

## WWII VETERANS TELL OF CONTRIBUTIONS

**Boyd Arndt and Willie Bert Rhyne are among last surviving soldiers**

CHIP JOHNSTON

*Charlotte Observer Sun, May. 27, 2007*

Memorial Day weekend is here, and for many of us that means different things: a three-day weekend for fun and relaxation, the beginning of summer, a weekend of racing.

For Mount Holly's Boyd Arndt and Willie Bert Rhyne, it is a time to reflect on their experiences in World War II as well as remembering those who didn't make it back.

Rhyne and Arndt both served in the Navy in the South Pacific; Rhyne aboard the Destroyer USS O'Bannon, Arndt aboard the Destroyer USS Herrmann.

Arndt enlisted right out of high school at age 18 and a year later, on his 19th birthday, took part in the invasion of Iwo Jima. Among the worst things Arndt witnessed was the killing of 1,000 men from the carrier USS Franklin by a kamikaze off Okinawa.

Rhyne enlisted in the Navy the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and during the four years of the war, only made it home once. Arndt never made it home until it was over. Rhyne says the contributions of the destroyers such as the ones they served on are often overlooked.



USS Franklin veterans Robert Baines, left, and Sam Rhodes swap war stories during a reunion of the ship's personnel Tuesday at the National Museum of Naval Aviation. The Franklin was nearly sunk by the Japanese on March 19, 1945, during World War II.

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## Franklin Reunion 2007 Pensacola, FL April 16, 2007

The Franklin reunion was held in Pensacola, FL, hosted by Louis Casserino, S1/c 6th-Div, and Zell Davis, SK3/c S1-Div. The reunion was held at the Navy Lodge at Pensacola Naval Air Station April 16–19, 2007.

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## WWII Veterans

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"The big ships, aircraft carriers and battleships got all the publicity, but believe me the little destroyers were right in the middle of all the fierce fighting. Both ships had the honor of escorting the USS Missouri into Tokyo Harbor for the signing of the peace treaty.

Both men sadly acknowledge that they are becoming a rare breed, as World War II veterans who made it back go to join those who didn't.

"During the war there were 15 to 16 million serving. Today we have 3 million left," said Rhyne.

Both men say they were lucky to have made it back.

"I hate that we don't have the patriotism like we used to," Rhyne said. Asked about Memorial Day, Arndt simply said, "I get very sentimental about Memorial Day. I'm just glad I got home; a lot of men didn't."

Today, Boyd Arndt and Willie Bert Rhyne are members of the Last Man's Club of Gaston County, an organization of Gaston County WWII veterans who perform military honors at funerals of Gaston County veterans.

*Chip Johnston:*

*johnston@charlotteobserver.com.*

<http://www.charlotte.com/494/story/137378.html>

### Commemorative Stamp

Harry Munzing received more than 60 letters in support of the USS Franklin Commemorative Stamp and has forwarded them to the US Postal Service's Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. It is now a waiting game for a response. Thanks to Harry in this effort!

## Franklin Reunion

*Con't from Page 1*

Activities included a tour of our Nation's most Extensive Air Museums and observation of the Blue Angels training session from Flight Line.

A dinner and dance was held at the Officers Club.

It was announced that the 2008 reunion is to be held in Kansas City.



### *Inferno*

Known throughout the fleet as "Big Ben," the USS Franklin was christened for the legacy of the four prior U.S. Navy ships. The Franklin was a creation of World War II, one of twenty-four Essex-class fast carriers built during the conflict, forming the backbone of the U.S. Navy's war against Japan. By the time the war had moved to Okinawa in the spring of 1945, "Big Ben" had already seen substantial combat, having participated in the island campaigns of the central and western Pacific and the Battle for Leyte Gulf in the Philippines, where she sustained heavy damage from the new and deadly Japanese kamikaze.

On March 19, 1945, the Franklin was launching her aircraft against Honshu, the Japanese mainland,

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## Association Dues

The USS Franklin Museum Association dues were due January 1, 2007. Please be sure you have forwarded your checks (\$10.00) to:

Bob Ladewig  
331 Oak Hill Rd Apt A  
Barrington, IL 60010-1686

Remember the dues help to keep the Association's newsletter in your mailbox!

## *Inferno Con't*

including the shipping industry in Kobe Harbor. Suddenly, a single enemy aircraft pierced the cloud cover and made a low level run on the ship, striking it with a 250kg bomb which pierced the deck and set off a chain reaction of exploding ordnance and aviation fuel. The aircraft carrier, now on fire, listing heavily to starboard, and with over 1,000 casualties, appeared to be mortally wounded. Inferno tells the heroic tale of the efforts that saved "Big Ben." It is a tremendous story of endurance and seamanship, told in harrowing detail in the survivors' own words. Inferno makes for gripping reading.

Joseph A. Springer retired from the United States Air Force after twenty-three years as an Aircraft Weapons Specialist. He now specializes in military oral history, having interviewed more than one-thousand combat veterans over the last thirty-five years. Joe's first book, Black Devil Brigade, tells the oral history of the First Special Service Force in World War II. Joe and his wife Susan reside in West Central Illinois.

Pre-order (discounted) your copy now at Amazon.com!

Zenith Press (September 15, 2007)

## *Did you know?*

**John P. Hogal** AMM2/c AG5

*Please contact:*

**John P. Hogal**  
**15046 Hale Dr**  
**Orland Park, Il 60462-3130**

**Carl Wine** 2/c V-6 Division

*Contact:*

**Carlene Krone**  
**625 East Rim Rock Place**  
**Tucson, AZ 85704-7225**

**Charles S. McGarry** S1/c SV6

*Contact:*

**Jeannine**  
**Bearftcontessa@yahoo.com**

**Michael Monte**

*Contact:*

**Michele Monte**  
**montevents@yahoo.com**

*Admiral Nimitz National Museum of the Pacific War*, in Fredericksburg, Texas, reviews, accepts, and preserves personal survival stories and experiences of WWII in the Pacific. May we suggest that you send your story to Mr. Richard Mismhimer, at his home: PO Box 3453, Alice, Texas 78333. A few shipmates of the Franklin have had their stories accepted for permanent placement.

The Museum of the Pacific War also sells memorial bricks for individuals, ships, squadrons, etc. to be placed in their memorial walk. If you haven't seen this museum for a few years, it is worth returning. The displays are growing in their complexity and worthiness every year.

Fredericksburg itself is a town of German heritage and Texas hospitality, located in the famous Texas Hill Country. It retains its turn-of-the-century Main Street buildings and the Admiral Nimitz Museum is located at one end of the street in the original Nimitz family home.

While there, you can visit the Pioneer Museum Complex (devoted to the history of area settlers), sample at least five local brews any day at the Fredericksburg Brewing Company (a brewery and restaurant on Main Street), and load up on great Texas BBQ'd ribs, pork, and beef at Cranky Frank's (a genuine Texas roadhouse) just on the outskirts of town. If it is spring, you will see thousands of Texas Bluebonnets blooming. It makes a great trip for the whole family, with multiple learning experiences all in one place. – Jim Stuart

*Sender's Address:*

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[www.ussfranklin.org](http://www.ussfranklin.org)

Place  
stamp  
here