raised the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is Harlon Block. Harlon was an all-state football player ... He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game. A game called 'War.' But it didn't turn out to be a game. Harlon, at the age of 21, died with his intestines in his hands. I don't say that to gross you out, I say that because there are people who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were 17, 18, and 19 years old - and it was so hard that the ones who did make it home never even would talk to their families about it.



(He pointed to the statue) 'You see this next guy? That's Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph.. a photograph of his girlfriend. Rene put that in there for protection because he was scared. He was 18 years old. It was just boys who won the battle of Iwo Jima .. Boys. Not old men.

The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was Sergeant Mike Strank. Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the 'old man' because he was so old. He was already 24 When Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn't say, 'Let's go kill some Japanese' or 'Let's die for our country.' He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, 'You do what I say, and I'll get you home to your mothers.'

Voluntary Dues

Again, **thank you** to all shipmates that have contributed dues and donations to the Association. Without your support, it would be impossible to publish "The Rolling Stone", maintain the Website and support our reunions. Dues are \$25.00 a year, are tax deductible, and are strictly **voluntary**. Dues are applied for one year (using date of check as beginning point, i.e. 01/01/11 check applies until 01/01/12). Dues received to date for 2011 are listed below. An asterisk designates dues paid for additional year (s). If anyone has paid and your name is not listed, please accept our apology and contact Kay Goble at 6200 Emerald Pines Cir, Ft. Myers, FL 33966, 239.768.1449 or via e-mail at marion-goble@comcast.net. Please make checks payable to: **USS Whetstone Association**.

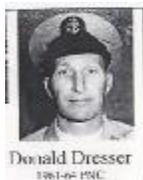
Please use this list as your receipt.

Alsleben, Keith	Fry, Stephen D.
Anderson, Robert*	Fulghem, Richard*
Bell, Charles	Funk, John
Bisping, Neil A.	Goble, Marion*
Blenkhorn, Charles*	Gordeon, Eddie*
Bogusch, W. C.*	Gregory, Carroll
Boren, Ben	Gross, Richard*
Bradow, Russell*	Grubb, Jack*
Brameyer, George	Hager, Robert*
Brannigan, Christopher	Hall, Charles*
Brown, Beryle	Hammons, Willis
Brown, James E.*	Haueter, Hylton*
Buchanan, Kenneth*	Haynes, Earl
Burik, Frank	Hjelvik, John
Caffey, Irby R.	Holleman, Jimmy*
Caldwell, William R.	Holmes, Robert A.
Carson, Capt. Grant	Hoover, Frederick
Chidester, David*	Johnson, Merrill*
Coakley, Bill*	Jones, Dale
Coldren, Wayne	Julian, Frank
Conover, Jan	Kirby, Joe*
Cox, Millard A.*	Kircher, Vincent*
Crawford, F. S.	Koons, Lee D.
Czarnecki, Vincent	Kuehn, Melvin*
DeWalt, Gary T.	Lanphear, George
Doerr, Gary T.	Leopold, Vincent
Dover, Fred	Lannon, Larry*
Draper, Rusty*	Manatt, James
Driskell, Fred L.	Maness, Jack
Dunn, Jim	McClellan, G. A.
Edney, Edward	McCray, David
Edwards, H.D. "Sonny"	McGrew, Joseph R.
Engelken, Ralph L.	McManus, Peter
Feathers, Paul*	McNitt, Russell*
Flowerree, Robert*	McQuillen, Tom*
Fox, J. Lee	Meismer, J. C.
Fox, Sebastian	Milton, Douglas
Fraser, Douglas*	Mitchell, Burley*
	Moore, Lane*
	Noffke, Henry A.

Ogletree, Ronald	Shrader, Daniel L.*
Oremus, Vern C.*	Skelley, Jr., Daniel
Packer, Chuck	Smedstad, Randall*
Pearson, Ray	Smith, Burt*
Peters, Lester*	Smith, Don
Pierce, Charles*	Stanford, Roy*
Pilgreen, Vince*	Stief, Bernard
Posey, Billy	Sutton, Doyle
Randolph, Stephen*	Sylvester, Kim
Raymie, Jerry*	Teske, Glenn*
Reed, Jr., George E.	Timmons, Garrett L.*
Remington, Richard	Tucker, George*
Richter, Herbert B.*	Van Guilder, David*
Rudnick, Robert	Ward, Everett*
Sandrock, Capt. J. E.	Watson, Marvin*
Sandwisch, Larry*	Weigt, Earl
Savala, Manuel	Weston, Keith
Savoie, Donald*	Wiesemann, Donald
Scott, Ralph V.	Winslow, Leonard
Sharkey, Robert	Wood, Gerald
Shimmell, Thomas*	Work, Robert G.

DECEASED LIST

We received notification of the following individuals that have passed since our last newsletter: Donald Dresser, Richard Kanea and William Wells. Notices regarding 2 of the individuals follow. As you know, we are not printing the full deceased list due to the size and space it incurs. If you would like a copy of the complete list, please contact Kay Goble either via regular mail, phone or e-mail.



Donald Dresser
1961-62 196C

We recently received the following from Frances Dresser regarding her husband Donald Dresser, who passed on July 27, 2011. "Don's distinguished naval career began in 1949 at Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Illinois and culminated with his retirement 1978 while serving as Master Chief Personnelman at Naval Training Center, San Diego. His numerous shore-based assignments were frequently interrupted by equally demanding assignments at sea to include serving on the USS Dixie (AD-14), USS Whetstone (LSD-27) and USS Midway (CVR-41). Upon retiring from the navy, Don spent the next 22 years working for the Civil Service where he worked in Office Records Department.

Richard Neil Kanea

My brother, Richard Neil Kanea, served in the Navy on the U.S.S. Whetstone in 1967-1968...he also served on an LCU in Vietnam during the TET offensive.

He died of complications from PTSD on August 1, 2000 and I would like to add his name to the list of deceased you have on the site.

*Best regards,
Alyce*



The Chaplain's Corner

Greetings Shipmates.

Autumn is a beautiful time of the year. Jane and I have been enjoying attending Nebraska football games. Our team is very young and developing each week as they compete. This is the first year being a member of the Big 10 conference. The short drives to games in Iowa and Kansas no longer are available to us. The schools in the Big 10 are long drives which will keep us at home. It will be exciting to have new experiences with new teams. What a change it will be.

Things do change for us which sometimes is hard for us to accept. Some of us become very set in our ways as we become older. Our grandchildren are growing up with technology we would never have thought possible. But there is one that never changes and that is the Lord, Jesus Christ. Our God is immutable, meaning that He never changes. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

He operates on eternal, unchanging principles. This is why we can build our lives on His promises. He has been unwaveringly faithful in the past and He will do the same for the future.

Less than a year until our reunion in Branson! Hope I see you there.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Blessings,

Marv Watson (RM-3 60-63)

Man

Of all animals in God's creation, man is the only one who drinks without being thirsty, eats without being hungry, and talks without having something to say.

John Steinbeck

Appreciation

By John Worman (BT2 1960-1964)

I got a note from Bill Coakley saying he appreciated all my daughter, Sandra and I have done for the association. While I appreciated his note, I did start to think about the members of our group and what they do.

The only order in my list is how I thought of them, so I would have to think about our presidents, past and present. Of all the jobs in the association, that is one job I will not have. I am very uncomfortable up in front of a group of people. I'm envious of those who can do it, but I've made peace with myself that I'm not one of them. If you are looking for a new president someday, look somewhere else.

So, my appreciation goes out to:

Marion Goble President #1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Jim Dunn President #8
Chuck Hall President #9
Bill Coakley President #10,11

Then as I consider, I think of the Vice-Presidents. They don't get much face time, but they are pretty busy during the reunions. Thank you! (and often they are the next Presidents.)

Then there is the 2nd Vice President. Who the heck are they? They are the next Vice President and the President a few years away.

Reunion Chairman. This post usually only lasts for one term, but during that time these guys are busier than a one legged butt kicker! They (and Kay and Marion) set up the facilities and programs that we are going to enjoy when we attend the reunion. They are an impressive bunch of people. My white hat is off and my thanks go to you.

How about our Secretary/Treasurer? We've only had one, but isn't she a dandy? Kay keeps the organization going! She is also a big part of the newsletter as she fills in the lists of deceased and found shipmates. She puts her stuff in, gets it to the printer, then mails it. You would think she was once the CO of the Whetstone and was trying to keep the ship together. Unfortunately, she never

got to see the ship. Then remember, she keeps the books and records the meetings and so much more! Thank you Kay!

There are others that make the organization run as smoothly as it does. Think of the many stories that we get from Everett Ward and Tom Lucas. Capt. Carson has submitted many, which has given us insight into what went on up in 'Officers Country'. The air was pretty thin up there, so I wasn't familiar with the intrigue of 'being in charge'. These shipmates have made my job so much easier.

You probably know, we have a website. It was started years ago by David Vydra, and now our webmaster is Russ McNitt. The website can be a black hole for time. It has to be updated often to be relevant.

From the very first until now, our Chaplain has been Marvin Watson. There is just no way we could do better. Marvin writes 'The Chaplains Corner' and he is the reason some shipmates read the newsletter. Thank you, Marvin.

Many shipmates haven't received a newsletter without my name on the masthead as Editor. I, however, did not start the newsletter. That honor goes to Donald 'Baby Huey' Hulen. Don started it and was the editor (with Kay) for two years. Business took up more of his time, so Kay did it alone for a year. I volunteered at the San Diego Reunion in 2000, so I'm the third editor.

Remember Bill Martin? He was the shipmate that got the ball rolling for the first reunion in Las Vegas in 1996. He contacted a lot of people (including Marion Goble) and the rest is history. We had an Whetstone organization!. Many thanks to Bill.

And... like they say every day on PBS, this is only possible because of contributions from the membership. THANK YOU!

It takes these guys a lot of time keeping the organization running. I'm very happy to be one of the team.

I'm sure I missed someone, but you blend in so well I can forget all you do.

Thank you everyone!

Agent Orange Information by: Tom Lucas

John

I looked at the agent orange list and found the Stone

I noticed there was no mention of our deployment to Nam in 1964.

Then I realized, it was at the beginning, about 5 days after the Gulf of Tonkin incident, that we arrived off Da-Nang with about 200 marines. We were on station for about two months and then we took the Jarheads to Subic.

There was NO agent Orange used there in 1964.

Tom

MY STATE OKLAHOMA

MM3	1952-54	Bugner, Frank	Guymon
BM3	1963-65	Dover, Fred W.	Tulsa
SN	1959-62	Drake, Donald G.	Norman
SK3	1966-68	Jones, Bobby L.	Commanche
EM2	1961-63	Knight, Richard A.	Broken Arrow
SN	1958-59	Nichols, Wiley	Midwest City
QM3	1960-63	Paine, John M.	Stillwater
FN	1949-52	Polk, James	Norman

Five pearls of Scottish wisdom to remember.

1. Money cannot buy happiness but somehow, it's more comfortable to cry in a Mercedes Benz than it is on a bicycle.
2. Forgive your enemy but remember the jerk's name.
3. Help a man when he is in trouble and he will remember you when he is in trouble again.
4. Many people are alive only because it's illegal to shoot them.
5. Alcohol does not solve any problem, but then neither does milk.

Bubba and Johnny Ray were sittin' on the front porch drinking beer when a large truck hauling rolls and rolls of sod went by.

"I'm gonna do dat when I win the lottery," said Bubba.

"Do what?" asked Johnny Ray.

"Send my grass out to be mowed."

(IWO from page 1)

Arizona .. Ira Hayes was one who walked off Iwo Jima .. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, 'You're a hero' He told reporters, 'How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only 27 of us walked off alive?'

So you take your class at school, 250 of you spending a year together having fun, doing everything together .. Then all 250 of you hit the beach, but only 27 of your classmates walk off alive. That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes carried the pain home with him and eventually died dead drunk, face down at the age of 32 (ten years after this picture was taken).

'The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky. A fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. His best friend, who is now 70, told me, 'Yeah, you know, we took two cows up on the porch of the Hilltop General Store. Then we strung wire across the stairs so the cows couldn't get down. Then we fed them Epsom salts. Those cows crapped all night.' Yes, he was a fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of 19. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store. A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother's farm. The neighbors could hear her scream all night and into the morning. Those neighbors lived a quarter of a mile away.

'The next guy, as we continue to go around the statue, is my dad, John Bradley, from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews. When Walter Cronkite's producers or the New York Times would call, we were trained as little kids to say 'No, I'm sorry, sir, my dad's not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don't know when he is coming back.' My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually, he was sitting there right at the table eating his Campbell Soup.

'You see, like Ira Hayes, my dad didn't see himself as a hero.. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes, 'cause they are in a photo and on a monument. My dad knew better. He was a medic.. John Bradley from Wisconsin was a caregiver. In Iwo Jima he probably held over 200 boys as they died. And when boys died in Iwo Jima, they writhed and screamed, without any medication or help with the pain.

I'm Sorry to Report

Hello ~

I'm writing to let you know that my dad, who served on the USS Whetstone from 1950-1953, passed away on May 7, 2011.

His name was Ernest Donald Lewis (he went by his middle name, Don); and was a BM2.

One of his close childhood friends, Gene "Buddy" Keeling, who also was on the Whetstone with my dad, passed away last month.

Could you add them to the list of departed ship-mates in the newsletter and website?

Thanks much,

Lisa

'When I was a little boy, my third grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, 'I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys who did not come back. Did NOT come back.'

'So that's the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima, and three came back as national heroes. Overall, 7,000 boys died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps. My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time.'

Suddenly, the monument wasn't just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero.. Maybe not a hero for the reasons most people would believe, but a hero nonetheless.

We need to remember that God created this vast and glorious world for us to live in, freely, but also at great sacrifice.

Let us never forget from the Revolutionary War to the current War on Terrorism and all the wars in-between that sacrifice was made for our freedom.

Remember to pray praises for this great country of ours and also pray for those still in murderous unrest around the world..

STOP and thank God for being alive and being free at someone else's sacrifice.

God Bless You and God Bless America

REMINDER: Everyday that you can wake up free, it's going to be a great day.

One thing I learned while on tour with my 8th grade students in DC that is not mentioned here is . . . that if you look at the statue very closely and count the number of 'hands' raising the flag, there are 13. When the man who made the statue was asked why there were 13, he simply said the 13th hand was the hand of God.

No Retirement at 20 Years?

A sweeping new plan to overhaul the Pentagon's retirement system would give some benefits to all troops and phase out the 20-year cliff vesting system that has defined military careers for generations, the Military Times newspapers reported.

The plan calls for a corporate-style benefits program that would contribute money to troops' retirement savings account rather than the promise of a future monthly pension, according to a new proposal from an influential Pentagon advisory board.

The move would save the Pentagon money -- at a time when it's being asked to cut at least \$400 billion -- and benefit troops who leave with less than 20 years of service.

The yearly contributions might amount to about 16.5 percent of a member's annual pay and would be deposited into a mandatory version of the Thrift Savings Plan, the military's existing 401(k)-style account that now does not include government matching contributions, according to the Times.

Proponents said the plan would allow more flexibility for service members, who could decide how they want to invest their retirement savings, and for the military, which would be allowed to offer higher contributions to troops who deploy frequently or take hardship assignments.

Thoughts

Be the kind of man that when your feet hit the floor each morning the devil says "Oh Crap, he's up!" Brother, life is too short to wake up with regrets. Love the people who treat you right and forgive the ones who don't, just because you can. Believe everything happens for a reason. If you get a second chance, grab it with both hands. If it changes your life, let it. Take a few minutes to think before you act when you're mad. Forgive quickly. God never said life would be easy. He just promised it would be worth it.

A young engineer was leaving the office at 5:45p.m. When he found the CEO standing in front of a shredder with a piece of paper in his hand.

"Listen," said the CEO, "this is a very sensitive and important document, and my secretary is not here. Can you make this thing work?"

"Certainly," said the young engineer.

He turned on the machine, inserted the paper, and pressed the start button.

"Excellent, excellent!" said the CEO as his paper disappeared inside the machine, "I just need one copy."

Lesson: Never, Never, ever assume that your boss knows what he's doing.

Paraprozdokian:

Paraprozdokian: Figure of speech in which the latter part of a sentence or phrase is surprising or unexpected; frequently used in a humorous situation..

'Where there's a will, I want to be in it,' is a type of paraprozdokian.

- * I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn't work that way. So I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness.
- * Do not argue with an idiot. He will drag you down to his level and beat you with experience.
- * The last thing I want to do is hurt you. But it's still on my list.
- * Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
- * If I agreed with you, we'd both be wrong.
- * We never really grow up, we only learn how to act in public.
- * War does not determine who is right - only who is left.
- * Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.
- * Evening news is where they begin with 'Good Evening,' and then proceed to tell you why it isn't.
- * To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism. To steal from many is research.
- * A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station.
- * I thought I wanted a career. Turns out I just wanted paychecks.
- * Whenever I fill out an application, in the part that says, 'In case of emergency, notify:' I put 'DOCTOR.'
- * I didn't say it was your fault, I said I was blaming you.
- * Women will never be equal to men until they can walk down the street with a bald head and a beer gut, and still think they are sexy.
- * Behind every successful man is his woman. Behind the fall of a successful man is usually another woman.
- * A clear conscience is the sign of a fuzzy memory.
- * You do not need a parachute to skydive. You only need a parachute to skydive twice.
- * Money can't buy happiness, but it sure makes misery easier to live with.
- * There's a fine line between cuddling and holding someone down so they can't get away.
- * I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.
- * You're never too old to learn something stupid.
- * To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.
- * Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
- * Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
- * Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
- * A diplomat is someone who tells you to go to hell in such a way that you look forward to the trip.
- * Hospitality is making your guests feel at home even when you wish they were.
- * I always take life with a grain of salt. Plus a slice of lemon and a shot of tequila.
- * When tempted to fight fire with fire, remember that the Fire Department usually uses water.

Jack's Short Circuited Separation

By Everett Ward

(continued from the July Issue)

It was with considerable consternation for the happy group when the starboard and then the port engine coughed, revolutions became labored and speed began to fall off. The hearty diesels coughed again, this time together, as though to clear their passages of the oily black smoke that was now beginning to spew astern. It thickened, and it wasn't long before the anemic machinery choked to a pitiful halt. They were dead in the water, drifting in a silence broken only by the occasional sound of artillery in the distant mountains. The experience of Jack's separation from the Navy now assumed a new dimension, and it was going to get more interesting.

The boat arrived at the dock ignominiously at the end of a tow line. Moving quickly, the engineman borrowed tools and dove into the engine compartment. The recalcitrant machinery was coaxed back to life, though retaining a persistent cough, indicating possible fuel contamination. Nevertheless, the mission was happily completed with a welcomed exchange of mail and movies. Within minutes of touching Vietnam's soil the shore party was left on their own as the boat set off with best speed possible, burping and coughing, across the anchorage to Whetstone--steam up, sea and anchor detail standing by, already heaving the anchors in to short stay.

Jack and shipmate Ron hitched a ride to the Da Nang Air Force Base in accordance with their orders. In Corpus Christi, Jack paused and pulled a draw from his beverage. Keeping quiet for minute of reflection, he went on. "And that's when the real fun began," he drawled.

"It was hot and dusty. The air was full of orange colored clouds of dust from the dirt streets," he continued. "It wasn't long before we were covered in the stuff." Traffic was heavy and the power puff dirt clung to sweaty uniforms like a glue paste. "We got past the gate ok. All we had to do was show our orders. An MP told us where to go. At least he thought that is where we should go. So, we went there."

A sergeant at the desk was cordial enough. He asked Jack and his companion where they were from and what they needed. This was explained and then the sergeant asked to see their orders. He began to read silently for what seemed to be about five minutes. He looked up, put his glasses on, and then began to flip thought the file of paper work. He looked up again and then back to the orders. After his third glance through the paper stack he looked at the grimy duo in front of him and asked, "Who gave you these?" The tone of voice indicated a problem and the answer was quickly explained; followed by another exclamation, forthcoming from the E-6.

"Your orders are no good. There is no such flight out of Da Nang. There never has been and probably won't ever be. You guys need to go back to your ship and get these corrected."

In unison Jack and Ron rapidly explained that the source of the deficiency was now steaming into the South China Sea and not expected to return any time soon. They had done what they were supposed to and all they wanted was to get home. Sensing that he was now marooned forever in a war zone, Jack noted that

he began to feel very insecure, orphan like. Shipmate Ron began to light off one cigarette after the other, dulling the effect of the traumatic news with surges of nicotine. Each may have repeated the purpose of their presence ending each repeat with the word "home", which had become somewhat choked with the beginnings of a suppressed sob. The way they said the word home must have struck a note of sympathy with the sergeant who then explained how the Air Force might be able to help them.

"I can get you on a hop to Saigon," he said. "When you get there, you can find a navy liaison and get these orders changed. They can get you out of country and on your way. How's that?"

What would a condemned man slated for a firing squad say when advised the squad had no bullets; or in the case of a prison execution, the focus of attention's discovery that the utility company had cut the electrical power to the complex? Relief was instant. A movie director would have added a swell of music and a glowing sunrise and cheers. There would be children would be waving flags; moms would be baking apple pies, and the band would kick in with "Johnny Comes Marching Home!" Grimness turned to smiles and, for sure, a demoralizing shadow that had cloaked the stray sailors seemed to clear.

Now waiting for instructions from the sergeant on what plane to board and when to get in line for the flight, there were a few minutes to pause. It was decided that they needed a soda and a snack. Some time had passed since arriving and they had no idea when the next meal might be found. Realizing they had no change they went to a desk and asked for change for the twenty dollar bill Jack presented to the clerk. The reaction from the clerk at the sight of the bill took everybody by surprise. It was as if Andrew Jackson's portrait had turned into a Medusa's head swirling with snapping rattlesnakes. Cringing as if in abject terror at the sight of the greenback, the clerk jumped up while at the same time sweeping the bill back to the two sailors.

His sudden and explosive agitation clearly suggested an attack of delirium tremens to which he added his shrill voice, "Get that out of here; get it away!" and repeating, "Get it away! You're not supposed to have that here!" All present looked up at the commotion and stared intently at the red faced clerk in front of two sailors, now frozen in alarm with the expression, "What wrong with that guy?"

Once again, the sergeant came on the scene. In a very direct sergeant voice he calmed the clerk and advised the two Whetstone veterans they weren't supposed to have greenback legal tender on the shores of Vietnam. American legal tender was illegal and taboo. Service people ashore in Vietnam were paid in scrip, known to all as "funny money." The official name of it was MPC which meant, "Military Pay Certificate." Possession of US denominations was illegal and possession warranted stockade, fines, imprisonment, and in some cases even a death sentence. The MPC was part of a system to curtail the black-market, hoarding, and inflation in the country. US currency was eliminated from the economy and it was

also illegal for anyone to hold MPC unless he was part of the US military in Vietnam. Trying to pass US currency was a big deal—a big, bad, big deal. That was it in a nut shell.

The sergeant continued very directly, “Keep that stuff out of sight and don’t flash it again! You don’t have time to get an exchange and beside it won’t do you any good because you need to get on the tarmac. Your plane is getting ready to leave!” Hot, grimy, sweaty, confused, and now glad they were not going to be brig rats, the two picked up their sea bags, orders, advice from the sergeant, and happily retreated to join the line of people forming for transportation to the flight for Saigon. Water from the fountain was ok after all and they really were not as hungry as they thought they had been. For the first time, and in a small way, a recurring thought began to spin as Jack commenced to think about what he would like to do if he ever met the yeoman who typed his orders. “Nobody had ever said anything to us about any of this,” he kept saying over and over.

The plane was vintage US Air Force; a Fairchild C-123, twin engine job, and judging from its wavy ripples in its exterior skin, it had seen a lot of service. Jack noticed several things about his flight accommodations. There were no seats; only canvas benches that filed longitudinally fore and aft, each side, facing inward to what appeared to be a cargo of ammunition crates, mail bags, and boxes of C rations, medical supplies, and piles of other bundles he surmised belonged to his fellow passengers. As the passengers filed aboard a second observation struck. They were Vietnamese nationals. To Jack and companion Ron this did not bode well. As far as they knew they could have been Vietcong. Both were quite familiar with the antics of ole “Charley,” ally by day and Vietcong by night. The 1968 Tet was fresh in their minds and, even then, in 1969, the NVA and Vietcong were pressing other offensives up and down the geography of Vietnam. These people were not speaking English and, not knowing if they had been won over to hearts and minds, their presence did nothing for Jack’s confidence. So far as he knew any one of them could have been a card carrying member of the National Liberation Front, i.e. Vietcong, i.e. Charley; pull out a grenade and scream, “Long live the name of HO CHI MINH!” (He, having just died---03 September 1969.) and everybody would join the ancestors of the Heroic People’s Army in one big boom.

Denied his cigarettes, shipmate Ron was going into a nicotine withdrawal crisis. He held an implacable fear of flying in any form; the events of the day compounded his consternation into the makings of a stress meltdown, especially when the crew chief began his preflight inspection. The plane would be flying to Saigon, about 450 miles away. It would be making some landings on the way south and would be doing some unusual maneuvers. Everybody was to strap in and then apply extra force to make sure they were strapped in as tightly as possible. “If everything goes well,” he said, (“Gasp!”) “We should be in Saigon in about two hours.” (“Gasp!”) Ordinarily, a flight of 450 miles would take about 40 minutes! What was this thing going to do--- explore half of Vietnam?

The bird took off in a cloud of dust, circled, and headed south. In short order it was plain as to what unusual maneuvers were. The flight was a hop that delivered routine supplies to several fire bases situated on the mountainous spine of South Vietnam. About the time it gained altitude it would begin to descend like a dive bomber beginning a run with a plunging dive. In that

mode it would suddenly make sharp banks and begin what amounted to a corkscrew motion followed by quick left bank, then right, and finally leveling off to suddenly drop and bounce onto an unpaved landing strip that had been bulldozed from mountain terrain. It would brake to a rapid stop with engines feathered at full throttle. The ramp would be levered down and there would be a scramble of people and things being off loaded. Just as quickly it would be winched back into position, the plane would taxi like a paperboy with pack of Dobermans behind him; lift off in a sharp climb leaving a vortex trail of red dust to mark its place.

The pilot was doing three things: One, he was getting the plane in through mountain gaps and there was no glide path; two, he was presenting as small a target as possible to ground fire and, three, he was getting in and getting out before a mortar round could get his number. His tactics amounted to a modified crash dive landing, which historically would have qualified him as a kamikaze instructor.

Jack and shipmate Ron discovered they could clinch their straps tighter. On each approach stomachs were left at feet level while heads floated to the waist as gravity pulled on them in a taffy string that stretched to a breaking point and then released with a snap. This was an express elevator with a maniac at the controls. Being sick did not enter into psychology of things; survival and being too scared to be sick did.

On one approach the plane had just leveled off for its drop- flop onto the dirt strip when suddenly there was a metallic bam! bam! bam! It was like someone slamming the side of an automobile with hammer. The noise was quick and ended seemingly before it began. Everybody was looking around and at each other. A pattern of round stabs of sunlight appeared toward the rear. Illuminated dust particle streaks that weren’t there before traversed each other and formed big X’s like search light beams, reminiscent of London skies during a World War II blitz attack. This illusion was complemented by the changing roar of the engines. As the prop pitch was being adjusted for landing, the adjustment produced a whine that substituted for the moaning wail of air raid warning sirens. The plane had been stitched by small caliber ground fire. It was over as soon as it began except for silent screams reverberating though the craniums of the strapped-in super cargo. Jack, looking at the face of the crew chief, tried to read any expression that might tell him what to expect, but the chief acted like nothing had happened. Then, twisting around to look out, he was fascinated by what appeared to be other bullet holes in the edge of the starboard wing tip. Looking again at the plane’s crew, the casual behavior was provocative, either indicating the danger had passed or the crew was crazy.

Cargo and people were exchanged as before, the ship wheeled, blasted itself down the strip, and the aerial roller coaster soared off again. As it did, contemplation on the bench drifted to how comfortable the rack on the old Stone

(See *Separation* on page 8)

had really been; how nice and snug and safe and predictable life had been, a thought Jack never dreamed he would be thinking. "I wonder if they miss me?" he asked himself.

The plane had climbed for another descent when the word was passed that Saigon was next. Things had to get better, and they did, though there was homicidal meditation to get back to Whetstone and see the ship's office staff. "If we ever get to Saigon," Jack mused, "they're going to need help prying the navy guys' white knuckle grips from this bench railing;" and, as an aside: "I sure would like to see that yeoman that wrote those orders!" Saigon arrived and the old "Provider" bird sat down like a lady. In the cockpit, the pilot scribbled in his flight log: "Arrived Saigon. All conditions normal. No remarks." Turning the plane over to the ground crew, he ambled away to the club. The two navy petty officers set out for the so called Navy Liaison Office.

They soon discovered there was no Navy Liaison Office. There was however, a Navy Military Air Transport Station; to that they were directed, and another stage was set to the day's adventures. The Day: Marooned, orphaned, nearly arrested, bounced around like a kite, shot at, scared, hot, dirty, and now hungry, the day seemed like a seven hour eternity. And so the two approached the office counter of what was probably the Navy MAT Station (Navy Military Air Transport Station), Saigon.

While handing over their orders to a first class yeoman and explaining why and how they got there, it took no time to realize this petty officer had failed a number of personality tests. After briefly looking at the pile of orders and listening to the distraught sailors, he frowned and proceeded to demonstrate why he would never acquire a winning personality. The man was dyspeptic. He was sarcastic; he was rude and obnoxious. He wasn't interested in helping the two stars of today's adventure. It wasn't his job, he said. Instead, he took the time to work himself into a temper and commenced to deliver a tirade. He wasn't going to write orders for them; he didn't care where they came from; he didn't care why they were there, and he didn't care their enlistments were up. Their problem was theirs; not his. So far as he was concerned, they would have to solve it themselves. He said those things, words to that effect, with a delivery punctuated with certain expletives familiar to naval people, reiterating frequently what his job was not; thusly capitalizing and painting himself thoroughly as the north end of a southbound horse.

This first class was a good example of what the up- and-coming Chief of Naval Personnel, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, wanted out, as in exit, of his new navy. If there was an example of what Naval Leadership was not supposed to represent and if there was a living, breathing specimen of at least one reason why the Navy was concerned about personnel retention, that fellow certainly held title and key. He abruptly shoved the orders back to them and left the counter and the two mystified waifs. Storming to his air conditioned office, he slammed the door.

The front of the receiving area was quiet as a dumbfounded Jack and a dumbfounded Ron stood looking at each other. American Express was not an option. The Good Neighbor obviously wasn't there; there was no Rock, they had seen enough Pilots that day to last a while, and they certainly were not in Good Hands.

The silent trance was broken by, "Psst! Psst!" coming from

an E-5 yeoman who had been working at his desk to the rear and side of the main counter. He had seen and heard the whole thing. Getting Jack's attention, he got up from his desk after first making sure that his motions were not being observed and advanced to the counter. "Here, call this number. Tell them what you need and what that guy just told you!" He was short and sweet, presented a jotted telephone number, pointed to a phone in the corridor, and returned to his desk.

The identity of the voice was quick, so quick that the answering station was not identified. After Jack spoke and explained his predicament and the blank wall he had run in, the voice said, "Hold on a minute." Then it came back, "Stay where you are and stand by the front. Somebody will be there in about ten minutes."

"Now what?" The two puzzled. They soon found out.

In about ten minutes a black, highly polished four door sedan stopped in front of the Terminal office. It had a chauffeur and it was decorated with a bumper plate in the front that had a single star painted in the middle. Topping off the right fender was a small flag and it had a star, too. On arrival the chauffeur, a master sergeant, got out and opened a rear door, whereupon an officer emerged uniformed in neatly pressed jungle brown fatigues. There was not doubt as to his rank: There was a silver star in the center of his cap and on each collar. Was he army, air force, or marine? We don't know. He had a star---the insignia of a brigadier general, a car, a driver, a flag on his fender, and a bumper plate, and that was enough. There was too much going on in popping tall, saluting, and trying to remember what to say to a high ranking officer to get the details straight. But he spoke to Jack and Ron and asked the two to repeat their problem. Then he went in and called for the OOD, the first class yeoman.

Jack heard part of the conversation. It was somewhat one sided, but he did say the indignant yeoman got a real chewing. He was dressed up and down, then sideways and backwards, and then reamed--all rather quietly, with precision, each word digging in like an armor piercing round. Part of the exchange was reminding the now unfortunate one that these men had served their time and wanted to go home. They had done their duty, their enlistment was up, and they deserved all the help they could get. They had served their country honorably and deserved the best the military could offer in thanks. A mistake in their orders could be corrected and they had come to the right place for help and the treatment they got was unacceptable. The general wasn't there long. There was no rebuttal to his message. The pallid yeoman stood rigidly behind the counter eagerly agreeing, absorbed by the general's message. Newly motivated, refreshed, and out of breath; reborn, and freshly reinvigorated by the realization that retirement would only be obtained through reform.

While the yeoman was having his persona, "Come to God," change session, the sergeant spoke to Jack and Ron, asking the last time they had eaten. It had been that

morning around 0500 when Whetstone piped early reveille for its entry into Da Nang, now several hours in the past tense. Explaining their earlier attempt to negotiate the Vietnam monetary trip wire, the sergeant handed them twenty dollars in MPCs. "Here," he said, "go to a canteen and get something to eat." They tried to pay him back but were kindly denied. Back in Corpus Christi, Jack reminisced that he didn't get the sergeant's name. He didn't get the general's either. For that matter he never found out who the yeoman was. All he remembered was that he was on the list of yeomen he would like to meet after he got out of the navy. He also said he never found out how it happened that a general would come to the aid of two sailors who had been swept by circumstances onto a lee shore. Surely, it was a form of divine intervention.

Shortly after the general departed, Jack and Ron had some chow, got cleaned up and picked up their new orders. They were soon on their way to Buckner Bay, Okinawa, aboard a C 140 Hercules. It wasn't posh, fitted only with military transport necessity, but there was conviviality with fellow passengers, the other sailors, marines, airmen, and soldiers who were also homeward bound. Box lunches were provided; they could move around; it was clean and flew in straight line with a passenger manifest jubilant with smiley faces. The end of the show was coming up to the final scene. There would be a short lay over, a transfer to another plane, and they would be bound east to Hawaii then on to Treasure Island, San Francisco, for final detachment, leaving there as new members of the two year loyal order of inactive naval reservist. However, a curtain call insertion to the dramatic departure of Jack and Ron occurred before the lights went up on the last leg of their adventure.

It had been less than a day since leaving Whetstone. The air terminal at Buckner Bay offered hot food, showers, a chance to change uniforms, and a somewhat relaxed atmosphere. The throng of personnel from all services bespoke the hubbub. For all practical purposes it resembled a civilian terminal. In this case, there were two groups of people that provided an equation by which east and west divided each other: those who were smiling--the ones leaving--the outgoing, eastbound--most of who were either going on R and R leave or going stateside for separation, and those who were not smiling--- westbound and incoming, most of whom would soon be ashore in Vietnam.

Jack and Ron were with the former group and had been assigned flights to happy land. Jack was going to leave some time after Ron and the two spoke departing salutations. Ron then joined the line forming to board another C-130 waiting on the tarmac, leaving Jack observing from the terminal windows. The transport was loaded, the ramp went up, the engines gunned and it was off, climbed, banked, and disappeared into the azure sky. Had the sun been setting, its golden rays would have illuminated two contented crooners, singing like pre-dawn mockingbirds.

Jack stayed at the window being entertained by the air field activity. All the planes--transports, fighters, helicopters, bombers, and a variety of others--all the trucks, tankers, tractors, and all the other movement shuffling around in ant hill fashion, each with some urgent purpose, driven by mysterious transmissions that somehow make it all happen. He was looking out over the base when he began to notice a caravan of yellow air-crash trucks, red fire engines, water-tenders, and ambulances being led by a red flagged pickup. Each displayed revolving and blinking red

lights and, over the din of other noises, could be heard the pitched howl of sirens. They were moving at high speed down one of the runways like a charge of cavalry then fanned out, forming a line abreast along its side facing inward, apparently waiting for something.

Shortly, there appeared a plane, a C-130, making an approach for a landing. Streaking out behind one of its engines was a thin trail of grayish smoke, and as it grew closer, a motionless feathered prop of the smoking engine could be seen. The engine was plainly was on fire, had been, or was about to be. The wounded Hercules landed and taxied to the end of the runway with the caravan of emergency equipment following and then surrounding it like a team of cats over a mouse hole. It was Ron's plane.

With the emergency under control, the plane rested for repairs and inspection. The offloaded passengers were brought back to the terminal where Jack met Ron as he re entered. He was pallid. Jack said he was walking like a zombie, staring straight ahead with big round eyes in what amounted to a ninety yard stare, oblivious of anything around; hair standing on end, walking robotically, trance like. He entered the terminal and tried to light up a cigarette, but his nerve wires had been frayed. Mind and hand were not together and his efforts were stilled by shaking hands wrought by spooked nerves. A cigarette would go to the lips but the lighter could not match the movement of the bobbing end. He would put that cigarette down like something was wrong with it and try to light another. This went on for what seemed several minutes until he finally made contact and began to settle down. The event was ample verification that Ron carried a mortal fear of flying. His experiences had been a chimera, now multiplied and amplified by being on another air plane, in the air, over the ocean, on fire. His cake had been well iced. After his color had gained some depth, his first words to Jack were, "I want to see that yeoman who wrote our orders!"

"The rest is history", as people say. Ron was assigned another flight and he and Jack went their ways. They held contact for a few years but it gradually dimmed away as those things do. At the very last of his enlistment, among all the things that happened in the years of Jack's service, the final days and the last hours unraveled as a wool rug rolling down a hill, giving an experience for the books. His intense departure from Whetstone left stamped an indelible memory and an everlasting desire to meet that yeoman who wrote those orders. For a fleeting minute in Corpus Chisti, Jack thought he had his man. Everett Ward YN3, 1967-1970

My separation was a complete "Piece of Cake" as compared to poor Ron and Jack. I was transferred to the San Diego Navel base. I didn't have any jobs to do, and they let me go about 2 weeks early. I was surprised when they said "You can go home now" (Ed)



Greetings from Your President



Today is September 11, 2011 and we are all asking, "Where were you 10 years ago, today?"

Personally, I had just arrived at my brother, Jack's house to pick him up for our daily coffee outing. As I entered the front door, the TV was on. The TV image was one of the twin towers shrouded in a heavy black smoke. My brother was visibly very upset; he told me an airplane had just stuck one of the twin towers. At the time, we did not know that the US was under attack. Sitting in his living room, watching the situation unfold, we were shocked when a second plane hit the other twin tower.

As I watched the TV, a sixth sense kicked in and I knew a great number of my brother firefighters, police, emergency personnel and civilians were having their last day on earth. My brother was taken aback when I got up and said, "Let's go." He asked, "Aren't we going to stay and watch?" My answer was this, "A lot of people are going to die today and I can't do a thing to help, and I would rather not witness the sacrifice of their lives". All those firefighters in the twin towers were their together as one. I know that a good many could have just backed out and lived for another day. But that was not to be, those Jakes were brothers and not one brother firefighter would leave another brother firefighter.

They believed that they go in together and they come out together, one way or another. That's the mentality of a firefighter and that will always be the mentality of a firefighter. So that's my September 11, 2001 experience, I sat in a coffee shop thinking of all those innocent people and firefighters whose only guilt that day was going to work, never to make it home again.

God Bless and Support our Troops,
Bill Coakley USN 1958-1962



Grand Plaza Hotel
245 North Wildwood, Branson, MO
Reservations:
Call Direct: 800-850-6646
www.bransongrandplaza.com

HOST HOTEL

Attendees may begin making reservations for the Reunion at this time. When you speak with the front desk staff, attendees should mention the group code "WHETSTN" (USS Whetstone Reunion) so you receive the group rate of **\$84.00 plus tax** for a Double Queen Bed room (**2 people in room. \$5.00 charge for each additional adult in each guest room**). Mini suites, King Feature Suites and Family Suites are available at an added cost. **Complimentary breakfast is included in all room rates.**

Reunion Itinerary

Sunday

- 12:00 p.m. Hospitality Room & Check-In
- 5:30 p.m. Reception (Light Meal) at Hotel

Monday

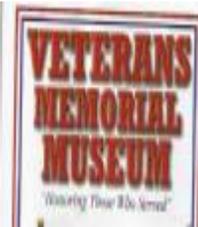
- 9:00 a.m. Veterans Memorial Museum
- 1:30 p.m. Area Tour and Memorial Service and Showboat Branson Belle Dinner, Show and Cruise

Tuesday

- 10:00 a.m. Clay Cooper Show & Lunch

Wednesday

- 9:00 a.m. Business Meeting & Women's Meeting
- 6:00 p.m. Group and Individual Photos
- 7:00 p.m. Banquet at Hotel w/Entertainment



REUNION NEWS: We have contracted with Pam Brown at Gatherings Plus in Branson, Missouri to handle the Branson reunion. Pam is a well-established Planner in Branson and handles numerous military reunions. Branson is a very busy place and Pam is able to provide us the most cost-efficient package for our reunion. Pam handles all contracts and accepts liability for same, food for reception and banquet, show ticketing, transportation to group activities and hospital room set-up and maintenance. Our group will maintain the snacks, beverages, etc. in the hospitality room during the reunion. Gatherings Plus also provides welcome packets upon check-in that will include name badges, coupons, an area map and an updated itinerary with departure times from the hotel. A reunion itinerary has been provided for a set price of **\$158.00** per person which includes: Reception, Banquet, Veterans Memorial Museum, an area tour, the Memorial Service accommodations and the Showboat Dinner Theatre and Show. The Clay Cooper Show and lunch is available for an additional cost of **\$47.00**. If someone is interested in only the reception and/or banquet, they can contact Pam directly at 417-338-4048 and discuss pricing. A registration form follows on Page 11 of the newsletter for you to complete and mail your reservation, along with your check/money order made payable to **GATHERINGS PLUS**. Upon receipt of the reservation, Pam will send confirmation letters and itinerary of reunion events and post your name at the reunion website she has set up for our group. Although this is change from our past reunions, we firmly believe this is the most affordable package that we can attain for our group and will work to our group's advantage. If you prefer to send your reservation and check to Kay Goble, 6200 Emerald Pines Cir, Ft Myers, FL 33966, you may and I will forward to Pam for processing or if you have any questions, please contact Kay Goble at 239.768.1449.

USS WHETSTONE
Branson, Missouri Reunion
September 16-20, 2012

NAME _____ GUEST _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____
DATES ON BOARD _____ RANK _____

Host Hotel: The Grand Plaza, 245 N. Wildwood Drive

For hotel reservations call direct to: 1-800-850-6646

Be sure and mention you are with the USS Whetstone reunion group to get the special group rate of \$84.00 plus tax. That rate is good 3 days prior and 3 days after the reunion, based on hotel availability. Rooms not reserved by August 16 will be released from the group block.

PLEASE REGISTER ME FOR THE FOLLOWING:

Activity Package Total _____ # of Attendees x \$158.00 = \$ _____

Clay Cooper Show and Lunch _____ # of Attendees x \$47.00 = \$ _____

TOTAL DUE.....\$ _____

A 50% deposit is requested by July 16 with final payment due by August 16. There will be a 10% cancellation fee if reservation is cancelled by Sept. 11. Refunds after that date will be on a case by case basis. Questions?? Call us at 417-338-4048 and we'll be happy to assist you.

For ticketing to additional shows in Branson call us at 417-338-4048.

Mail Registration Form and Check To:

GATHERINGS PLUS

P. O. BOX 1023, BRANSON WEST, MO. 65737

417-338-4048

Reunion Website:

www.reunionproregistration.com/usswhetstone.htm

This Registration Form should be mailed directly to Gatherings Plus with your check made payable to GATHERINGS PLUS. Pam will, in turn, provide you confirmation of your reservation and add your name to the website she has established for our group. Thereby allowing you to view all attendees that have registered for the reunion.



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SHIP'S STORE



To order any Ship's Store item please contact Marion Goble, 6200 Emerald Pines Circle, Ft. Myers, FL 33966, (239)768-1449 or e-mail marion-goble@comcast.net When submitting an order, please make checks payable to **USS Whetstone Association**. All jackets and golf shirts are navy blue with gold lettering. T-shirts are navy blue with gold lettering or gray with navy lettering. Hats are navy blue with gold silhouette of ship, white with navy blue silhouette of ship or red with gold silhouette of ship, or camouflage with gold silhouette of ship (**red and camouflage hats and DVD of Reunions are new items**).

Items for Sale:

Ball Caps (With Silhouette)	\$20.00
Cruise Books (57, 61,66,67/68 & 69)	\$20.00
DVD of Reunions (1996-2006)	\$10.00
DVD of 2008 or 2010 Reunion	\$10.00
Golf Shirts (S,M,L,XL)	\$35.00
T-Shirts (S,M,L,XLG, XXL)	\$20.00
Jackets (S,M,LG,XLG)	\$50.00
Jackets (XXL & XXXL)	\$52.00
Mouse pads w/Whetstone Picture	\$10.00
Yosemite Sam Patches	\$ 8.00
Zippo Knives w/Ship Silhouette	\$20.00
Zippo Lighters w/Ship Silhouette	\$13.00
Whetstone Pictures on Canvas	\$25.00

Note: All Prices Include Shipping

Another Reason for not Smoking!

A man from the Royal Australian Air Force suffered life-threatening third-degree burns after a portable toilet exploded -- an incident connected to a U.S.-led military exercise in the area, Australia's Department of Defence announced Monday.

Officials believe the man was using the portable toilet (also known as a port-a-potty) at Rockhampton Airport, some 300 miles north of the capital Brisbane, in the state of Queensland, when he lit a cigarette.

"There was some sort of explosion," a Department of Community Safety spokeswoman told Australian newspaper the Courier-Mail. "He suffered burns to his head, face, arms, chest and airways."

I'm looking for a new job. I started as a watchmaker, which was great because I made my own hours. Unfortunately, I didn't have the hands for it.

Then I tried being a grocer. But it only offered a meager celery and I came home every evening beet.

I thought about joining the army. But my name is William and everyone kept yelling "Fire at Will!" Plus, they're only looking for recruits of high caliber.

Then I was offered a job as a cartoonist. But the entire industry seems a little sketchy.

For now, I'm working as a magician. But getting the tricks right is so frustrating; I'm pulling my hare out!