

# Swift Current

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Swift Boat Sailors Association

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Comments & suggestions to-  
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## The Maritime Museum of San Diego

Founded in 1927, the Maritime Museum of San Diego contains one of the largest collections of historic and historic replica ships on the US West Coast. The Museum itself is constituted entirely of its floating vessels, many of which operate and some of which also contain temporary and permanent exhibits on their own history and the maritime history of San Diego and the region. The ship collection has grown substantially over the last several years and now includes the 1898 steam ferry Berkeley, 1904 steam yacht Medea, Soviet era Foxtrot class attack submarine B-39, USS Dolphin AGSS 555 (the deepest diving submarine in history), replica 18th century 24-gun frigate Surprise, replica 19th century US Revenue Service Schooner Californian (official state of California tall ship), 1914 pilot craft Pilot, replica schooner yacht America, and America's Cup class racing yachts Abracadabra and Stars and Stripes. Many of these ships operate from a 1940's era railroad barge adapted to provide exhibition areas for small craft, naval artillery demonstrations, race management, and storage areas down below. Following years of research and preparation, in 2011 the Maritime Museum of San Diego will begin construction of the replica Spanish galleon San Salvador, flagship of explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo during the 1542 voyage that brought the first Europeans into the area. The flagship and centerpiece of the entire collection, however, is the 1863 bark Star of India (formerly Euterpe), which many consider to be the oldest actively operated ship in the world. Like Berkeley and Pilot, Star of India is both a national and state historic landmark. Star of India is additionally awardee of the World Ship Trust Heritage Award in 1999.

This assemblage of ships has transformed MMSD into a prominent landmark on the city waterfront and one of the most visited places in the region. Currently more than 1.4 million people annually are drawn to the Museum's location to take in the sweep of maritime history presented to open public view. Most outdoor living history museums, historic battlefield sites, historic structures, and single big-ship museums strive to recreate the past at a single moment in time, while leaving it to traditional galley-style museums to present multiple themes or subjects in relation or chronology. Along with Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and very few other outdoor Museums, MMSD aspires to present a series of related chronological experiences, each embodied in the form of an historic ship as providing its own voyage to the past, supported by encounters with artifacts and period spaces therein that place the ship and its time in context and in relationship to the others. The result, from the visitor's point of view, is hopefully a set of linked experiences which unfold over time in explaining San Diego's place in maritime history.

In keeping, exhibits on board museum vessels address such themes as the age of exploration, the Pacific voyages of the enlightenment, the history of fishing in the Pacific, yachting, the US Navy, America's entrance into the Pacific, the maritime aspect of continental expansion, the advent of steam navigation, oceanography, maritime commerce, and the history of San Diego Bay. The Star of India herself houses exhibits which illustrate her own history as a product of hundreds of years of technological evolution, as an implement of oceanic trade, a player in the great oceanic migrations of humanity, a workplace, a home, and a symbol of community identity.

In addition to the permanent exhibitions, MMSD also provides a program of ongoing temporary installations ranging from maritime art and photography, history of cartography, miniature ship modeling, to large historical theme subjects such as Piracy in the Pacific, Age of Fighting Sail, and the Voyages of the Manila Galleons. In 2011, MMSD will partner with the Kelton Foundation to produce Voyages to Paradise: Cook, Melville, and Gauguin showcasing original masterworks by the artists who sailed with Cook as well as artifacts and memorabilia associated with his voyages, contemporary artwork and artifacts associated with the writings and voyages of Herman Melville, and one of the largest collections of original works by the post impressionist Paul Gauguin to be exhibited in the United States. From 2011 to 2013, the construction of the

## **The Maritime Museum of San Diego, cont**

galleon San Salvador will be presented by the Museum at a nearby location as a temporary outdoor living history theme park showcasing traditional shipbuilding as the first industrial activity of the New World, the age of exploration in the Pacific, maritime native peoples of the West Coast, and first contact experiences between native peoples and Europeans.

Apart from its ships and numerous small craft, MMSD collections include thousands of artifacts, models, instruments, ship's equipment, tools, engines, weapons, items of clothing, manuscripts and rare books, archival materials, photographs, films, oral histories, ship plans, charts, cruise ship ephemera, unbound periodicals, and bound volumes which support the mission of the Museum in presenting the history of San Diego and the US West Coast. The research library located in the Berkeley is used extensively by maritime scholars and supports the Museum's research mission in production of the academic historical journal *Mains'l Haul*, currently the only peer review journal devoted to maritime and naval history being published in the United States. In recent years, MMSD has furthered the cause of maritime research through hosting national conferences of the Nautical Research Guild, was host for the Eighth International Maritime Heritage Conference, and was organizer for the 2004 international Conference on Spain's Legacy in the Pacific. MMSD has also sponsored expeditions to locate, excavate, research, and exhibit recovered materials from the Manila galleon San Philippe, lost in 1576, to locate and document a native Kumeyaay petroglyph impression of first contact (perhaps the first Native American image to depict a recorded historic event in American history), and organized an expedition in the Californian to visit and investigate archeological sites on all eight California Channel Islands, making her the first vessel to visit all eight of the islands during the course of a single voyage since the 18th century. The Museum also offers a lecture/travel program called "Evolution of the Ship" which takes participants to all the great maritime museums, archeological, and historic ship sites of Northern Europe and the Mediterranean. In 2012, participants will follow the narrative path of the "Voyages to Paradise" exhibit in retracing the routes of Cook, Melville, and Gauguin, beginning with observation of the Transit of Venus at Venus Point, Tahiti, June 6, 2012.

MMSD also provides educational experiences to schools and youth groups that serve more than 20,000 children annually, including overnight living history programs, tall ship experiences, rowing adventures, and oceanography explorations. The opportunity to actually sail in ships specific to four different centuries also allows MMSD to offer a unique series of sail training programs and underway experiences for members of the general public and for museum members. Each year, in formal courses and training exercises, MMSD prepares a crew of hands from among its membership sufficient to take the entire operable fleet of sailing and steam driven vessels to sea and also annually trains a new corps of docents to interpret the ships to the visiting public. In partnership with local universities, MMSD offers internships and accredited courses in museum studies and in the history and practice of celestial navigation. Through a Landmarks of History grant provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, MMSD annually offers stipend funded workshops on Pacific history to elementary and secondary school teachers from across the United States.

At MMSD, the visiting public is encouraged to go beyond the traditional museum exhibition experience by undertaking a variety of trips underway offered on board the Museum's fleet. These include races in state of the art ACC class racing sloops, whale watching expeditions in the schooner yacht America, daily tall ship sailing adventures in schooner Californian, occasional mock sea battles between Californian and visiting tall ships, rowing and sailing experiences in the museum's fleet of small craft, and historic narrated tours of San Diego Bay in the Museum's 1914 pilot craft Pilot. Californian makes several out of area voyages annually, ranging from multi-day trips to nearby Catalina Island, to multi-week expeditions to the Channel Islands and Northern California ports. Upon completion of the San Salvador, Californian and San Salvador will voyage together as a traveling museum under sail to various California communities, complete with exhibitions, educational programs, and theatrical performances. On five occasions in the last several years and now annually, MMSD has hosted tall ship festivals visited by national tall ships from around the world and which draw up to 500,000 participants, making these celebrations of maritime heritage the largest outdoor events in the region.

In summary, the Maritime Museum of San Diego strives to use its ships as actively as possible, and also to the degree possible as a form of narrative in providing a wide spectrum of stories, information, and experiences that serve to inspire interest in our maritime history and enrich the cultural and educational life of our community.

## President's Corner

The first quarter of 2012 kept the officers and directors quite busy. Topping the list is the Malta PCF. Project Committee Chairman, Dave Wallace, along with Virg Erwin, Mike Solhaug, Andy Horne and Jim Deal have all spent long hours working on the international diplomatic scene.

They, along with major involvement from Director, Maritime Museum San Diego, Ray Ashley, have succeeded in securing Malta P-24 for the west coast. International law and policies threw us a curve along the way. The good news is that the Malta PCF transfer is official. P-24 has been gifted to the Maritime Museum San Diego with the SBSA taking the supporting sponsorship role.

As of this writing, shipping arrangements are being worked on. Follow the chat sites for future announcements.

After fourteen years of SBSA leadership service, Gene Hart has stepped down as Treasurer. BRAVO ZULU, Gene!! Don Farrell has been voted into that slot by the SBSA Board of Directors at the annual meeting in San Diego recently. Welcome aboard, Don!

Please be patient, the annual SBSA dues statements will be in the mail soon....late fees will be waived!

The 2013 Reunion plans are well underway. Chuck Rabel, Reunion Chairman, is leading the way to insure another memorable reunion in San Diego. I can't emphasize enough the importance to mark your calendar for May 11<sup>th</sup>. Hotel reservations will be accepted by the Holiday Inn – On the Bay at the reunion room rate of \$119. You don't want to end up paying \$220 per night elsewhere once our reunion room block is reached. See more reunion information in this newsletter.

Time to "Answer The Call"....SBSA Director Call, that is! Five director's terms will end at the 2013 Reunion. Interested individuals are encouraged to contact Mike Solhaug [SolhauMJ@EVMS.EDU](mailto:SolhauMJ@EVMS.EDU), Van Odell [odellvs@gmail.com](mailto:odellvs@gmail.com), or Raul Herrera [BeanPCF79@aol.com](mailto:BeanPCF79@aol.com). A Director's term lasts four years. A candidate should have computer / email accessibility. He should also be available for reunion off-year Board Director meetings, personal travel arrangements required. Snipes, Bosuns, Gunners, QM's and Comms specialist are encouraged to serve.

Director, Joe LaVoie has taken over the Vice-president of Benevolence position. He will be sending out sympathy cards and get well cards. Please provide Joe with word of a Swifties' passing or when one of our brothers is seriously ill or undergoing surgery. Joe's email address is [JLaVoie@aol.com](mailto:JLaVoie@aol.com).

Now hear this....Look to the Ship's Store running a pre-reunion sale soon. Some of the items currently on the store shelf may be a thing of the past, so don't be left out.

My Family members – Jim Deal is requesting that we all update our profiles.

The SBSA has made a commitment to assist the Naval Heritage Command with the upkeep of PCF-1 in preparation for the 40<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.

This Memorial Day, EN3 Albert Merk Fransen, Jr., PCF-87, Coastal Division 15 (Qui Nhon), killed in a mortar accident 2 July 1969, will be remembered at the VUMMF Memorial Day Service. Let's all take time out that day to remember our Honor Crew, and all Swifties that have boarded their last patrol since our last reunion in San Antonio...We Remember

## Gary Blinn's Celebration of Life April 28, 2012

Dear Friends,

No one had a more special place in Gary Blinn's heart than his fellow brothers-in-arms. Gary's death last July was sudden, only three weeks after his diagnosis with pancreatic and liver cancer. He didn't want a funeral service or burial, so we had neither. He had said a celebration of his life would be all right, but I couldn't find it in my heart to celebrate while I was still in shock. Spring is coming. April brings his birthday and it feels like the right time to celebrate.

Only happenstance controlled who found me answering the phone or him up and about. I regret getting overwhelmed by the magnitude of the response to his goodbye letter and not following up each and every response individually and personally. Please know that you were a comfort to us. And whether you talked to Gary or did not get that opportunity, know that age and distance had not diminished his loyalty and fondness for you.

Best wishes to the best buddies in the world.  
Diane Marie Blinn

# 1968 – A Veterans Journey from the United States to Japan and Vietnam

By Tom Edwards

February 5, 1968 was 3 days after my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was at the Induction Center at 39 Whitehall Street in New York City. That location had me close to where I was born, the one and only Brooklyn; former home of the Dodgers and still home of the best pizza in the world. Singer/songwriter Arlo Guthrie (son of Woody “This Land is Your Land, This Land is my Land” Guthrie) mentions the Induction Center and “sitting on the Group W bench” on the title track of his debut album, Alice’s Restaurant. Arlo performed the song on July 24 for a receptive audience at the Newport Folk Festival. Having completed my induction, it was day one of a 4 year military commitment. The Selective Service Board was in full swing but having grown up near the Atlantic Ocean, the Navy appealed to me, so I joined.



Being familiar with winter on the east coast didn’t come close to preparing me for February at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. I thought I understood the definition of cold. As it turned out, I wasn’t even close. Getting off the bus at the snow covered training facility gave me a new definition of cold. Like all of the other recruits, I slept (sort of) with my pea coat, watch cap and gloves on. It was an interesting first day. We were never told the temperature and that was probably a good thing. I do know it would have had to heat up, a lot, to hit zero. My wife and I have lived in Minnesota for the past 4 years. It isn’t the buckle of the Sun Belt but I still have never been as cold as I was at Boot Camp.

Somehow I managed to graduate and, after a 30 day leave, I was off to my first duty station. I arrived onboard the U.S.S. Krishna (ARL-38) on May, 13, 1968. The ship was dry-docked at the naval base in Yokosuka, Japan. On the night I arrived, there had been a large turnover in the crew and I was assigned to be an Electricians Mate Apprentice. My naval career was underway.

Given the ships location, the liberty (time away from the ship) policy was very liberal. With a less than staggering income and a lot of free time in Japan, I went to the Naval Credit Union and obtained a \$500 loan. At the time, that was real money. The military was justifiably confident they would get their money back, and they did. At 360 yen to the dollar, it was a great time to be in the Land of the Rising Sun. My plan was to make the next few months memorable and they were. I have very fond memories of Japan. It is where I developed (no pun intended) my interest in photography. Finding a nice 35mm camera there was not the biggest challenge I have ever faced. Among my first stops was the Great Buddha of Kamakura at the Kotoku-in Temple. At nearly 44 feet tall and more than 10 tons, the bronze statue and immaculate gardens throughout the site are impressive. I made several trips there during my time in Japan. Weekend journeys to the Noto Peninsula were memorable. It is on the west coast of Japan to the west of Tokyo. The scenery is the classic definition of picturesque. A trip to Tokyo was about what I expected; it reminded me of New York. One difference was that Coca Cola was the only sign I recognized. I had purchased a “Japanese to English” book while I was there and tried to learn a few basic phrases. Having read it for about an hour, I saw a young lady about my age with what appeared to be school books. In my best Japanese, I thought I asked her “Excuse me. Can you tell me which train goes to Kamakura”? She looked at her watch and in English much better than mine she said “Wait about 10 minutes. There will be a train here that I’ll be getting on. Get on it and get off at the 5<sup>th</sup> stop”. I thanked her and asked why she let me struggle with Japanese. She said “I have lived here all of my life and have never had anyone asked me “Are you go for ice cream when no Kamakura”? Apparently, I was not qualified to join the Tokyo Debate Team. The months in Japan went by quickly. In mid-September the dry-dock was flooded and the WW II vintage Krishna was underway. Next stop, An Thoi, Vietnam.

## Veteran's Journey, cont



On our last day en route to the southern tip of Phu Quoc Island, (south of the Cambodian coastline) I had crow's nest duty. That vantage point, with a high quality pair of binoculars gave me the first view of where I was about to experience the most memorable chapter of my military years. On September 24 we dropped anchor and Swift Boats (Patrol Craft Fast) were about to become a part of my daily life until May of the following year. The Tet (Lunar New Year) Offensive had been launched about a week before I started Boot Camp. In an effort to offset their

mounting losses, Vietcong forces began attacks in locations throughout South Vietnam. As a teenager, I was about to get a close up look at life in Vietnam.

After testing a variety of craft to combat the Vietcong's unlimited access to waterways and the coast for infiltration and smuggling, Sewart Seacraft, a manufacturing firm in Louisiana, was awarded the contract to construct 50 foot long Swift Boats. The crews that manned them trained at the naval base at Coronado, near San Diego, California. With two 480 horsepower Detroit Marine Diesels below the deck, the quarter inch thick aluminum hull craft had a top speed, depending on fuel load, etc. of about 25 knots. Twin .50 caliber machine guns were above/aft of the pilot house and a .50 caliber over an 81mm mortar was on the aft deck. The boats, and the warriors that manned them, were a perfect fit for disrupting the supply lines from the north to south Vietnam. The Navy was engaged in a new type of warfare along the rivers and canals of Vietnam. Swift Boats, and their all mostly all- volunteer 7 man crews, were more than up to the task. Repairing and maintaining them gave me skills I utilized throughout my post-military career. As a member of the Brown Water Navy I quickly learned that keeping the boats up and running was a 24/7 commitment. Without exception, every Krishna crew member took pride in our assignments. In spite of where we were stationed, the weather and



food that was just a touch short of gourmet, morale was never a problem. On the contrary, the comradeship among the Krishna crew was at a consistently high level. During Operation Market Time, Swift Boats interacted with junks (fishing boats) daily. A majority of the junks were operated by legitimate fishermen. That frequent contact gave the Swift Boat crews the opportunity to give the junk operators candy and cigarettes when their boats were inspected for contraband, a great public relations move. Among their other assignments, Swift Boats also served on reconnaissance missions, evacuating the wounded and assisted in special operations. Amphibious assaults against Vietcong enclosures was also on their lengthy "to do" list.

## **Veteran's Journey, cont**

As a maintenance and repair electrician, I still remember the Swift Boat crews returning to An Thoi to thank us for what we had done and letting us know about anything that needed attention. I recall starting to work on one boat at about 11:00 AM and finishing about 1:00 PM the next day. Once you have done that a few times, there isn't much in life you will confront work-wise that will be much of a challenge. My time in Vietnam, in fact, gave me the electrical trade skill set I used for more than a decade after my discharge. Shortly after earning an engineering degree I had the opportunity to work in the aerospace industry. Having satellite launch vehicles built and successfully launched requires a high level of teamwork, the kind I learned during my Navy years. 1968 was an unforgettable time for me; one year, 3 countries, a war, and a return to a divided nation. The Beatles sang Hey Jude, Otis Redding was Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay, the Rascals told us it was a Beautiful Morning and Steppenwolf said we were Born to be Wild. As a veteran looking back at that year, I am pleased to see the troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are being shown the respect they have earned.

In 1971 the U.S. Navy donated two Swift Boats to the newly formed Republic of Malta. They served as coast guard vessels enforcing fishing rights and were also involved in rescue work of those fleeing North Africa. Virg Erwin, Officer in Charge of Patrol Craft Fast 67, has served as a board member of the Swift Boat Sailors Association and the Vietnam Memorial Fund. He was invited to Malta to accept donation of one of those retired boats to be delivered to the San Diego Maritime Museum. It will be restored, maintained and used to promote the history of Swift Boats in the service of both countries.

In 2007 I became a member of the Swift Boat Sailors Association. My wife and I attended the 2007 SBSA reunion in San Diego and the 2011 reunion in San Antonio, Texas. Having done that, we are ready for the 2013 reunion and a return to San Diego. Given that I was not a Swift Boat crew member, "I fixed 'em when they broke 'em", I am honored and humbled to have been welcomed into the SBSA, a great veteran's organization. I wish my shipmates fair winds and following seas.



### **New SBSA Members in 2011, 2012**

Woodrow Dalahite	Colmesneil, TX	An Thoi, Cat Lo	1969-1970
Daniel Ninedorf	Kewaunee, WI	USS Mark AKL-12	1970-1971
Patrick H. Stack	Dayton, MN	CTF 115	1968-1969
Michael Brophy	Sarasota, FL	NAVSUPACT SGN DET 90.2, NAVSUPACT Cam Ranh Bay	
Marshall T. Baldwin	Bullhead City, AZ	Naval Support Facility, Cam Ranh Bay	1967-1969
William G. Thomasson	Memphis, TN	Cat Lo	1966-1967
Don L. Jones	Marianna, FL	Danang	1965-1966
Robert R. Johnson	Tyler, TX	An Thoi, Saigon, Cam Ranh Bay	1965-1966
Ramiro S. Gonzales	Glendale, AZ	Qui Nhon	
Eugene Green	Philadelphia, PA	An Thoi, APL 21	1967-1968
Melvin J. Baker	Morgan Hill, CA	An Thoi, Cam Ranh Bay	1969-1970

# ***Swift Boat Sailors Reunion***

## **Keeping the Memories Alive**

San Diego May 8 – 12, 2013

**Holiday Inn On The Bay**

1355 North Harbor Drive San Diego, CA 92101

Reservations: (888) 233 9527 (619) 232 3861

The **Holiday Inn** SBSA Room Rate is \$119. Be sure to ask for the Swift Boat Sailors Reunion price. Standard rate is \$220. Every room has a balcony.

Reservations may be made beginning 11 May 2012. We have a limited number of rooms reserved for the Reunion. Two other conventions are being held this same week. Please make your hotel reservations as soon as possible.

Your credit card ***will not be charged*** until check-out. Hotel Cancellation Policy is 24 hours before arrival.

Airport Shuttle Pick-up is 10 & 40 minutes past the hour all day - *No Charge*

Reunion Registration and Tour information will be mailed to all members in May. Swift Boat rides on the San Diego Bay will depart from the Maritime Museum across the street from the Holiday Inn from Tuesday 7 May to Monday 13 May.

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### **Deceased Swifties 2011 forward**

Kenneth F. Tryner	Virginia Beach, VA	2011
Gary Blinn	Norfolk, NE	2011
Franklin Henry Carpenter	Columbus, GA	2012
Clair "Pete" Schrod	Pocatella, ID	2012

### **Change of Address? Need new membership card?**

Stay in touch with your shipmates!

Membership card replacement fee \$5.00.

Contact Don Farrell, Treasurer  
Tel. (760) 630-1634 Email– donfarrell@cox.net



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