

First Texas Volunteers (BB-35) Newsletter

February, 2006

Donald H. Fischer, President
February 8, 2006

Annual Banquet, Saturday, January 28.

Our annual banquet was held at the Monument Inn Saturday evening, January 28. We had a great turnout, with 54 attendees. Included in the crowd were friends from TPWD, including Russ Kuykendall, director of San Jacinto State Historic Site, and Barry Ward, director of the Battleship *Texas*. Also attending were our close friends from the Battleship Texas Foundation and San Jacinto Battleground Association, Capt. Charles Alcorn and Jan DeVault respectively.

The central theme for the banquet was appreciation for a great 2005. The past year seems to have been something of a watershed for FTV. The organization seemed to hit a stride. The McArdle project was completed after two and a half years. The McArdles, responding with a dinner in November for the volunteers who worked on the project, were genuinely impressed with the entire effort and the outstanding results. The Boiler Room #3 project continues with positive results seen at every turn. Lighting systems are being activated for Hard Hat Tours, and the Combat Information Center (CIC) is shaping up well.

Three awards were presented during our "official" portion of the banquet. Chuck Moore received his Certificate of Appreciation for the most hours in 2005 with 971, and his tremendous work on the McArdle project. Bill Siros, who was second in hours with 823, and who has been leading the charge on restoration of CIC, also received a Certificate of Appreciation. Finally, but certainly not least in the eyes of his fellow volunteers, was presented in absentia a Certificate of Appreciation for his leadership in restoration, and especially on the McArdle project.

The Hard Hat Tours for 2005 were successful, earning over \$11,000 to be directed toward our restoration work.

All in all, a successful year, and as the song says, "the best is yet to come".

Hard Hat Tours of Saturday, January 23 Earns \$2,505.

FTV earned \$2,505 during the January 23 Hard Hat Tours. A total of 77 visitors participated in the tours and seemed to thoroughly enjoy themselves. In fact, a number of visitors donated more than the \$30 we have asked. In addition to the revenue produced, several very positive, and unsolicited responses, were received by Barbara Tankink, our TPWD liaison. So, to everyone participating in this latest HHT production, well done.

Excerpts include: *"Thank you for providing the tour. Jo Ann, my wife, has been telling everyone she can about the tour and how much we enjoyed the tour. Our thanks to our tour guide and the other members of the guide group who provided the explanation of what went on in each compartment."*

Also, *"...am back in the UK now and would just like to say how pleased I was with the hard-hat tour last Saturday. It was very interesting and I was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm of all involved with the on-going restoration of the ship. A special thanks to the guy who took round our party. I am terrible at remembering names, but I do recollect he was The Electrician – Sparky." Well done, "Sparky"! Or, shall I say, Stan?*

And, *".... I highly recommend the hardhat tour on the Battleship Texas. I did it last weekend. You go into the bowels of the ship that are otherwise off-limits to the public. Plus, every dollar of the \$30 fee (plus any extra you give) goes straight to the efforts underway to restore other areas of this historic vessel."*

Next Hard Hat Tour Scheduled for Saturday, March 18.

Everyone, please remember the next Hard Hat Tour is slated for March 18. Regulars and everyone else, who would like to participate and learn more, please contact Don Fischer for assignments. Currently all visitor slots are filled.

While we are on that subject, Ed Morrison is recuperating at home following some surgery and anticipates missing the next HHT. Let's make sure we give a good one for Ed.

Current Restoration Projects

As provided by Chuck Moore, our man about restoration, the major projects for 2006 are progressing as follows:

Boiler Room #3. This project is well underway. Bill Richmond volunteered to "honcho" this project this year, and his appointment seems a natural extension of the hard work he has put into this project. Assisting Bill has been his daughter, Sarah, J. D. Oliver and Stan Adams, with additional help from Jimmie Gonzalez and a cast of half dozens.

There is much to be done here, so check with Bill to see how you can assist in this project. While it's dirty work, it is not the wholesale encapsulation and stripping down that the Officer's Pantry is going to be. Half of the entire room will be restored to provide a dramatic demonstration to our special tours of our on-going efforts to restore the ship and why their support and donations are important.

Motor Whale Boat. The abrasive blaster has been shipped and should be aboard shortly. In the meantime, project details and identification and staging of materials are underway. Two major keys to this project are some expertise in woodworking and caulking of the seams. If your expertise runs in those areas, please contact Sharron Waszkiewicz and give her and her team a hand.

Officers' Pantry. Chuck Moore is leading this project and needs your help. Various furniture and miscellaneous materials have been relocated from the pantry, and segregation and ventilation is being rigged prior to executing the stripping of the compartment.

John Stock will be taking plans for the warming table in anticipation of reproduction.

Folks, this is your basic grunt work restoration project. Be sure to give Chuck a call and jump in.

The Ship, the Park, and Everything

There really isn't much to report on the prospective dry berthing of the ship. It can be said that this

approach is recognized as the only viable option to saving the ship. The old concept of moving the ship to dry dock periodically has been scrapped permanently.

At this time efforts are underway by TPWD, BTF, and SJBA to identify sources of funds to perform the necessary work to build the berth and repair the ship. Currently some \$16 million has been earmarked for this work through some circuitous efforts by BTF. While this seems like a lot, it will take much, much more to realize the goal. This subject merits serious discussion in-house of what role FTV can or should play in such efforts.

On a more direct and happy note, the ship has just received another \$10,000 from the McArdle Foundation. Barry will be the arbiter of how these funds are to be used. It is probably a safe bet that much of these funds may be used in restoration efforts.

SJBA, which I have described as an extremely professional, cooperative, and yet focused group, has already performed extremely valuable service for the park. Several parcels of land have been acquired, ensuring no further encroachment or construction will intrude upon the battleground.

There have been some wrinkles. The San Jacinto Museum Association and BTF have expressed some concerns about how these three very disparate organizations can function together. There is a perceived threat that SJBA wants to "take over". Through the author's personal observation in working with SJBA this past year, this is not the case at all. During a recent advisory board meeting at the park, viewpoints from all parties were aired, and in many ways, the air was cleared, but parochial views held by all organizations will be difficult to overcome. Our job in all of this is to ensure we are good neighbors and colleagues to all who support the Battleship Texas and San Jacinto State Historic Site.

In wrapping up on a light note, if you have not already run this trap, each of us will be required to carry a "green card" to verify, if you will excuse the joke, we are "legal" and may gain access to the park for our activities. This will ensure we won't have to pay the new entrance fee, which became effective the first of February.

See you soon.