

THE DECKPLATE

Volume 2, Issue 2

September 2003

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS SCHOFIELD (DEG/FFG-3)



Points of Special Interest

- *Mark your calendars now for the 2004 reunion in San Diego. See what the city has to offer by reading the cover story.*
- *Page two has one new member for the roster. See WELCOME MAT for his name and address.*
- *An important message from Larry Eckard, President of ML&RS, Inc. is on pages three and four.*
- *Be sure to take a few minutes to fill out the survey on page five to let us know your wishes for the reunion.*

SAN DIEGO, JUNE 24-27, 2004

The dates for the 2004 reunion in San Diego, CA have been finalized. The USS Schofield reunion will be June 24—27 at the Handlery Hotel & Resort. San Diego is a fabulous place for a reunion and will be a great time for all who can attend. As usual, we will give you a brief summary of some of the most famous sites and activities for the San Diego area and let you choose the ones you would like to have on your reunion agenda. Send in the survey on the last page so we can begin to plan the activities which you prefer. Make your plans now, so you won't miss this reunion.

The history of modern San Diego begins with Alonzo Horton, the former New Englander. In 1867, he purchased nearly 1,000 jackrabbit-infested acres (for about 27 cents each) along the harbor, initially giving away lots to anyone who would agree to build on them. By the turn of the century, "New Town" contained more than 300 buildings and had replaced Old Town as the center of San Diego commerce.

As we explore the downtown you will see Horton's legacy lives on in the unique citadel of shopping and dining that bears his name, **Horton**

Plaza, located in Gaslamp Quarter where Horton's development first began.

The 16-block **Gaslamp Quarter** has become the hottest place since the development of Horton Plaza in 1985 and the creation of San Diego Convention Center. Also, there are round-the-clock activities in the area with shops, galleries, coffee houses, theatre spaces and dozens of restaurants.

On the waterfront is the **San Diego Maritime Museum** showcasing San Diego's rich maritime past. It consists of the century-old windjammer *Star of India*,

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

the steam ferry *Berkeley* and the luxury yacht *Medea*.

We have established a really good relationship with the Public Affairs Office on the Naval Base, and barring alerts, or some other special occasion, we can normally arrange a guided tour on an active duty ship. We of course have no control over the type of ship. The last reunion we hosted in San Diego this November got a 3 1/2 hour tour of USS VALLEY FORGE and were treated like VIPs. It was the highlight of the reunion for many of the men.

Along the Embarcadero toward the Convention Center you'll find not only the city's working tuna fleet but also part of the US Navy's Pacific Fleet. The city's maritime history is actively commemorated in Seaport Village, a 14-acre waterfront shopping and dining complex that recalls the days when cargo ships would make the dangerous journey from New England around Cape Horn.

Downtown San Diego encompasses much more than the harbor area. The most famous attraction is **Balboa Park**, another reminder of Alonzo Horton's civic vision. Just north of the central business district, the park covers 1,200 lush acres and contains some of the most fantastic architecture ever assembled in one place:

13 Museums

Art Galleries,

**Reuben H Fleet Space Theater
and Science Center**

**Simon Edison Centre for
the Performing Arts**

**San Diego Junior Theatre
Starlight Bowl**

California Tower

(with its working 100-bell carillon)

Balboa Park is also the home of the world-famous **San Diego Zoo**, which houses 800 different species in the enclosures carefully designed to resemble the animals' natural

habitat. The entire Zoo is designed as a 100-acre tropical garden and can be visited on foot and on a special three-mile guided bus tour.

Just across the harbor from downtown San Diego lies the quaint village of **Coronado** which is accessible by the four-lane, two mile long San Diego-Coronado Bay Bridge. It is also connected to the mainland on the south by a long, narrow sandbar known as the **Silver Strand**. The jewel in the Crown City is the historic and fascinating **Hotel del Coronado**, which has attracted the rich and famous since its opening in 1888.

The north end of Coronado is occupied by **North Island Naval Air Station**, and the east is the headquarters for the Naval Amphibious Base.

The scenic drive down the Silver Strand will take us just across the border into Mexico to **Tijuana**. Tijuana is a shoppers mecca, and even if you don't spend a peso, the trip is worthwhile.

Now decide which of these attractions you would like to see on the agenda for your **June 24—27, 2004 reunion at the Handlery Hotel & Resort in San Diego**. Mark them on the survey form and return it to us so we can customize the activities according to your wishes. We want to make your reunion truly yours by giving you what you want. Please let your voice be heard. Registration packets will be mailed approximately 90 days before the reunion is scheduled. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend.

**USS SCHOFIELD
REUNION
JUNE 24—27, 2004
SAN DIEGO, CA
HANDLERY HOTEL
& RESORT**



WELCOME MAT

The following shipmate has been located since the last newsletter. Welcome aboard. We hope to see you at the next reunion and that you will take an active part in the association. We welcome:

*Paul Taylor (1968-70) E3 M Div
PO Box 780-903
Sebastian, FL 32967
772-589-2317*

FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance after 06/03 issue
\$724.64

Funds received since 06/03 issue
\$69.50

Funds available for 09/03 **\$794.14**

Expended 09/03 newsletter-
\$207.54

Balance for 12/03—\$586.60

Contributions should now be made to ML&RS, address below.

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Hickory, NC 28603**

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"Our Reunions Work So You Don't Have To"

OUR VIEW

Larry H Eckard, President, ML & RS, Inc

We truly appreciate the support and loyalty the members of the USS Schofield have shown to Brenda and me and the staff of ML & RS, Inc. We intend to keep providing you with the first class service that you deserve and expect at reasonable prices and hopefully maintain your loyalty and support.

Ten years ago or less, we were in a so-called "buyer's market". Hotels competed for our business by offering excellent rates and amenities, but by the late 90's, this was changing. Hotels still competed for our business, but almost as if by collusion, the rates began to creep up. Even though we still were able to get bargain rates compared to "rack rates" or individual planners, the rates were (and remain) higher. With the downturn in the economy, everyone thought that we'd see the market swing back to where it had been in the early to mid 90's. Not so. Surprisingly the hotels did not buy into that theory. At the risk of losing business, rates were kept high, and that is where we are today. There are still some good rates out there (compared to today's average prices) but they are becoming harder to find, and certainly will not be found in major cities, especially in downtown hotels. Food prices have increased, but not to the extent that room rates have.

All you have to do is drive by the gas pump or look at your gas credit card and you'll see how fuel prices have increased. It's easy to see why tour costs have risen significantly.

With that brief background, this would be a good time to review exactly how using our services benefit your organization. Once you fully understand just what is included in your reunion price, you'll find it is actually a bargain. Just to refresh your memory:

- We started, and are continuing to this day, assisting

you in locating members of your ship, unit, organization, etc.

- We place reunion announcements (using the reunion coordinator's name as contact person) in over 400 newspapers throughout the country and forty veterans publications. Dozens of your members have been found this way.
- For those who want us to, we maintain your database. Even though a member of the group may duplicate our efforts (and there is no real reason for someone to do this), we have the most up-to-date roster of members.
- We subscribe to a postal service that tracks change of addresses provided the member leaves a forwarding address with the post office. That is not a free service; it costs \$.70 per change of address.
- We also subscribe to a label printing service, updated quarterly by the postal service, that automatically corrects address, adds the last four digits of the zip code, and prints the bar code which is required for discounted postage rates.
- The two subscriptions referred to above allows us to maintain a postal permit for "automation" which lowers the postage from \$.37 to \$.219.
- Once the city has been selected, we take it from there. Our experienced negotiators get the best possible prices, rates that you as an individual planner cannot get.
- We know how to negotiate, what to ask for, and just as important, what not to ask for.
- We get lower rates by not accepting or giving anything complimentary to anyone, so everyone pays the same price.
- We get lower rates by reserving a block of rooms on your behalf instead of each individual calling the hotel freeing up the hotel's reservations staff to handle their face-to-face customers. This is especially significant at check out time. If you don't have any incidental charges, turn in your key and walk out – bill paid. You can't do that with an individual reservation.
- Hotels, tour companies, entertainers, and other vendors see us as repeat business, they see an individual planner as a one-time deal. Who gets the best deal consistently? We do!
- We prepare, print and mail all reservation material.
- We pay all the deposits (and unless you have a treasury this is significant)
- We receive all reservations from members
- We make all reservations with the hotel
- We are able to accept VISA and MASTERCARD
- We are on site to manage the reunion, freeing up your members to enjoy the reunion
- We act as liaison between the hotel and the group
- We create and print banquet and memorial service programs
- We provide each member with a memorabilia item commemorating the reunion
- We arrange for entertainment, guest speakers, Color Guards
- We have a host of first quality memorabilia items (caps, T-shirts, sweat shirts , etc)
- There is absolutely no cost to the coordinator or the

association. (We are compensated by charging a registration fee to everyone who attends the reunion)

- At the end of the reunion, we start over again.
- We truly care about your reunion. We want it to succeed just as much as you do.

Let's make it clear from the onset, there are some reunion groups that do successfully plan and manage their own reunions. Let me make it equally clear, doing your own reunion is not less expensive and it is a heck of a lot more trouble and work. We know, there is an organization or two out there that charges you to attend special seminars they call FamTours (which by the way are sponsored and funded by the host city's Convention & Visitor's Bureau, so they actually are free). Hmmm! If you Reunion Chairmen are really interested in visiting a city, tell us and the next time they have a FamTour, we'll make arrangements for you to attend—free. (You'll still have to provide your own transportation.) Many Chairmen of our groups have gone free—and many more have been invited—to Fam's in Norfolk, Buffalo, Colorado Springs, Albuquerque, Asheville, Jacksonville, Virginia Beach, just to name a few, so you know first hand it can be done.

These seminars claim to “teach you how” to plan your own reunion by giving you a few common sense pointers and then trying to sell you liability insurance. You may learn something at one of these seminars that you don't know, but I challenge you to discover something that we are not already doing. My point is, if you pay to go to one of their planner events, (and I am sure some of you have); don't be fooled by how easy they make it sound. Planning and managing a reunion from start to finish is not nearly as easy as the classroom instruction would have you believe. Remember the old adage, “Them that can do – Them that can't teach.” We don't mean this to

be critical because some of things they are now “teaching” are things we've been doing for years; but other things being taught are downright foolish.

Make no mistake, experienced hotel Sales Directors can spot an inexperienced individual planner a mile away. Unless you know how to negotiate, you won't get the best available deals, you'll get what the hotel wants to have. So, if the subject “doing it our selves” ever comes up, ask your self one question. Am I (me, personally, not one of the other guys) willing to accept total responsibility for all of the items we have listed above, plus the unforeseen things that will happen. If you are not willing to do it, why would you pass it off to a buddy?

With the increased use of the Internet, a lot of “fare saver” businesses, such as Expedia, Priceline, Travelocity, Orbitz, to name a few have emerged. Often you can get what seems to be a good room rate (sometimes even at the reunion hotel) from one of these services. Getting a room through one of these services may save you a couple of dollars (but we can document a couple instances when the reunion rate is less than the fare saver rate. But in the long run, it hurts the rest of your friends. The hospitality room, and banquet rooms are provided without cost, based on the number of guest rooms that are occupied by members of the group and reserved through ML & RS, Inc. Why do you think the first question you are asked is, “How many rooms will you require”? Then the next step is for the sales director to ask the past couple of reunion hotels to confirm your room history. Therefore, each person who gets his/her own room, either through one of these services, or even at another hotel, does not pay their fair share of hospitality and banquet room charges, passing this cost instead to those who stay in the hotel.

This is a serious matter, and unless we nip it in the bud, I can foresee the time when it will be nec-

essary to charge folks not staying in the hotel a sur charge to cover their share of the rooms in question. Folks, there ain't nothing free.

STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

This is the official publication of the USS Schofield Association. From now on it will be published quarterly in March, June, September and December, *subject to receiving sufficient funding*. The Newsletter is funded by voluntary contributions from the membership. All members are encouraged to support the voice of the Schofield. A financial statement will appear in each of the following issues. **Send contributions to ML&RS, Inc. PO Drawer 11399, Hickory, NC 28603.**

The newsletter is intended to be a vehicle for the members to express opinions, make suggestions and especially share experiences.

Unless otherwise stated, the views and opinions printed in the newsletter are those of the article's writer, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Association leadership or the Editor of the Newsletter.

All letters and stories submitted will be considered for publication, except unsigned letters will not be published. Letters requesting the writer's name be withheld will be honored, but published on a space available basis. Signed letters with no restrictions will be given priority.

Letters demeaning to another shipmate will not be printed; letters espousing a political position will not be printed.

ML&RS, Inc is not responsible for the accuracy of articles submitted for publication. It would be impossible to check each story. Therefore, we rely on the submitter to research each article.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space limitations and grammar.

You are encouraged to actively participate in the newsletter family, by submitting your stories and suggestions.

USS SCHOFIELD 2004 REUNION SURVEY SAN DIEGO, CA, JUNE 24-27

In order to provide the kind of reunion you want, not what we "think" you'd like, please take a few minutes to look over, complete and return this survey to ML&RS, Inc. right away. The reunion agenda will be created from the responses and the Chairman's input. Let your voice be heard. **Please return the survey by December 29, 2003**. Mail surveys to:

**Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc.
P O Drawer 11399
Hickory, NC 28603-6402**

**Or Fax:
828-256-6559**

Reunion format:

Do you want a welcome reception the first evening? ____yes ____no;
If yes, would you prefer only an hors d'oeuvre platter____
or a hamburger/hot dog or soup & sandwich type dinner____?

Do you prefer breakfast all three mornings as a group____
or just a farewell breakfast on Sunday____?

Do you prefer the hotel Luau on Friday night____
or have the evening free____?

Do you want a band or DJ after the Saturday night banquet ____yes ____no?

Please indicate which activities you would like to see on your reunion agenda :

____ Gaslamp Quarter	____ San Diego Zoo
____ San Diego Maritime Museum	____ Coronado
____ Naval Air Station & Amphibious Base	____ Point Loma
____ Embarcadero	____ Tijuana, Mexico
____ Seaport Village	____ Horton Plaza
____ Balboa Park	____ Old Town

Your comments and suggestions are welcome:

PLEASE RETURN BY DECEMBER 29, 2003

REGISTRATION PACKETS WILL BE MAILED OUT APPROXIMATELY 90 DAYS PRIOR TO THE REUNION.