

CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123 NEWSLETTER

3412 Pleasant Run Road, Irving, Texas 75062

April 2012

Chartered: Nov. 1, 1985. Past Presidents: *Nelson Oats, *Harold Ballard, *W. O. Mullin, *Verle Oringderff, *Harold Trammell, *William Oakley, Frank Polenta, *S. L. Baker, *George Payne, *Harry Steinert, & *Al Clement. *deceased. Current Officers: President-Mike Pixler, phone contact: 817-929-1557, First Vice President-Jim Rau, phone contact: 817-367-3343, Second Vice president-Pat Mann, phone: [info later], Secretary/Treasurer-Blanche Howerton, phone: 817-578-6542, Sergeant at Arms-Troy Jones, Chaplain-Rev. James Pixler, Kitchen Committee, Lillie Payne, Historian-Ruby Pixler, Reporter at Large & Newsletter Editor-Bill Stallings, phone contact: 972-255-7237.

Monthly Meeting is held on the second Saturday of each month from 10:30 AM to 1PM at the North Side Multipurpose Center, 1801 Harrington [North], Fort Worth, TX 76106. Dues are \$10 a person annually and are effective from Oct. to Oct.

Directions: Interstate Hwy 30 runs east & west. It accesses the downtown Fort Worth area from the south. Exit north on Henderson St. After a couple of miles it crosses a fork of the Trinity River and becomes State Hwy 199 which goes to Lake Worth, and the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. When you reach the traffic light at the intersection of 18th St. NW, turn right [east] and go up the hill four blocks to Homan St. Turn left [north], and go a block to the Y. Stay right and continue into the Center's rear parking lot. Our meeting room door with the CCC sign is to the right as you approach the building. Bring a friend & enjoy fun, fellowship & food. Sign the register for you may win the \$10 door prize.

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WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES : Troy and Wanda Jones, Everman, TX, 04/14 [#45]

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Willie Adair, New Boston, TX, 04/20; James Pixler, Fort Worth, TX, 04/11; and Truman Pixler, Aledo, TX, 04/16.

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MINUTES OF MEETING OF CCC LEGACY CHAPTER 123, ON SATURDAY, April. 14, 2012, Weather: Pleasant – Temp. 60° ; Attendance: 18.

Pres. Mike Pixler opened the meeting at 11 AM. He welcomed everyone and then read a joke about a guy delivering some shingles to a clinic. It was no medical situation. The clinic was confused.

Chaplain, Rev. James Pixler led the invocation. Troy Jones, Sgt.-At-Arms led the pledge to the flags. Blanche Howerton, Sec./Treas. read the minutes of the previous meeting. The motion was made by Vice Pres. Jim Rau to accept the minutes as read. It was seconded by Bill McKee, motion carried.

Blanche then gave the financial report. Tony Rodriguez made a motion that the report be accepted as read. It was seconded by Troy Jones, motion carried.

Pres. Pixler and Bill Stallings, newsletter editor, gave a report on phone calls to members which they had made. The group sang happy birthday to Chaplain Pixler and happy anniversary to Troy Jones and his bride of 45 years, Wanda. Congratulations.

VP Jim Rau gave a report on the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge. He had received word from Suzanne Tuttle, the director of the center, that she had been given a donation with the stipulation that it be used for restoration of the CCC structures. What amazing news!

~~Discussion was made concerning next month's meeting and our booth at the Nature Center. We will meet at the Community Building at 11:00 AM, eat lunch, go to the Nature Center for tour and work booth at "Buffalo Boogie." A ride will be provided from and back to Comm. Bldg.~~

Merle Timblin had a lovely trip to Arizona. He told us about the trip and more will follow, I'm sure. We always enjoy hearing his stories.

Richard Crooks told us about an experience he had in the service. VP Jim Rau passed the donation can. The drawings were held for the \$10 door prize. Jim Rau donated the money back to the chapter.

Chaplain Pixler blessed the food. Troy Jones made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Merle Timblin, motion carried. The Kitchen Committee served a very delicious meal. Thanks ladies for all of your help.

Respectfully Submitted,
Blanche Howerton, Sec./Treas.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The Subject for This Corner is: **Loyalty**

Or did you get the part of we may need to be grooming a new president [for CCC Legacy National]? You spend your life; or at least a large portion of it, working with, arranging, meeting, fixing, and all the rest of the "TV CS" you can think of for a subject, people, family, friends, and organizations and then it happens. Someone questions your loyalty towards the very subject you have worked with for a really long time.

I felt, at first, maybe it's me. Nope, it wasn't me. Tried to explain why something happened, but they could only see the little bit in front of them. I know this perhaps does not make sense to many of you, but for the few who understand; I only asked to be heard, without interruption, to guide you through the big picture. Regardless of what you may think, the world does not revolve around you. You're just a part of it. For someone who has served his country, volunteered in the community, sacrificed family to serve various organizations, follow the ones who needed following, led the ones who needed to be led, learned more about subjects than I really wanted to, and then my loyalty to be brought to question. Really???? Really?

I feel you may need to back up just a bit and think about what was said and how it was said. I think perhaps you are mistaken. So what does this have to do with grooming a new president? Not much. Perhaps it has more to do with it than you think. In the number of years our current president has led the CCC Legacy through the difficult time of the merger, through the time of initial organizing, forward to today and the future. Thank you to the workers in the office. Hey, wait a minute; that was her too. The next president has some big shoes to fill. ~~Don't ever think that the loyalty is not there. Take a look at this article again, look at the subjects covered.~~ There are many not listed. Maybe it will be made clear for all who attend the May meeting of CCC Chapter 123, first at the Multipurpose Center, at 11:00 AM, for a quick lunch, then load and head for the FNC&R for the 2012 "Buffalo Boogie" at 1:00 PM. Hope to see you there.

No, I did not forget. THANK YOU JOAN for all that you do.

Mike Pixler, President, CCC Legacy Chapter 123

Report on Lillie Payne

A few weeks ago Jack Bragg told us that Lillie Payne was in the hospital. We visited with her there at the Denton Regional Medical Center which is just south of the city on I35E. Her diabetes has caused her to lose most of the use of her legs. We had a good visit with her, and she was in good spirits. However, a few days ago when we asked Jack how she was, he said that he had lost contact with her. We called the Denton Regional Medical Center and were told that she was released from there on the 18th. We think she was transferred to another hospital or nursing facility in Denton, but have no info as to which one. If anyone knows a contact please let us know.

A Thoughtful Poem and a Note from Jack

SPARK OF LIFE

The first breath with an Ahh

It is the spark of life they saw
All the people struck with awe
Something you could not draw.

Creation must have that spark

Without it a lifeless dark
Religion plays a major part
For millions a place to start.

All living things have this

It is divine bliss
Simply a creators kiss
~~Something you don't want to miss.~~

Old age does not change anything

A new life the bells will ring

For the new one they will cling
The old folks will sing.

Jack Bragg

P.S. Sorry I have not been to the meetings – missed seeing you all. I have not heard comments. Hope the poems are enjoyable. See you when able.

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The Latest News on Our May 12 Meeting and Tour of the Fort Worth Nature Center & Refuge

As talked of in our last meeting, we will meet at 11:00 AM at our regular place, The North Side Center, and have our potluck dinner at that time. **Now for the slight change in plans:** At about 12:30 PM we will adjourn to the parking lot and now board a small 24 passenger mini-bus with a driver that will take us out to Lake Worth and The Nature Center. We now will **not** have to car pool or play follow-the-leader to get there. The plan is that we will visit the CCC built area at Broadview Park, then continue on to the Hardwicke Visitor Center [and with luck we may get to see the Bison Herd along the way], and then take a leisurely tour of the rest of the park. There will be numerous places for bathroom breaks along the way. Hopefully the spring flowers will be at a peak then. Our bus will then bring us back to the North Side Center about 4:30 PM or so.

Houston, Texas and the Story of the Heavy Cruiser USS Houston

We were in Houston this last March and saw an article in the Mar. 1 issue of the Houston Chronicle entitled, “Survivors Mark 70th Anniversary of USS Houston’s Sinking.” The article went on to tell of the sinking of the USS Houston by the Japanese on the night of Mar. 1-2, 1942, in the Battle of Sunda Strait off the coast of Java in the South Pacific. Two men that survived that event, Howard Brooks and David Flynn, were in Houston for this occasion as representatives of only 15 remaining survivors left of the “USS Houston CA-30 Survivors Association.” They told of the ship being down to one gun firing, the ship listing and ablaze, when they heard the chilling order over the public address system: “Hear this: All hands abandon ship!” Flynn said, “You sort of froze for a second.” Brooks added: “We knew it was the end.” Both men jumped into a bloody and burning sea, and swam for their lives. They were picked up by the Japanese and spent the next 3 ½ years as POWs. Brooks was among those forced to build the infamous Burma Railway. The story of the sinking of the *Houston* and what happened to the men were one of the mysteries of the war – unknown until the war’s end.

The City of Houston and the ship had an unusually close relationship going back before the war. The ship made two well publicized visits to the city, and when news of the loss of the ship reached the city, a mass out-pouring of patriotism caused citizens to pledge enough funds to build a replacement cruiser and an escort aircraft carrier. Locally, one thousand recruits volunteered to replace the lost crew of the Houston. An aside here: one of our members and a “Boy,” William ‘Bull’ Ellis of Edna, Texas, was one of those volunteers. The Navy wound up assigning Bull to a sub chaser instead.

The story of the *Houston* is much more than its tragic end though. It was one of the proudest ships in the U.S. Navy, and the men who served on her felt themselves very lucky. For the rest of the story we use material from the book: "The Last Battle Station – The Story of the USS *Houston*," by Duane Schultz, published by St. Martin's Press, New York, in 1985, and a good read.

The men of the *Houston* joined the Navy or Marines for many reasons: to beat the idea of a coming draft, to escape a life of chopping cotton, or from seeing friends home on leave in their sharp uniforms and stories of girls in every port. One man, Otto Schwartz, talked of having no money and with holes in his shoes. He had joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and was sent to California. "When I joined the CCC, I had more clothing at one time than I had ever seen in my life. Then I joined the Navy, and of course in the Navy the first thing that happened is that I walk in and they start throwing all kinds of clothing at me....And then to get paid in addition was really great."

The *Houston* from time to time had one other very special "crewman" on its journeys. Between the years 1934 and 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt, a true Navy man, chose her for four separate vacation cruises. She became known as the "President's Flagship." Because of his partial paralysis, various changes to the ship, including a small electric elevator, were made to accommodate him. He liked to visit as much of the ship as he could. A launch was brought aboard, along with an experienced boatswain's mate, to support FDR's love of deep-sea fishing. Few fishermen could claim having access to a vessel with a 1000+ crew and nine 8-inch rifles. Even when it meant extra work for them, the crew was honored to have the President among them. For FDR it was a time of great relaxation; his cares slipped away, and he joked with the officers and men. When he came aboard for his third cruise in 1938, the President remarked, "It's good to be home again, Captain." The first cruise covered 11,783 miles, the second 12,000 miles. Twice the *Houston* with FDR aboard passed through the Panama Canal. In the summer of 1939 the *Houston* was alerted to expect the President to join them in Seattle for a fifth cruise, this time to Alaskan waters. It never happened; looming events leading up to the start of the war in Europe that September kept the President close to the White House.

We Continue our Conversation with Mr. Claude Tyler of Blossom, Texas

In our last issue we talked with Claude of his numerous travels with the CCC between 1937 and 1940. He returned home to continue his schooling and help on the family farm until he got a special invitation.

The U.S. Army drafted him in September, 1942, and sent him to Stockton, California, for the majority of his basic training. Then for specialized training, he was sent to a school at General Motors' Oldsmobile plant in Lansing, Michigan. This plant produced weapons and ammunition as part of the war effort. Claude spent about six weeks here learning how to service and repair a number of these weapons, but mainly the .50 caliber heavy machine gun and the 20 mm cannon; all used extensively in fighter and bomber aircraft, as well as by ground units. All told he was in training for about a year when his unit boarded a troop ship on the west coast and headed for Australia. Claude says that he had always been bothered with motion sickness, so you can imagine that his time on the 18 days getting to Townsville, Australia, were not happy ones. They were only there three days when they boarded ship again and headed to Port Moresby on Papua New Guinea. Claude was now part of an eleven men team that specialized in machine gun repair. They were then flown to their duty station near an airfield in Rambo Valley, a broad swath of land with a river running through it. They were working closely with Australian

soldiers now; in particular an anti-aircraft unit nearby. One thing that stands out with Claude while they were here was seeing Wolf Bats; understandably by their appearance. Their head was shaped like a wolf, and they had about a six foot wing span. Fortunately they did not bother the men because they ate mainly fruit and insects. Their unit was stationed in the valley about one year. For an example of the type of work they were doing: a .50 caliber gun barrel came through their shop that had gotten so hot by continuous firing, that it bent and the rounds went out through the side of the barrel!

Claude did get to go back to Australia once on a ten day leave. He enjoyed being among the Australians and listening to their way with the English language, but it took some doing for him to get used to eating mutton most of the time. He says that now they raise a lot of beef, but at that time, there were sheep everywhere.

Back on New Guinea Claude and his team began following the Army's island hopping advance up towards the Philippines and beyond. Their first stop was via a convoy of LSTs [short for Landing Ship Tank] and LSMs to Biak Island off the far northwest coast of New Guinea. The island had recently been wrested from the Japanese, and they were still trying to retake it. Claude and his group were set up near the airfield there, and they spent some time in foxholes when Japanese planes came over to bomb the runways. They were on Biak two to three months, and then headed for the Philippines. They had six 4-wheel drive trucks to take with them, so they had to be cut in two so they could fit in the side cargo doors of transport planes. On arrival they would then be welded back together.

They landed on Luzon at Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines, and immediately set up shop there. The Filipinos were glad to see the return of the Americans, and when Claude mentioned to them that he was from Texas, they thought all Texans were rich ranchers! **One particular group of "customers" was the Filipino and American** Guerillas that had been fighting the Japanese for about two years. Their favorite weapons were the .50 caliber machine gun and the .45 caliber pistol. Claude got a two-day pass to visit Manila and he got to see the destruction there. It was about this time that he got Dengue Fever. This disease is transmitted by mosquito bites, and is bad stuff. With doctors' help, he did recover. Malaria was another mosquito borne illness that was prevalent, but Claude took his antibrine tablets regularly and thus avoided that.

From the Philippines, Claude's unit was sent to the Island of Okinawa. They landed D +4 which was four days after the initial invasion, and he was there for two months when he became ill again. He was sent back to a hospital in Manila to try to find out what he had. Finally the doctors determined that he had metal poisoning which he got from working and heating brass and Australian coins to make jewelry. He had been doing this in his off duty times. While in the hospital there, Claude went through an earthquake and a typhoon. One day while Claude was in recovery, a colonel came and asked him if he would like to go home or return to Okinawa. Claude was almost speechless when he asked, **"Sir, do you mean I have a Choice?" Yes, he was told, and I think** we can figure out his answer to that tough question!

Soon Claude was on board a Canadian hospital ship headed for Tacoma, Washington. While aboard, he became acquainted with one of the head nurses and he did some work for her. She in turn gave him pills to avoid seasickness, and he did just that the entire trip. He arrived back in the States in December of 1945, took a troop train to San Antonio and was discharged Jan. 20, 1946, and was married on Feb. 3. He and his wife had two daughters and were married for 55 years until she passed away 10 years ago. Claude lives with his daughter, Anna and her husband. Claude, now 91, gave up farming some time back, but he still runs cattle on his 160 acres. Not long ago he was attending a CCC reunion at Linden, Texas, where he met Ken Burns. One thing led to another, and Ken asked Claude to meet with him and his film crew at Albuquerque, New Mexico, where they would be

filming part of the National Park Series for the PBS network. They flew his whole family out for the event, and Mr. Burns personally interviewed Claude, and he is in the fifth episode of the series. Claude made the National Reunion at Branson, Missouri, two years or so ago, and he says to tell everyone in Chapter 123 a big hello!

The Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy is a non-profit organization dedicated to research, preservation, and education to promote better understanding of the CCC and its continuing contribution to American life and culture. *"I propose to create a Civilian Conservation Corps to be used in simple work, more important, however, than the material gains will be the moral and spiritual value of such work."*

--FDR, 1933

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