



The Riverine Reporter **Sea Tigers Association**



A publication of the US Army 458th Trans. Co (PBR)

**Summer 2014
Vol. 5 # 3**

NEWSLETTER

**Editors: Don Cook
& Mike Hebert**

Greetings to all former 458th members (DUKW's, LARC's, BARC's, PBR's, Whalers, and associated Military Police). This is the July 2014 issue of the newsletter. Subsequent issues published quarterly.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Welcome Home and greetings from the Southern White House. As some of you know, last summer we escaped New Jersey's taxes and the snowy winters for the East Coast of North Carolina. A difficult move compounded by Murphy's Law times twenty. We are settling in and really enjoy the area.

As we begin summer it's time to make plans to join us in Covington, KY for our reunion in September. Each reunion brings together old and new friends who share our common bond of Army sailors. We also share the bond of being away from home for holidays, birthdays of our loved ones, and the difficulties of day to day living in a combat zone. So come out for another chance to ride on a PBR with you brothers in arms.

If you have any suggestions on how to make these reunions better please let me know. I know you have asked for a list of phone numbers, wives names, which out post and dates for those attending. I will have that information for you when we get to Covington. Any others suggestions you have please let me know. My email is tjfarrell458@yahoo.com and my cell phone number is 856-562-1797.

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT:

Regarding the reunion: the sooner registrations come back to Bill the easier it is to coordinate our numbers for meals etc. with the hotel.

In the past 2 years we have lost at least ten members due to death. Many of these men did not get the chance to attend a reunion. Please try to attend and reacquaint with comrades you haven't seen in many years.

Ya know, life is truly like a roll of toilet paper, the closer you get to the end, the faster it goes.

See you at the reunion! Denny Hull '70 -'71

2014 REUNION

Sept. 16 – 20 Erlanger, KY (across Ohio River from Cincinnati)

Plans are coming together and being finalized for the annual reunion to be held this year at the Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport, 1717 Airport Exchange Blvd. Erlanger, KY.

In the past we have been chartering buses for tours to the many different attractions in the area we were visiting. We have had several comments about the long days of touring as well as the expense and people not having time to just sit and relax and B.S. This year the Covington Convention and Visitors Bureau has agreed to set up a table with guidance and directions for people who care to visit the many local attractions.

For the 458th this year we will have Dave Pizzoferrato with PBR 6927 as well as Ken Adams with his DUKW available to us at the Ludlow-Bromley Yacht Club on the Ohio River. Dennis Ambrusco, owner of PBR 721, will be on crew with Dave and his PBR. Denny Hull, Tom Farrell, and I have been working to arrange for a LARC-V to be there but so far have had no luck on that. Keep your fingers crossed.

On the Tuesday 16th (show up day) at about 1800 hrs. we will have an Honor Guard post the colors followed by a picnic of pulled pork sandwiches, baked beans, potato salad, etc. and dessert for \$18 per person.

The 17th will be a day for brotherhood and going to the Ludlow-Bromley Yacht Club where the PBR and DUKW will be located. By the way, I should mention that the Ludlow-Bromley Yacht Club may not be exactly what you may picture in your mind. Some of you may not want to leave once you get there. In fact, Denny may still be there. Denny, Tom and I found it quite impressive. Really a neat setup. Good booze, great food and just a really nice place to hang out, or ride a PBR or DUKW. The Yacht Club is also **CASH ONLY**. They do, however, have an ATM machine on board.

On Thursday the 18th we will hold the business meeting at 0900 hrs. After that will be time for more brotherhood or carpooling to various attractions in the area including the yacht club.

Friday the 19th will also be a day of brotherhood or visiting attractions until the banquet at 1900 hrs. Cost for the banquet meal will be \$34.50 per person.

Saturday morning will be for goodbyes and hitting the trail for home.

The Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport is a very vet friendly establishment as is the whole of Covington and Northern Kentucky area. Approximately 75% of our membership lives east of the Mississippi River. The Hotel is located within a day's drive for a large percentage of our members. We hope you will consider attending this year. None of us are getting any younger.

This year is also an election year for the positions of secretary and treasurer. Both Pete McGuirk and myself have decided to retire from our positions and pass them on to someone else. If you are interested in volunteering to run or would like to nominate someone to run for one of these positions contact me (Bill Northrop) at 605.339.3381 or norwill6@sio.midco.net. With nominations, one of the board members will have to check

and see if the person nominated is willing to run for the position. As all of you know, Pete and I have been in these positions for many years and I think burnout is getting to us. We need a break. If warranted, the appropriate ballots will be mailed out after nominations have closed.

Nominations need to be sent to Bill Northrop or Tom Farrell (president) by July 1, 2014. Ballots WILL be opened and read DURING the business meeting.

The PBR and DUKW are being brought to our reunion for the price of transportation and fuel. I would guess the total cost of this to be around \$1500 to \$2000. Donations would be very much appreciated and can be sent with the registration.

Also, a heartfelt "Thank You" to the gentlemen furnishing the boats and taking the time out of their busy schedules to ensure we have a great reunion.

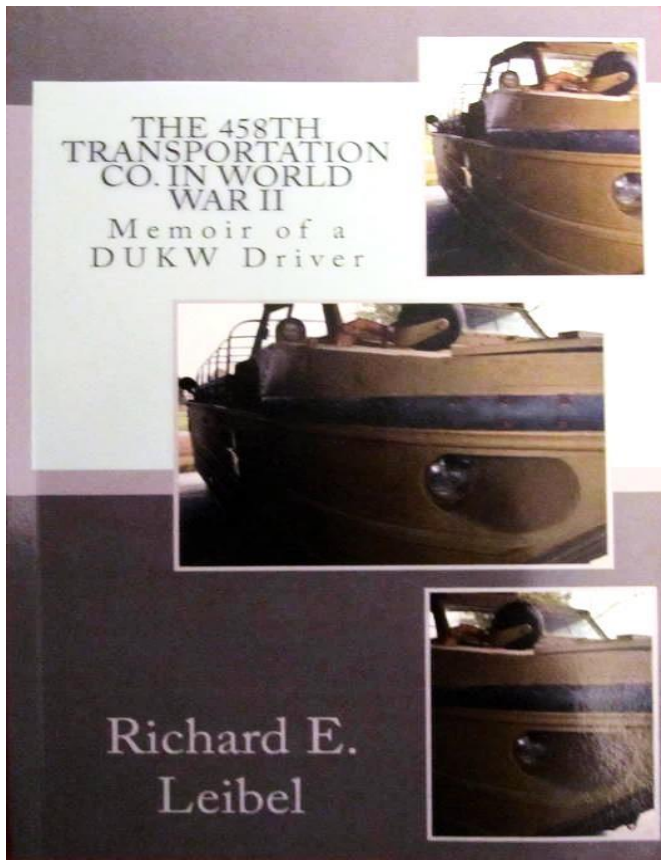
We're looking forward to a big turnout and a great reunion. I know many of you have never attended one of our reunions, so please consider making this one. Who knows how long before we have another reunion so close to so many members.

Regards, Bill Northrop (secretary)

MEMBER NEWS:

- World War II 458th member Richard Leibel has authored a 130-page memoir of his exploits with the 458th Transportation Corps during the D-Day Landings at Omaha Beach, the Battle of the Bulge, and serving with the 2nd Armored Division, crossing the Rhine River.

Richard recounts harrowing details of his careening off a mountain cliff in a 2-ton truck, nearly capsizing on a troop ship in the Atlantic, rescuing British glider pilots, being strafed by a German Luftwaffe pilot, having an enemy 88mm shell land at his feet, and how he and another soldier – both unarmed – captured six German soldiers who were carrying rifles! He also tells how he came to acquire Nazi Reich Minister Joseph Goebbels' gold pocketwatch!



This book is a must-have for any member of the 458th or anyone who is interested in the history of World War II. It is a very well written, crisp and witty, and offers interesting insights into the origins of the 458th Transportation Corps.

This is a good opportunity to read the complete version of the installments that have been appearing in the Riverine Reporter. Or, you can just wait until they run their course in the newsletter, which will be sometime in 2034!

Copies can be purchased from Amazon.com and AmazonEurope.com (for the Germans!). Price in the U.S. is \$12.95. A Kindle version will be available in the next couple of weeks. Those attending the reunion in Cincinnati will be able to purchase an autographed copy at a discount. Richard is graciously donating **all proceeds** of books sold thru the Sea Tigers to the 458th Sea Tigers Association! He is also going to donate an additional amount from sales outside the 458th. Thank you, Richard. We are proud to have you as a member.

- The newsletter staff is very pleased to report that the response to our request for support

has been outstanding! Donations to the newsletter fund have been coming in on a regular basis with over \$500 raised since our plea for assistance. Thank you all. It's nice to know that when the need arises, you are there to help. It is greatly appreciated.

Recent donors are:

- * Richard E. Leibel
- * Dave Hunt
- * Ed Aldrich
- * Fred Smith
- * Ken Jones
- * Jeff Strand
- * Fred Rosenberg
- * Oliver Redden
- * Ray Simpson made a very generous donation in the name of Jim Farmer
- * Bill Bassett has also made a very generous donation to the fund.
- * Member #12, Bob McCabe, sent in an extremely charitable donation.

Thank you all for your unwavering support!

BUCKET LIST TRIP

by Tom Wonsiewicz

Lois and I made a “bucket list” trip to New Zealand and Australia. It was spectacular. But the moment that rocked my boat was unexpected and unplanned. In Sydney we were returning to our hotel after dinner when there was a loud and raucous carrying on in the block ahead of us. It was coming from a group of 40 or so, many waving the old Republic of Vietnam flag. You remember it, Yellow with three red horizontal bars. As we approached, they were chanting anti-communist and pro-freedom slogans. They were in front of a theater where a touring troupe from Vietnam was performing. They were drawing attention to the problem of communism in Vietnam today. I chanted along with them and walked their line shaking hands.

I asked one old guy his age. “I’m 72,” he responded. I told him I had been a soldier there and he asked in his heavy accent “Where you serve?” I got as far as Cat Lai and Nha Be and his eyes went wide. “No, Get outta here, you

know Cat Lai?" We shook hands and Lois snapped a picture of us.



The US didn't win that war we fought in, but I have always felt that our efforts to assist the South in establishing democracy were for a good cause. The racket raised by those Vietnamese patriots protesting communist Vietnam was all the affirmation I'll ever need and I share it with all those who served.

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WORDS OF WISDOM

by Don Cook

Words of wisdom hammered home (more like jammed down my throat) by my uncle who was a old crusty & nasty Army MSG (who was busted in rank more than once for fighting while drunk). He was a World War II and Korean War vet. One day I was jokingly bustin' his chops that after I graduated from OCS and commissioned a 2nd LT that he would have to salute me! You would have thought I had kicked him in the crotch!

The words of wisdom he imparted were words to the effect – listen here, asshole, if you want to survive in combat and be successful in the Army, listen to your NCOs. They are the backbone of the Army. They make the Army run. They can easily survive without your sorry ass but you can't survive without them.

Truer words were never spoken – I never forgot what he said.

In my first assignment as a platoon leader in the MP Company at Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, AL I was scheduled to meet my

platoon sergeant at 0800 hours Monday morning. He showed up about 45 minutes late, had two black eyes and busted nose. I'm thinking, oh shit, my career is over before it starts. I said to him Hi Andy (SFC Anderson). Don't you look all pretty this fine Monday morning. He grumbles something to the effect, yeah, you should see the other guy. He got right to the point. LT, do you want to survive Vietnam and be successful in the Army? I'm thinking, he must have been a fly on the wall when my uncle was ripping me apart. I responded, of course I do! He said, good. I'll run the platoon, you command the platoon. You listen to me and do as I ask and we'll both be successful. He took the words out of my mouth. I said, Roger that Andy. The first job was a breeze.

After Vietnam I was commanding an MP AIT Company at Fort Gordon, GA and the first sergeant comes in my office and says, Sir, there is a SFC Anderson here to see you. I said send him in. Guess what – he had two black eyes and a broken nose! I said Andy, what the hell have you done now? He said "I told my company commander to go F+^ himself. I need a home. I said First Sergeant, work it out with Battalion and find Andy a home with us. He was assigned to us the next day with stern guidance from the Battalion Commander. Andy excelled at being allowed to do his job, the trainees loved him, and the NCO's loved and respected him.

From the bottom of my heart and the deepest reaches of my soul I honestly believe (and have firsthand experience with the fact) that the enlisted and NCO's are the salt of the earth and the backbone of the Army (any service for that matter). Allowed to do their jobs without micromanagement the job will get done well and fast and with great pride and morale.

Why am I rambling about all this, you ask? Well, I am rambling because even in retirement I see the same work ethic in all the old fart NCOs who continue to excel in our association. Look at the jobs completed with the establishment of the Sea Tigers Association; the planning and execution of the yearly reunions; the writing, organizing, printing, and

mailing of the quarterly newsletter, and; the list goes on and on and on!

You are the backbone of our organization – perfectly planned and flawlessly executed.

I know that if I list names I will inadvertently leave someone off the list and hurt feelings. Please accept my apologies in advance – no slight intended.

To: Mike Hebert, Bill Northrop, Lee Helle, Tom Farrell, past and present association officers, please accept my public and heartfelt thank you in appreciation of all your efforts and the jobs you've done and continue to do. I salute you! Hoo-ah!

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The 458th Trans. Co. in World War II

by Richard E. Leibel

...Continued from Spring 2014

The only pleasant thing about our journey was passing through Salem, Oregon. I suppose being the early spring days of May helped a lot. The main highway through Salem was a very wide street. The Capital building as well as the large homes were set back from the street a good distance. The large lush green lawns were decorated with flowering trees, bushes, and flower gardens, all in full bloom. It seemed nice and pleasant even in the worst situation.

Toward the end of the first day of our travels we pulled into a large lush green field. We were soon ordered to pitch our pup tents. The first thing was to lay the tents in rows and then snap the two halves together. The next move was an attempt to erect the tents. Driving the tent pegs into the ground proved to be a problem. The nearest thing we had to a hammer was the small fold-up shovel meant to dig foxholes. Driving the tent stakes into the ground proved to be quite a chore. If you drove them into the loamy top soil they kept coming out of the ground. Driving the stakes into the clay soil proved to be almost impossible.

While we were still struggling - and I mean struggling - a newsboy came through our area selling the latest edition of the local paper. The extra front page print read, "Park Turned into

Tent City". The large front page picture showed lines of pup tents. Unless the picture was a fake, which was a possibility, the troops in the lead trucks of the convoy had time to pitch the tents, the news people had time to take and develop pictures, write and print the story and have the news out on the streets while our section of the convoy was still en route.

In my estimation, the pup tent is the most useless thing ever devised. Besides being a challenge to erect, they are so small that if you are taller than 5 feet and you slide in feet first your head is out in the open. If you slide in head first, your feet are in the open. When I say slide in, I mean slide in. The pup tents are too low to even crawl into. There is absolutely no protection from the moisture or bugs in the ground. The only place I know that doesn't have ground moisture is in the desert or on rocks. Also, the thin blanket issued to us proved to be useless. This was why we were forced to spend one month's pay to buy a sleeping bag. Also, they should have made the designer of the useless pup tents sleep in them during a cold month of January. He would have learned firsthand how inefficient they were.

...Continued in Fall 2014

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BOOK REVIEW:

by Mike Hebert

Many of you are probably already familiar with a writer named Tim O'Brien, but I stumbled upon his work by accident recently. His Vietnam War novel, *The Things They Carried*, is absolutely superb. It's quirky, evocative, and powerful. He is being hailed as the "new Hemingway" and "the best writer of our generation". In addition to winning the New York Times **Book of the Century** Award he is also a Pulitzer Prize finalist. His book is available from Amazon.com for \$11.00. Order it. It is simply incredible – unlike anything you have ever read. You will not regret it.

"As good as any piece of literature can get" – Chicago Sun Times

"There have been movies. And plays. And books. But never anything like this" San Diego Union

CONFESSIONS OF THE 458TH

How I was picked for the Army

by Mike Hebert

It was a beautiful bright and sunny Monday morning in early July of 1969. My mother and two younger sisters, dressed in their Sunday best, accompanied me to the local bus station in Laurel, Maryland. My father, a career soldier, was absent, having been sent to Thailand several months earlier. We all stood around on the sidewalk next to the bus station. None of us spoke very much. I tried my best to be brave

None wanted to be the first to burst into tears.

My last memory of home was looking out the back window at my mother and sisters waving goodbye as the bus disappeared down the road. My mother was fighting back tears, my little sisters too young to comprehend the gravity of the situation.

The bus arrived at the Induction Center in Richmond, Virginia several hours later. A skinny mean-looking Sergeant boarded the bus and glared at us, his eyes spitting fire from hell.

Get off the damn bus you scum! Now! Get off! Get off! Get your ass off the damn bus! Move! Move! Move!

I joined a large contingent of other young draftees standing around in a large room. We were taken out into a cavernous hallway and told to line up against the wall. A fleeting image of a firing squad danced across my mind, but then reality set in. There was nothing funny about this.

I was going into the military!

After all the recruits were lined up, a burly Sergeant came out and walked all the way down to the far end of the line. He reminded me of a grizzly bear in a uniform. Most of the young men weren't paying much attention. They were either nervously conversing amongst themselves or staring down at the floor, lost in their own thoughts and misery.

I watched the big Sergeant closely. He was counting heads and moving some of the men to the other side of the hall. I kept my eyes on

him, determined to figure out what was going to transpire.

I had always regarded myself as a bit more attentive than most. Not that I was any smarter than anyone else, I just noticed things. My earliest memory of intuitive ability was probably in the third grade. Belinda Thompson, a cute little blond girl, used to sit in the middle of the merry-go-round during recess and make all of us boys push her around. It was always the same game every day: she was the Queen of England and we were her knaves. *Push! Push harder!* At the end of the recess period she would always reward one lucky boy with a kiss on the cheek. I figured out very quickly what was going on, the rest were all dumbstruck by love. I still pushed her, though. After all, a kiss is a kiss.

Belinda Thompson... Belinda Thompson... I never did get a kiss. I wonder why? Maybe I never pushed hard enough. Or maybe she knew that I had figured out her little playground scam.

... Oh my God! How stupid of me! I caught myself staring down at the floor, lost in my own thoughts - thoughts of Belinda Thompson, thoughts of a kiss... I had become another poor recruit standing in line against the wall!

I shook my head, trying to clear my brain. How long had I been daydreaming? What had I missed? Where was the Sergeant? What was he doing? What was going on?

I looked up the line. I was relieved to see that he was still down the hall a bit. He was still moving people to the other side. I breathed a little easier.

As he got closer, I could hear him bark clearly. "One, two, three - Marine! One, two, three - Marine!" Recruit number three moved across the hall.

Every third man was going to the Marine Corps!

Quickly I started counting the men ahead of me. One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three. When number three landed on me, I almost panicked! I felt blood rushing to my

head. I thought I might pass out. Under no circumstances did I want to be a Marine – none! I looked around for an exit door.

Then, thinking quickly, I turned to the recruit next to me. “Hey, huh... I wonder if you’d mind changing places with me. I’d like to talk to the guy on the other side of you. We met on the bus ride down here from Maryland.”

“Yeah, sure. Not a problem.”

A few minutes later the big Sergeant came by. “One, two, three – Marine!”

I was number two.

I thought often of the poor young marine – number three - during my stint in the Army. I felt bad at times thinking about what I had done. Sometimes I would sit by myself and contemplate how such an innocent, foolish, and selfish spur of the moment act could have such a profound impact on someone’s life.

Guilt was a frequent companion.

In 1969 the percentage of marines going to Vietnam was probably 100. The percentage who returned home was considerably less. Did the poor young Marine end up in a muddy rice paddy somewhere, the victim of a Viet Cong bullet? I wondered if he had regretted changing places with me that day as he lay there staring at the sky, gasping for his last breath of air.

Not a problem, he had said. *Not a problem*.

Those words haunted me for years.

Was I living my life at the expense of another?

There were no answers.

I hope he survived his tour in Vietnam. I hope he’s sitting around the bar in some American Legion hall somewhere, telling everyone the story of how he was supposed to have served in the Army, but some jerk in line made him change places and he got picked for the Marines.

I hope he is alive and well.

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REFLECTIONS by Tom Wonsiewicz

...Continued from Spring 2014



458th HQ Bldg/Supply Room

Saigon Living

Our compound was near Ton Sun Nhut airbase. (Was it named *Pershing Field*?) It was adjacent to a VN Army post, a cemetery and what must have been a soccer field. It was not very large. There was a centralized mess hall, a barber shop and NCO/enlisted man’s club (I’m not sure which any longer). There were above ground latrines, built over removable, sawed off 55 gallon drums. The effluent was burned off each day with diesel fuel—an unforgettable stench.



Saigon Waterfront: Majestic Hotel behind ships

Vietnamese were employed to work in the mess hall, as hootch cleaners/launders and other odd jobs. Neither side knew much of the other’s language beyond a few phrases. I remember the barbers. They would finish the haircut with a quick neck and scalp massage and then “crack” your neck. Holding chin and the back of your head they would twist your head to a certain position then give it a little

flick. You could hear the vertebrae ‘pop’. The first time it scared me; after that I looked forward to it.

Combat Volleyball

On Friday afternoons there was a habit of having an Officers Vs. Enlisted volleyball game - combat rules. It was rugged, but good fun. On one occasion, I was trying to make a save and landed full force on one wrist. I finished the game, but was in excruciating pain afterwards. That evening I went over to the main hospital in Saigon, which wasn't too far from us. The X-ray was negative - it was just a bad sprain. I remember the doctor ordering the Medic to give me “X” cc's of some kind of pain killer. “Doc, he's not a horse”, the medic said as he rolled his eyes. The doc paused then cut the ordered dosage in half.

That had to be my first out of body experience. I don't know what that drug was, but I felt great, and wouldn't mind having it again from time to time.

“You Are Cordially Invited...”

“...to participate in a volley ball match in honor of the Tet Holiday. Refreshments will be provided.” Those, more or less, were the words on the formally printed invitation. The VN Army unit next door was challenging us to a volley ball match. They had to be kidding!

We may not have been athletes, but we were in pretty decent shape and twice the size of our challengers. It would be like taking candy from a baby. We accepted.

We arrived on a Sunday, starting around 11 AM. The initial introductions and “speechifying” were a little awkward, but everyone relaxed when play began. It was a best of three, 15 point match played on sand - something we weren't used to.

In the first game, we cleaned their clock as if it were a varsity vs. junior varsity game. I don't think they had more than 5 points on the board. There was a short break. They had a tub of iced “33” beer, it was hot, and we were off duty - why not have one.

The second match started out like the first, and then the worm turned. They realized they couldn't score by trying to spike it at the net – we were too tall. They started placing their shots. The match went to “deuce” any number of times. Their resolve was tightening and we were wilting in the sweltering noon-day sun. When they scored the winning point, they went nuts. You would have thought they won the war. The match was even.

The second break was longer than the first. They served some snacks and more to drink: we obliged.

The third game wasn't a match at all. They blew us off as soundly as we trounced them in the first game. They had one guy who could place his serve on a dime – and he did while facing away from the net. He was outstanding. He also served every ball for them that match. We complained that service was supposed to “rotate” but they feigned that they couldn't understand English very well.

In the end, we all ate and drank with the same gusto. They were gracious in their victory, having beaten the American gorillas.

...Continued in Fall 2014

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458th Sea Tigers short sleeve tees, denim long sleeve shirts, polo shirts, jackets, and hats are available thru 458thseatigers.org.



Don't forget to visit the following 458th
Transportation Company web sites:

www.458thseatigers.org

www.458pbr-vungrobay.com

We really, really need stories from your experiences in Vietnam! Please send submissions to one of the staff listed below.

Back issues of the newsletter are available. Just contact one of the staff listed below.

We appreciate your submissions, feature ideas, corrections & criticisms. Please submit info to:

Bill Northrop: norwill6@sio.midco.net

Don Cook: dccookjr6@cox.net

Mike Hebert: michaelhebert@cox.net

458th SeaTigers Officers

President: Tom Farrell

Vice President: Denny Hull

Secretary: Bill Northrop

Treasurer: Pete McGuirk

Chaplin: Scott Fultz

Historian: Bob Brower

Membership Chairman: Glenn Booth

**Deadline for Fall (October)
issue of newsletter is
September 15. Please
submit materials prior to
that date.**

458th SEA TIGERS ASSOCIATION

Bill Northrop, Secretary

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL

Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

email: _____

Military Info:

Unit: _____ Dates w/Unit: _____ Location: _____ Rank: _____

Please check this box if you **DO NOT** want information on this application shared with other members of our organization.

DUES (check box): 1 year; \$20.00 3 years; \$45.00 Lifetime; \$195.00

NEWSLETTER DONATION: Amount \$_____ (Thank you!)

Please submit verification of service with application. We will need any of the following: copy of orders, copy of 201, photos, or a member who can vouch for you.