



The New Orleans Reunion: a Study in Contradictions

After holding annual ships reunions at wonderful locations throughout the United States for 34 of the past 35 years (the only exception being the covid year of 2020), the USS Okanogan (APA 220) Organization held its last official reunion this September in New Orleans, Louisiana. A bitter/sweet reunion, this final one abounded in contrasts and paradoxes. It was the end of our organization, yet most of our Business Meeting was devoted to ensuring that our friendships would live on. It was our final farewell, yet all of us promised to “stay in touch.” We were all very sad that our organization was disbanding, yet all of us laughed and laughed throughout the four days that we were together.

In thinking of the beginnings and end of our association with the Navy in general and the USS Okanogan in particular, I can not help but contrast what we are today with what we were while aboard APA 220. For example, as sailors we used to gather on #2 hatch to watch movies. Now we watch them on Net Flicks. On the ship we were guys you could depend on; at the New Orleans Reunion, we were guys with Depends on. On the ship some of us wore blue jackets; at the reunion some wore blue blazers. We used to be gators sailors who went to sea. At the reunion we went to see gators. Many of us used to be crew cuts, flattops, or high and tights. Now we are comb-overs. We used to read *The Navy Times* and *All Hands*. Now we read *The Legion Magazine* and the *AARP Bulletin*. We used to get carded when we wanted to buy a beer; now we get carded so we can get a senior discount.

A final contrast can be seen in the two pictures below: [Okanogan Afloat](#) and Dave Meierhoff's [Okanogan Float](#). (See more about Dave's float on Page 2.)



Enjoy your Veterans Day, and thanks for your service





Veterans Day in Emporia, Kansas

The History of Veterans Day In 1953 Emporia citizen Alvin J. King proposed that “Armistice Day” (a holiday celebrated every November 11 to honor those who served in WW II) be changed to Veterans Day to recognize and honor all veterans from all wars and conflicts. The holiday was first organized and celebrated in Emporia in 1953. Kansas Congressman Ed Rees, also an Emporian, then took King’s proposal

to Congress, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower, also of Kansas, signed the bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day. The first nationwide observance of the new holiday was on **November 11, 1954.**

Home of Veterans Day, Emporia has been celebrating this holiday every year since its inception, and this year was no exception as 2025 found Emporians conducting a multi-day celebration which included a Freedom Fest, which featured walking and running events and good food; a musical salute performed by the Emporia Municipal Band; a free movie screening of “Top Gun”; A football game between Emporia State and Fort Hays State—with a half time Salute to Service; a parade; and a memorial service honoring veterans who have passed away—some on the field of battle and others who served, returned home, lived productive lives and then died. The annual parade this year featured over 60 units: local organizations, community members, bands, and floats that wended their way down Commercial Street to show their appreciation to all vets.



The Okanogan Floats Again Not to be outdone by his fellow Kansans—Alvin J. King, Congressman Rees, and President Eisenhower, our shipmate **Dave Meierhoff** has been participating the Emporia parade for over ten years as the designer, builder and driver of his US Navy/Okanogan Float. This year’s entry is a really good one as it fully displays Dave’s patriotism, his love of the Navy, and the

respect and esteem that he has for the USS Okanogan and the shipmates with whom he served.

Thank you for representing us, Dave.





**God Rest the Souls of Our Departed Shipmates
and Bring Comfort to Their Friends and Families.**



Norman Laskay passed away at home in New Orleans LA on October 13, 2025 surrounded by his family. He is survived by his beloved wife of 53 years, Leslie Weathersby Laskay and his daughter, Socea Laskay May. Norm first served aboard our ship as a deck division officer and later as our navigator in the mid-60s. A graduate of Maine Maritime Academy, Laskay spent most of his adult life in activities related to the sea and ships— first as a Navy and merchant seaman and later as a senior partner of DLS Marine, a leading worldwide marine surveying firm. All of us who attended the New Orleans Reunion and enjoyed our stay in NOLA and loved all of the tours and activities truly appreciate everything that Norm did to ensure that our final reunion would one of the best—if not the best—of our organization’s 35 annual reunions.

Norman was widely recognized as a leader in the marine appraisal industry. He served for many years with the American Society of Appraisers, where he helped establish national standards for marine evaluation and taught courses to surveyors around the world. He loved sharing stories from his early seafaring days and took great pride in seeing younger surveyors grow in their craft. Norman touched many lives and he will be missed by all of us.

IN MEMORIAM

Since the last newsletter our Historian, Colin Carney, has discovered the names of 14 of our shipmates who had passed away sometime ago, but had not been added to our Muster List of Deceased Shipmates: The names of these sailors will be added to our list of departed shipmates which can be found on our Organizations Web Site (ussokanogan.org)



Brautigan, Richard BM1 Korea
Cook, George BM 1951-55
Delos, Bryant GM1966-67
Dunn, John SN 1947-51
Martinez, Augustine, MM Vietnam
Richardson, Glen GMG3 64-68
Unser, Buck 1959-1960

Clemo, Rober C EN2 1958-62
Corrolli, Harry LT Korea 1949-52
Dibble, James QMMC Korea
Hargett, Claude, S1c WW I
Nicholson, Robert A ENFN 1966-68
Smalley, Andrew Korea
Weisinger, Carl, GMG3 Vietnam

NOTE: Many important procedures, policies, and decisions were made at the New Orleans Reunion Business Meeting. Please read over the official minutes presented on pages 4 and 5. The pages that follow the minutes will elaborate on the what will happen to the organization and what you can do to “stay in touch” and to help us meet our closing goals.



Meeting Minutes Providence, September 15, 2025

Opening Activities

Master at Arms, Larry Black, called our annual business meeting to order at exactly 1700, with Reunion Coordinator Dave Meierhoff presiding and calling upon Dr. Cliff Perkins to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Following the pledge, Meierhoff welcomed the 16 voting members and 15 guests in attendance. He then recognized Eddie Janek as the only WW II or Korean Veteran in attendance this year. Next, he paid tribute to Norm Laskay for all that Norm did in “paving the way” for this year’s reunion—organizing tours, contracting busses, securing venues, etc. Norm was, unquestionably, the person most responsible for the success of the reunion this year. Finally, Meierhoff mentioned the names of shipmates who, like Laskay, had to cancel at the last minute and informed us that we would be contacting some of these gentlemen via video/phone sometime during our reunion. He also encouraged us to send cards, e-mails, and other greetings to them and others who couldn’t be with us this year.

Business carried over from 2024

Historian’s Report

Historian Colin Carney delivered an interesting report on the formation and operations of PHIBRON 7. Carney’s mentioning of names of ships we steamed with on a regular basis and the training we performed in preparation for both Korea and Vietnam brought back memories of the times we served aboard APA 220, as did his description of our landings and activities in Vietnam. He concluded his presentation by informing us that Former PHIBRON 7 ship USS Cabildo is now a museum in NOLA and suggesting that it would be a good site for us to visit on our free day.

Last Year’s Minutes

Next, Secretary Tom Schaefer read the minutes from the 2024 Business Meeting, noting that we would soon be voting on proposals related to the dissolution of the Okanogan Organization. Cliff Perkins moved that the minutes be accepted. Larry Cleveland seconded the motion, and the membership unanimously agreed.

Treasurer’s Report

In the final piece of “Old Business,” Treasurer Richard Keel informed us that our treasury’s assets as of this morning stood at \$10,424.56 with approximately \$4400 worth of pending reunion expenses. He will produce a final and accurate Financial Report sometime in mid-October and publish it the the November edition of our newsletter. The treasurer’s report was approved by the membership—Thus concluding the the meeting’s Old Business segment.

New Business

The next part of the meeting, overseen by Tom Schaefer, was devoted to dealing with how we will proceed with the shutting down of our organization while at the same time providing a framework that will enable us to continue to communicate with each other, to preserve the memory of our ship and her crew, and to facilitate a smooth, meaningful and effective distribution of our assets.



The Closing of the USS Okanogan Organization

We began with a discussion of what we should do with our **non-cash assets**. Based upon that discussion and subsequent motions, the membership voted that our organization's bell used at our meetings and ceremonies, should become a prize at our banquet, and that our ship's historic launching bottle container be donated to a museum. It was further decided that any other memorabilia belonging to our organization will remain with the shipmates who presently possess them.

[Notes: (1.) Colin Carney volunteered to find a museum-home for our Ship's Launching Bottle Container. (2.) Cliff Perkins won our ship's bell at the banquet. (3.) We have plans to compile a catalogue of what Okanogan memorabilia is still around and who possesses it.]

Next we discussed the mechanisms that we have put in place to **help our members stay connected** with one another so that they can continue to communicate, share ideas, keep up-to-date, and to perhaps meet in small groups from time to time at informal reunions. (1) **Our newsletter** will be published twice a year: (Memorial Day in May and Veterans Day in November). These semi-annual editions will be distributed via e-mail only. Those who have been receiving their newsletter via US mail will have to provide us with an e-mail address. (2) **Our organization's new and improved website, www.ussokanogan.org**, is up and running. It will be maintained by Mick Correia. You will find that the site is professional and easy to navigate, and that it will be a valuable tool in keeping former Okanogan sailors informed and up-to-date. Mick stands ready to accept all suggestions, comments, or reactions (mick.correia@icloud.com). (3) Our **Directory of Shipmates** is on track to be delivered via e-mail some time in December or January. The directory will present an alphabetical list of all members and will provide their name, the highest Rank/Rate they attained while in the Navy, the years they served aboard the Okanogan, the name of their spouse, their address, phone number (cell and/ or home), and their e-mail address.

Our third consideration was to insure that our Okanogan Organization members continue to display their patriotism and their pride in the US Navy and that they keep alive their memories of the USS Okanogan and her crew. Suggestions for how to accomplish this goal will appear in subsequent newsletters and upon the web page.

Our final discussion and action centered upon how to best dispose of our financial assets after all reunion expenses are paid. Many suggestions were proposed and discussed—donate to charity, divide among membership, donate to veterans' organizations, reimburse reunion attendees, provide scholarships....Following these discussions Gordon Arnsperger made the motion that whatever is left should be divided into four equal parts and that Colin Carney, Richard Keel, Dave Meierhoff, and Tom Schaefer should each receive one of the parts. Each of these men would then be responsible for deciding what should be done with the fourth he is responsible for, distributing it accordingly, and informing the membership of his action. Garry Mulick and Don Lazarus both seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned When no one responded to the call for other new business, Larry Cleveland moved that the meeting be ended. Barry White seconded, and the meeting closed with a prayer by Richard Keel at 1826.

Very respectfully submitted,

Thomas F. Schaefer, Secretary

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**THE END
OF AN
ERA**



To Help Us by Doing the Following

Stay Connected through the newsletter. From now on, newsletters will be issued twice a year— Memorial Day in May and Veterans Day in November. If you presently receive your newsletter through the U.S. mail, you will have to make an adjustment. After this issue, **all of our newsletters will be delivered only to e-mail addresses.** Therefore, If you want to continue to receive The New Rendezvous, you will have to

supply Tom Schaefer with an e-mail address. If you do not have one, maybe you could send us the e-mail address of a family member or good friend. We would send it to their address and they could print it out and bring it to you. (Wouldn't it be nice go see them a couple of times year?) Please send your e-mail address to schae2k@comcast.net . **Also we are counting on everyone to supply us with newsletter material.** Please let us know what is going on with you and your family. Also if you come across a story or an event that you think your shipmates will be interested in please send it to us. We would also be really happy to hear about any occasion in which you meet up with or communicate with a shipmate.

The new and improved USS Okanogan Website: Our new website created by Paul Hartman of The Computer Engineering Group, Inc. in Baltimore and overseen by our webmaster, Mick Correia, is up and in the process of being updated to include pictures of the New Orleans Reunion and the latest information on deceased shipmates. Please log on to the site www.ussokanogan.org . You will be impressed, for the site is professional and easy to navigate,.Mick stands ready to accept all suggestions, comments, or reactions. Let him know what you think.

10 Ways that Okanogan Organization members can continue to display their patriotism and their pride in the US Navy and that they keep alive their memories of the USS Okanogan and her crew. Sponsoring Okanogan plaques in museums, libraries, cemeteries and other venues. (1) Fly the flag (2) Attend parades and patriotic events (3) Wear your ribbons and medals on patriotic holidays (4) Proudly wear your Okanogan and United States Navy tee shirts, ball caps, jackets, and other Navy gear (5) Volunteering to speak at elementary middle, and high school Veterans Day programs (6) Join and support the American Legion, VFW, and other veteran organizations (7) Console and support the widows and family members of our deceased shipmates (8) Let educators and all of your friends know about the 127 videos that 19 of us recorded while at our Harrisburg Reunion in 2019. You can find these very professional videos by typing USS Okanogan APA 220/Veteran Interview Archive into your address bar. Or by logging on to youtube and typing "USS Okanogan" into the search bar. (9) Pass down your Navy memorabilia to your kids and grandkids along with your favorite sea stories (10) Visit and support military venues—Navy Memorial, Vietnam Wall, Military Ships, Bases, Forts, National Shrines, etc.

Our Directory of Shipmates is still on track to be delivered via e-mail some time in December or January. We might be e-mailing you a portion of the document to make sure our information is correct and up-to-date. If we do, please return it as soon as possible.



Now Hear This—News and Notes from Your Editor



Would You like a copy of the New Orleans Reunion Memory Booklet that we sent out to all of those shipmates and guests that attended our festivities the year? The booklet, which is 15-pages long, contains copy and pictures that provide a historical perspective on both our ship and our organization and then goes on to chronicle the activities that took place at this year's gathering—starting with our Welcome Aboard Session in the hospitality room and ending with our annual Ship's Banquet. Of special note were our trips to the absolutely fantastic WW II Museum; and our exploration of Manchac Swamp, as we checked out the population of alligators, wild pigs, egrets, raccoons and other "swamp creatures." When we left the swamp, we were transported to Pier 51 Seafood restaurant, where we dined on authentic cajun food—including gumbo; po-boy sandwiches; and fried alligator, if you were brave enough to try it. We also took a very interesting bus tour of the City of New Orleans, and participated in the very important final business Meeting of the USS Okanogan Organization. **I will be happy to e-mail this Memory book to any one who emails his request to schaef2k@comcast.net .**

Treasurer Richard Keel reports that we presently have about \$3,500 on hand. He looks to pay off a few final obligations and then distribute what remains in equal parts to Colin Carney Richard Keel, Dave Meierhoff, and Tom Schaefer who have been given the responsibility for distributing our funds in accordance with the goals that we established at the Business Meeting. (See page 5.) We will report on what each of the four appointees does with his share in the May Newsletter. Treasurer Keel's goal is to "close out the books" by January 1, 2026.

Please keep in mind that one of the major goals in closing down our organization has always been to provide ways that we can keep in touch with each other. Hopefully, some of this togetherness will take place as you actually meet up with shipmates—maybe you could take a cruise together, visit a resort like Branson, or plan a visit to a city that you have been wanting to see. If you do make plans like this and want to be joined by other shipmates, please let us know and we will publish your plans for others to see.

Did you know that the word "OKANOGAN" is an Indian word meaning "RENDEZVOUS". With that in mind, it seems as we former Okanogan sailors are almost obligated to rendezvous with one another. I do know that **the lovely Mary Ann** and I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of every rendezvous we have had with all of you from Plymouth Meeting in 2010 to New Orleans this year. And we are hoping that some how, some way our paths will cross again. What do you think?

An Important Reminder: If you do not presently receive your newsletter through the internet, please send me an e-mail address by January 1, 2026. (www.schaef2k@comcast.net).

Another one: I am counting on you to supply me with material for future newsletters.

Here are a couple of other e-mail addresses you might be interested in:

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So Long, Shipmates. It has been a GREAT cruise!



Here's wishing you fair winds and following seas