



# The Scuttlebutt

April 2010



Newsletter for USS Texas BB-35 First Texas Volunteers (FTV)

## Docent / Hard Hat Tour (HHT) News

### Dates for future 2010 HHT's:

May 8  
Oct 16  
Nov 20

Two events are coming up which will need volunteers:

**Hardhat Tour, May 8th.** - We will need docents, water boys, -etc. to welcome our guests and serve as tour guides and followers. The May 8<sup>th</sup> Hardhat Tour is going to be another full house; 104 participation count as of now that's 13 for each time slot per group, with a waiting list of 24 to get on. Good turnout. Please let me know how available you are and preferences as to time slots.

**BB-35 Authorization Celebration, June 26th.** - Construction of the USS TEXAS was authorized on 24 June 1910 when President Taft signed the budget conference bill. They planned on \$6 million dollars, excepting armor and armament. TPWD is planning to celebrate the 100th. anniversary of this momentous event on June 26th., 2010. The plan is that a party with cake will also attract some public figures. Put this on your calendar; more details forthcoming. Let me know if you may be available.

Herb Powers (VP Docents) [hwpowers@prodigy.net]

## Restoration News

### Dates for future 2010 Restoration Work Parties:

Apr 24	Aug 14, 28
May 8, 22	Sep 11, 25
Jun 5, 19	Oct 9, 23
Jul 3, 17, 31	Nov 6, 20
	Dec 4

Don't forget we have "Home Work Buckets" for anyone that can work on items away from the ship.

Barbara Graf (TPWD) sent the following reminder for those working at The Ship on Saturday, April 24:

FTV: Please remember that Saturday April 24th is our San Jacinto Day Festival & Battle Reenactment and you want to arrive early. Expect to possibly be stuck in a long line of traffic waiting in cue to go through one gate or another. Lot A BB35 could possibly fill up early in the day and the gate may close early. We are going to try and instruct officers to watch for your mirror parking passes so that you may be able to park at HQ, so please be sure that you have your parking passes in your vehicle, or you may risk the officers running you out to a lot in the park and having to be shuttled in by bus. Expectation could go as high as 30,000.

## Upcoming Events

### **The Ship is having a birthday!**

Well sorta, more of an anniversary of a birth announcement.

### **"Celebrating a Century" event**

Andy Smith (Ship Manager) sent this to the FTVNews Staff:

A minor addition/correction- the June 26th event is also (and more importantly) our "Celebrating a Century" event for this year, in which we will celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Authorization of TEXAS on June 24, 1910. We will have a cake cutting, ribbon cutting and guided tours (provided by the FTV!) . . . I really enjoy what y'all have done with the newsletter- it is great!

Thanks!  
Andy

### **Don't forget to mark your calendars for:**

San Jacinto Day Festival & Battle Reenactment - April 24, 2010  
Restoration Work Days - April 24, May 8, and 22, 2010  
Hard Hat Tour - May 8, 2010  
"Celebrating a Century" event / Battleship Interpretive Project, "Grand Unveiling" - Saturday June 26, 2010  
BB35 Veterans' Reunion - October 9, 2010  
Pearl Harbor Ceremony - December 4, 2010  
Yuletide TEXAS "A Sailors Christmas" - December 11, 2010

## Reminiscing the past

Alita Morrison has been gracious enough to send us some past reminisces. First are some excerpts from a short write-up she sent us, which Ed Morrison did on the early history of the FTV, that will expand on what was in last month's newsletter:

I'll have to do a brief composition for you! It all started "long ago, in a galaxy far, far away".

### **A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FIRST TEXAS VOLUNTEERS (BB-35)**

In about 1985 three groups of concerned citizens began, individually, to volunteer their services to help do various things on the Ship. This was very early in the period when TPWD had suddenly inherited the Ship, and there was no structure in place to formally authorize such an arrangement.

These groups came from the Exxon Refinery in Baytown, Houston Lighting and Power Company, and the Baytown Fire Department.

These three groups set their own schedules, and just tried to stay out of everyone else's way. Generally, they each had a leader, and cooperated with whoever they might find on the Ship staff who had something interesting to work on. "Doc" Holliday, of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, gave the worker bees things to do, and they all followed his lead, as time wore on.

I joined this group on July 19, 1986, reporting to "Doc", and Alita joined on December 12, 1987, reporting to Bob Browning, the Ship's Curator at that time. I believe that Chuck Moore joined us sometime between myself and Alita. Other Old Timers included Jerry Irwin, Bernard Olive, Homer Thomas and Blaine Corman, all of whom were in place before me.

As I recall, about September 1986, TPWD declared that three Volunteer groups was too many, and that we were required to combine into one group. We all gathered in one meeting for the first time, and voted to combine. Bernard Olive, leader of the Fire Department Group, was elected "Master Chief"; Eddie Borowiak, leader of the Exxon Group, was elected "Chief"; John Jeter, leader of the HL&P Group, became "Chief" also, but also kept the secretarial records; and Terry Smith, a member of the HL&P Group, became the Treasurer. At this time, we adopted the name "First Texas Volunteers (BB-35)".

Bernard Olive had developed contacts within the U. S. Navy who served as sources of Navy Uniforms, and we adopted a schedule authorizing pseudo Navy ranks which we would assign for wear by our members according to length of service to FTV. This table ran from 50 hours' service to advance from SR to SA, 650 hours for advancement to CPO, 1700 for Ensign, up to 2900 hours for Admiral. Then, we adopted the rule that the highest rank permitted was Master Chief; nobody was permitted to exceed that rank. This clever dodge avoided having to salute each other! Most members bought Navy uniforms, dress blues, whites and dungarees, white hats and black shoes, or the female equivalents, and we all felt very snazzy. Furthermore, having the Ship hosting dozens of "sailors" was a picturesque touch!

Dungarees and khakis were the usual wear, as the reason for coming to the Ship was to work, and the work we did was hard and heavy. Our welders did welding, our electricians did wiring, and so forth. This work gave many of us very many hours, as we all worked to prepare the Ship for the 1988 drydocking in Galveston. Occasionally, this involved late-night work, just to keep the job on schedule. Bernard's knowledge of fire equipment and requirements of the Fire Codes and Coast Guard Regulations and Procedures were very useful in fulfilling these requirements; Eddie Borowiak, and other professional welders, burned up dozens of rods all around the Ship; and John Jeter's wiring expertise was put to good use. We felt fulfilled, and looked forward to riding the Ship to Galveston, working on like the heroes we considered ourselves to be.

Alita also sent some personal memories from the dry docking preparations:

Hi all of you,

I gathered my memories to tell about the preparation of the battleship to go to dry dock and the towing to dry dock.

All of the preparation for dry docking had to be completed by December 13, 1988. Lots of things were taken off the ship and stored on shore. Brass plaques were cataloged as to location, so that they could be put back after the return from dry dock. This was done as a precautionary measure, just in case, some dry dock workers might want to steal things such as brass. Many other things were packaged into crates and left on the ship.

There were two approximately 12 foot long ship models boxed and left on the ship. The models were the Carrier San Jacinto and the Cruiser Houston. Both models had been appropriately located on the ship because their names represented local history. I will tell about these models another time.

The volunteers heard stories about the dangers in the leaking hull of the Texas. Pumps were kept running to remove water from the lower ship compartments. There was talk about the danger of towing the ship a long distance to the Todd Shipyard in Galveston, Texas. The ship might sink during the towing and become a blockage to the routine commercial shipping traffic in the ship channel. Also more serious to us would be the danger to the people on board the ship. I do not think there were any life boats on board. I hope they had life vests for everyone on board. Also of concern to the volunteers was that we might lose this historic ship we so much loved and made great efforts to be part of her restoration.

Another major preparation being worked was digging away the underwater earthen "wall" separating the mooring slip from the main part of the ship channel where large commercial ships sailed past constantly. I do not know how high and wide this "wall" was. For a long time I recall dredges were working near the stern end of the BB-35. I think they were floating dredge boats, but I am not sure of that. I do not know where they put the earth after it was removed. As I recall the "wall" was earthen, but perhaps also metal or other materials to prevent water currents from moving it away.

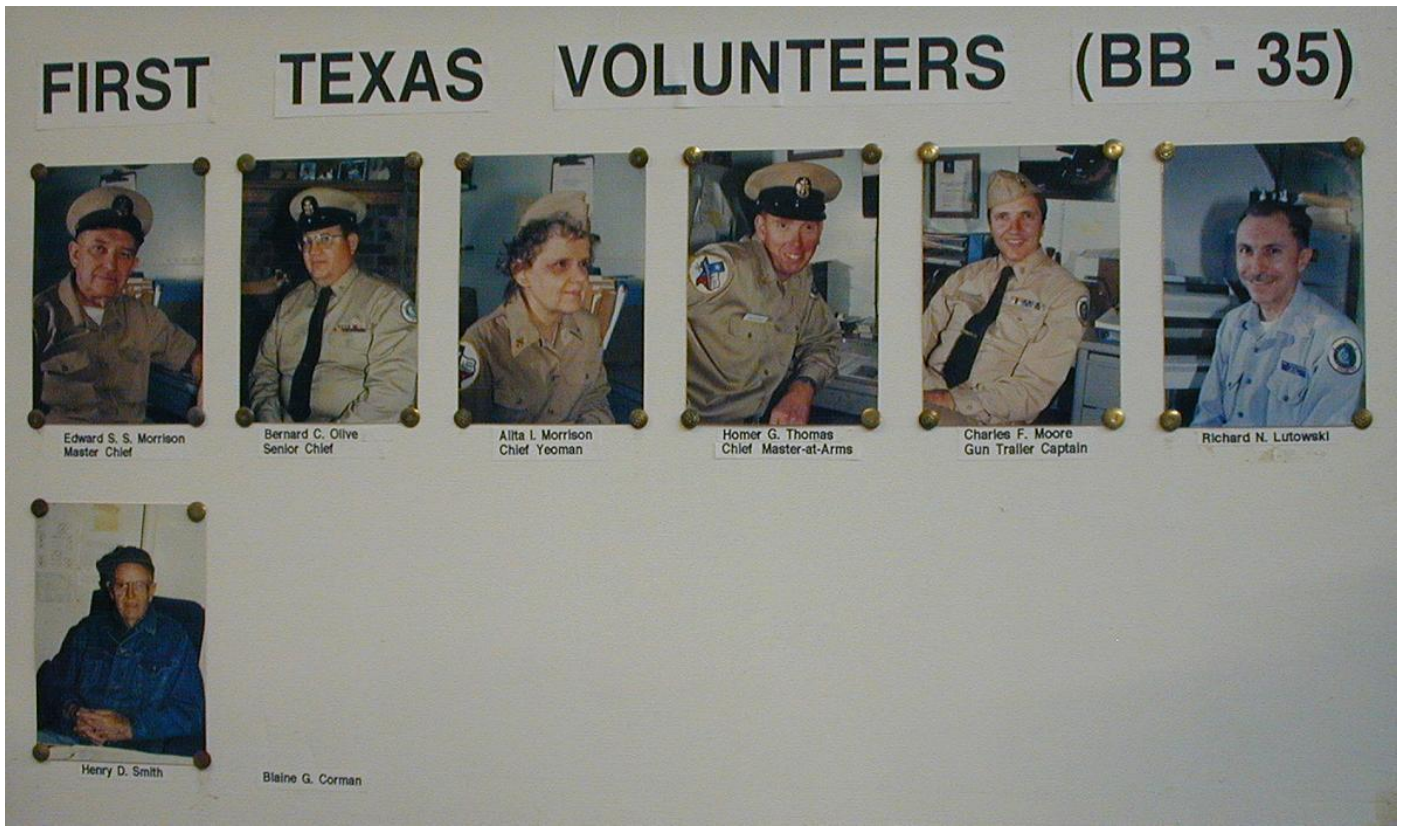
The day to tow the ship to dry dock began in the predawn hours of December 13, 1988. This ship had many TPWD staff people on board and three FTV members to ride to dry dock. The mooring cables on the ship had been disconnected. Ed and I watched from shore as many tugboats were connecting cables to the ship and starting to pull the ship out of the slip. The tugboats pulled but without much results. The "wall" had not been dredged away enough to allow the ship to get out of the slip. A story was told that one tugboat damaged its engine while working too hard. Ed and I continued to watch from the shore. We saw the paint marking of the ship's waterline rise high above the actual waterline as to tugboats pulled hard to get the ship over the remains of the "wall.". A photograph we took showed the waterline paint above the water. The tugboats looked small as we watched from the shore. One tugboat stopped at the edge of the shore and we saw that the boat was really quite a large, tall boat.

Ed and I watched on shore for many hours as the tugboats struggled to pull the ship out of the slip. When the ship had been pulled free of the remaining "wall" we and others boarded a cruise boat. The cruise boat followed the ship under tow for quite a distance. We saw several fireboats spraying decorative water showers as we followed the ship. After some miles following the ship, the cruise boat turned around and returned to the Battleground. We spent 12 hours seeing the ship off to dry dock.

I hope that you had time to read this memory of the ship. I will write more, this time, about the dry docking.

Alita Morrison (Secretary)

The FTVNews Staff was able to dig up a collage of pictures of some of the early FTV members. Herb was our photographer and supplied us with this "picture of a picture".



Top row - Ed Morrison (Master Chief), Bernard Olive (Senior Chief), Alita Morrison (Chief Yeoman), Homer Thomas (Chief Master-at-Arms), Charles Moore (Gun Trailer Captain), Richard Lutowski

Bottom row - Henry Smith, Blaine Corman (not shown)

## Other News

### **New Members**

**Please welcome the following new members to the FTV**

Peter Ream  
Rene Marin

Mike Guina  
Del Hines

### **Interesting Facts**

The following was submitted by James Thomas.

As you know, I'm working on a biography of our Capt. Charles Baker (actually retired as RAdm). While working on some family stuff, I found that his older brother, Guy Baker, was also a Naval Officer. Here's the part that may be of some interest to our group: 1935-1937, Guy Baker was commander of the USS Houston. He retired before the war, but was brought out of retirement to command the Charleston Naval Yard during the war, and had no sea duty. Anyway, with our sometime connection to the Houston, I found it very cool that our Baker was related to one of the captains of the Houston.

## FTV Library

### Recommended Reading

We seemed to have sparked some interest last month in the Cruiser Houston. Being that the Texas is moored close to Houston (the city of), I am often asked about the Cruiser Houston by visitors. So I thought I would share a bit of her (their) history and include some books that might be of interest. The heavy cruiser USS Houston CA-30 "Galloping Ghost of the Java Coast" was commissioned on June 17 1930 . She visited her namesake city, Houston TX in October 1930 and in April 1939, was considered President Franklin Roosevelt's favorite ship, and was the flag ship of the US Asiatic Fleet prior to WWII. She disappeared in the early days of the war after the Japanese had claimed to have sunk her several times. It was not until after the war that it was fully revealed that she was sunk in the Battle of Sunda Strait early on March 1, 1942, and that her surviving crew was used as forced labor by the Japanese to work on the Burma-Thai Railway ("Death Railway", made famous, along with the whistling marching song by the same name, in the movie "The Bridge on the River Kwai", which is typical of Hollywood historical accuracy). Her disappearance so riled the citizens of Houston that, in order to avenge her loss, they raised enough money to build another ship, and 1000 men volunteered to man her (actually 1650 total). The "Houston Volunteers", as they were known (the first 1000 men), were sworn in, in a mass induction ceremony on Main Street, on Memorial Day, May 30 1942, although only one actually served aboard the new Houston. There was sufficient money raised (\$85,000,000) to build two new ships, the light cruiser USS Houston CL-81 and the light aircraft carrier USS San Jacinto CVL-30.

The new light cruiser Houston was a Cleveland class light cruiser, of which 27 were built (39 were planned). Of the 12 cancelled cruisers, 9 hulls were converted into Independence class light aircraft carriers, of which the USS San Jacinto was one.

The USS San Jacinto was the ship Ensign George Bush was serving on when he was shot down over the Pacific. At the time, Bush was the youngest Naval Aviator in combat. An excellently preserved builder's model of an Independence class CVL (no AutoCAD back then) can be seen at the George Bush Library in College Station TX.

Bob Lunsford (Consulting Editor)

The following books may or may not be available in the FTV Library:

- "The Bridge over the River Kwai" by French writer Pierre Boulle (notice the title is different than the movie's)
- "The Fleet The Gods Forgot" - The US Asiatic Fleet in WWII by W.G. Winslow
- "The Ghost That Died at Sunda Strait" by W.G. Winslow
- "The Last Battle Station" - The Saga of the USS Houston by Duane Schultz
- "Ship of Ghosts" - The Story of the USS Houston by James D. Hornfischer

### From the FTVNews Staff

Nothing of any import has occurred within the FTVNews Staff this month.

Well .... that was until we had our FTVNews Staff meeting (yes, at some little hole in the wall eatery off the downtown tunnel system close to the Esperson Buildings) to discuss this month's newsletter's draft. Seems we are having some difficulty agreeing on the optimal formatting and layout for the newsletter. Please have patience with our efforts (and changes) until we figure out what works best, or at least works best for us.

**IMPORTANT!!!** Please submit any articles of interest, announcements or information to be included in future newsletters to: **BB35FTVNews@Gmail.com**.

*Any views and opinions that may appear in this newsletter are not particularly the expressed views and opinions of the editorial staff of said publication (i.e., we reserve the right to plead the 5th!).*

Senior Editors:  
Laura Lunsford  
Suzanne Riggerbach

Consulting Editor ( Typesetter, and Provider of Comic Relief ):  
Bob Lunsford