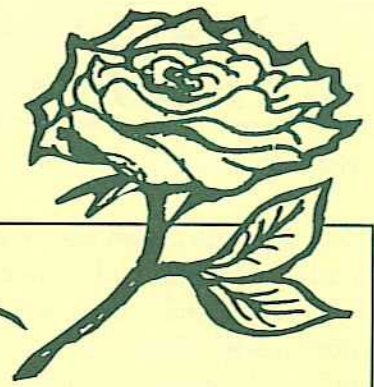




# Ramblin Rose



A Publication of the USS Montrose Association

ISSUE 1 - WINTER 1995

Dear Montrose Shipmates,

Ever ask yourself, "Whatever happened to So & So? Wonder what he's up to? Chances are, he's asking the same thing about you. He may have even been looking for you at one of the last four Montrose reunions. That's right, we've already had FOUR!! San Diego, Calif., Gettysburg, Penn., Savannah, Ga. and Montrose, Colo.. And what GREAT times those were!

It all started with one guy, Russ McDonald, asking what had happened to all those guys; **and then doing something about it...** We now have names and addresses of approximately 450 of your fellow shipmates, some of whom are original Plank Owners. Sadly, we also know of many departed shipmates.

Whether you've been actively involved or not in the past, you are a Montrose shipmate; **you are family!** And we need your help to reach others in the Montrose family. September 14-17, 1995, the next reunion will be held in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Prior to that time we want to reach as many shipmates as possible. If you know anyone who served aboard the "Ramblin' Rose", please call or drop us a line; it'll be one more assurance we're putting everyone possible in the official **Crewlist**.

A lot has been happening to keep the memory of Montrose alive and to better keep you "in the know". A **U.S.S. MONTROSE ASSOCIATION** is being formed with officers and committee chairmen to be elected at the '95 reunion. Members will be able to cast absentee ballots for both representatives and future reunion sites. An interim Association is now in place. As you see, the much-requested newsletter has become a reality and it will grow in size and frequency as the membership grows. Your input of sea-stories, news of shipmates... anything of general interest... will be added to photos, articles and fun stuff from the reunions to make it a welcome reminder of the good (and sometimes bad) old days. Through the Association you'll have access to Montrose collectibles... even if you're

**AHOY  
THERE!**



unable to attend the reunions. As a member you'll have access to the Crewlist, so maybe you'll revitalize some old friendships... just as many of us have.

1995 membership dues are \$10.00. Please join us, today. Send your check to:

U.S.S. Montrose Association  
P.O. Box 1112  
Stanton, CA 90680

**by the way!...**

*We Need Your Help!*  
Send us your sea stories, anecdotes and photos. Be sure to let us know when you were in, name & rank, and approximately when various events occurred.

*If you think it news worthy, it probably is.*

*Thanks!*

Hello Shipmates,

Back in 1989, when we were putting together the first reunion in San Diego, we discovered that a lot of people had placed a special value on the years they had served on the Montrose. This whole thing was started as "the Montrose Family" and we have grown to a size now where to keep that family concept going, we have to form an association. There are far too many people left out because they can't attend reunions, whether it might be because of health, economics, distance, time, whatever.

Everyone should have the opportunity to help pick the leadership of the association and the site of future reunions. They should also be able to get memorabilia, hats, pins, ship photos, etc. I've talked to many of you on this very subject and you all agree it's about time.

A key benefit of forming an association will be the ability to build better communication among us through newsletters that are paid-for from modest membership dues. I'm really excited about the possibilities!

I'm also excited about Reunion '95. I hope to see you all in Manitowoc in September— it's less than nine months away. Be sure and send your reservations to Claude Hribal and Mike Phillips, our reunion Co-chairmen. They've put in a lot of hard work to make it as good as the rest. A big "well done" guys!

So long 'til the next newsletter

## *From the Historians Corner*

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### **"PASSAGE TO FREEDOM"**

By Jim Ruotsala

After enjoying a brief visit to Kobe, Japan in mid 1954, the Montrose got underway for Hong Kong. While enroute, we received a message routing us to French-Indo China. The name was soon changed to Vietnam.

One of the immediate results of the French-Viet Minh agreement on cessation of hostilities in French Indo-China shortly after the battle of Dien Bien Phu, was the involvement of the United States Navy in the humanitarian task of helping provide passage south for those refugees who desired and were able to flee communist rule in the north. The operation was called "Passage To Freedom" and was the largest evacuation by sea in military history.

The Montrose was the second ship to arrive in Haiphong, just behind the Menard on 18 August 1954 and loaded 2,100 refugees for the first trip, many were frightened but brave. They had been told by the communists that once at sea we would throw them all overboard. They came anyway, they preferred death to communist rule.

The ship continued to evacuate personnel until mid September and then sailed for Hong Kong. 700,000 refugees fled from North Vietnam to the south, about 1/3 of these on naval vessels, the rest by small boats, land travel and some by air, yet only 60 civilians went north from the south.

For his work in Vietnam, President Diem awarded Dr. Tom Dooley the medal "officer de l'orde national de Vietnam". All other personnel involved received the Vietnam Presidential Unit Citation, "ribbon of friendship". No Vietnam PUC's were awarded during the Vietnam war and none have been awarded to anyone since 1954.

# LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

Dear Mac,

When you called yesterday, I became quite interested in the idea of a Montrose Newsletter, and what I might contribute for the September, 1956 to June, 1958 time period.

I was recently told by Bill Haugh (LTJG) that probably the most dangerous situation we experienced was going from the Gulf of Siam to Bangkok on a river that was 20 feet deep and we were drafting 18 feet. I imagine we stirred up a little mud on that trip.

Anyone who has worked in the Ship's Office knows that it isn't necessary to keep good track of the crew's many discharge dates. To a man, sailors are not shy about letting those responsible know they are "short timers". It was, therefore, all the more remarkable when a baker (wouldn't you know it would be someone from Supply!) named Montoya showed up at the Ship's Office to say he thought he was near his discharge time. We looked in his records and quickly told him to start packing his gear. His discharge date had been a week ago. That was 36 years ago, so I guess you could say that the fact I still remember it with a mixture of laughter and horror is testimony to how incredible it was.

Perhaps our biggest shot at fame was our participation in the making of the movie South Pacific on Kauai in the summer of 1957. We sang a song or two and some of the crew is actually recognizable on the big screen. You should have heard the stories later about the many encounters that took place with Mitzi Gaynor during that short participation of the men of the Montrose. Can anyone exaggerate, embellish, or downright lie like a sailor???

Since, as I first mentioned, the period of September, 1956 to June, 1958 was one of relative calm, I have no true war stories to contribute. I can say, though, that this period of my life seems to be indelibly etched in my brain.

Best Regards,  
Chuck Smith  
Former YN2

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## FROM THE SHIP'S LOG

SUNDAY, 14 NOV 65  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS, R.V.N.

12-16 Anchored as before. 1313 LCM-2 returned to the ship from Song Tra Bong River and reported encountering hostile fire from automatic weapons along the river bank. No personnel casualties, several bullet holes in the starboard gunwales and one in the starboard engine block were detected. Personnel aboard LCM-2 were: ENS. D.A. Albrecht, 694662, USNR, incharge; Pickett S., SN, 6911628; Hartman, D. P., GMG-3, 6866567; Guptil, R. H., RNFN, 6934084; Westlake, C. R., SN, 7782535; Alexander, K. M., SN, 6985604, 1430 veered anchor to 70 fathoms.

P.R. Borowski, LTJG, USNR

U.S.S. Montrose Association  
P.O. Box 1112  
Stanton, CA 90680

Forwarding & Return Address Requested



## Hey! Who are those guys?

Just a handful of your shipmates at the Montrose, Colorado reunion May '94! This particular group (of rowdys) served aboard Montrose between '63 and '67. That's Lamond, your rain or shine Postman (65 - 68) middle front. You might even spot Lt. Bussell somewhere in there.

Of course there were a lot of other people who also attended; guys who served as far back as 1944, many of the wives, even sons and daughters. Everyone was welcome! And everyone had a great time.

Tours, a parade, music, dining, dancing, cocktails,...cocktails..., and even a few drinks all make for a great time. But guess what the best part is!? It's You! Nothing's better than being with your buds after all these years - swapping war stories and playing catch up. It's a classic case of "the more, the merrier!" That's why we want you at the next one; to make it even more fun.

So do something worthwhile, give yourself a well deserved mini vacation in someplace new and exciting, Manitowoc, Wisconsin!!! Come see your buds and have some fun. And put yourself in the picture next time!