



# THE CHINA LAKER

Vol. 3 No. 2

Summer 1997

## NEW ITEMS SPARK GIFT SHOP OFFERINGS

T-shirts and caps emblazoned with the following historic China Lake graphics and legends are now available in the China Lake Museum Foundation's Gift Shop.



Lacking color printing capability, we can't do justice here to the vivid, full-color impact of the actual merchandise. However, we can attest that these new products are moving well. More and more Exhibit Center visitors are stopping in to browse and buy. Several have expressed their pleasure at finding "another really meaningful souvenir of The Lake."

Caps come in a choice of white or blue at \$9.11, including California state sales tax. White caps also come in a version whose bill sports the gold leaf configuration of a senior officer's "scrambled eggs"; these are priced at \$10.72, incl. tax.

All the T-shirts are white, in sizes Small through XX-Large. Sizes Small through X-Large sell for \$10.72 each, or \$18.23 for two. XX-Large shirts are \$12.87 each, \$22.52 for two. As above, these figures include tax.

Two other T-shirt designs are available at the same prices. One features a background listing the names of many notable weapons systems developed at China Lake, behind the proud legend: *Weapons Technology and Systems for the Fleet*. The second clusters logos of the NOTS, NWC, NAWS and NAWCWPNs commands around the words, *A Proud History of Support to the Fleet*.

If you haven't visited us since these eye-catching items came into our inventory, stop in soon! The Gift Shop is adjacent to the exhibit area in the north end of the Exhibit Center building at the end of Blandy Avenue.

All Gift Shop items may also be ordered by mail or telephone. Foundation Office Manager Jeanie Copeland (760-939-3530) will take your request and advise you of shipping charges. Mail/phone order payment may be made by Visa or MasterCard, or by check. Mail orders should be directed to P.O. Box 217 • Ridgecrest, CA 93556-0217.

(Please see p. 4 for more Gift Shop articles and prices.)

**SEPTEMBER SEND-OFF  
FOR CHARTER MEMBER  
STEVE SANDERS**

Your Board of Directors will honor founding member Steve Sanders with a no-host farewell party Friday evening, September 19. Steve and Nancy are presently in the process of moving to Nevada's North Lake Topaz region.

Board Member Paul Homer is in charge of preparations for our send-off. It appears likely the event will feature an informal BBQ dinner in a casual setting such as the lanai adjacent to the Barefoot Bar in the former "O" Club building.

Steve was one of the prime movers in the creation of the China Lake Museum Foundation in 1993. As Head of the Technical Information Department at the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, he held key responsibilities for the base's official history and weapons exhibit programs. His knowledgeable, enthusiastic support played a major role in establishing, enlarging and enhancing the Exhibit Center.

Steve's grasp of the Foundation's vision for an enduring China Lake Armament and Technology Museum has inspired other members throughout the ongoing effort to get official Navy Museum status. Since the organization's beginnings, his dedicated service as Treasurer has not prevented him from performing dozens of other chores, large and small. In helping develop the Gift Shop's inventory, he has laid the foundation for continuing diversification and expansion of this important revenue source.

Board meetings have benefited not only from Steve's wisdom, resourcefulness and positive outlook, but also from the strong sense of camaraderie that characterizes his participation. His presence and his contributions will be sorely missed. The Board is sure the entire membership joins in wishing Steve and Nancy nothing but the best as they start building their new life.

Foundation members who want to attend the no-host September 19 event are

invited to contact Paul (375-7535) or the Foundation's Office Manager Jeanie Copeland (939-3530) in early September for firm information on time, place and cost. For final planning purposes, Jeanie will need a notification of intent-to-attend no later than September 11.



**MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Once again Office Manager Jeanie Copeland's face is beaming as she reports good news about our membership rolls: 22 new regular members and 14 renewals since publication of our preceding edition.

We're deeply gratified to have the WACOM Thrift Shop become Lifetime Member #29. We also express our appreciation to Contributing Members Kathy Armstrong and Dave Rugg.

New Regular Memberships have been issued to:

Arthur J. Arsenault  
Elizabeth Babcock  
William J. Berger  
Katie Cheneault  
Wayne Doucette  
Andrew & Anna Hinz  
Toshio Inouye  
Terre Jacks  
Jane La Rosa  
Leonard T. Lesniak  
Juanita Madden  
Joseph & Lisa Mattis  
Dave & Marie Newman  
Robert E. Riggs  
Charles Thelen  
Fayelene Thelen  
James E. Vasbinder  
Mary Louise Walden  
Charles Walden  
James E. Weimholt  
Mary Weimholt  
Walter & Ina Wright

Welcome aboard!

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There's been a change of direction in the progress of the request for Navy Department approval of our proposed China Lake Armament and Technology Museum as an official Navy museum. The Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division is no longer seeking approval for a new museum facility. Instead, it is now requesting authority to convert the present China Lake Exhibit and Conference Center into the museum we desire.

We foresee some positive results if this authority is granted. The China Lake Armament and Technology Museum could become a reality in a short period of time. An effective basis for the collection, preservation and display of artifacts could be established promptly. We could speed up the timetable for offering a broader range of museum services to the public.

Conversion, rather than for creation of a new facility, would shift the China Lake Museum Foundation's fundraising focus. Instead of seeking capital for facility construction, your Foundation could go after funds to design and install exhibits and to support other essential museum operations.

We've learned not to expect quick response on requests to SecNav. However, at the June Board of Directors meeting we were encouraged when Scott O'Neil (NAWS Museum Advisory Committee representative) commented on positive expressions of support from Capt. S. W. Douglass (NAWS Commander) and the NAWS Judge Advocate General.

NAWS has let a contract for expansion/remodeling of spaces in the former "O" Club building, where the Exhibit Center and the

CLMF office and gift shop are housed. Under the expansion plans, the former bar area adjacent to the present conference room will become available for exhibits. Another adjacent space, east of the conference room, will also be made available for use by the Exhibit Center, and by the Museum if the conversion request is approved.

We'll keep you posted as we get updates on the Exhibit Center-to-Museum conversion request.

Foundation membership is staying strong. Most heartening! (See **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**, p. 2.) Once official Navy Museum status is in place, there'll be opportunity for members' involvement in lots of support endeavors. Encourage your China Lake cronies to join us!

We're happy with the way sales are going at the Foundation's Gift Shop. The response to the T-shirts and caps we recently added to the merchandise line is encouraging. You readers who live outside the Valley can order these and other items by phone (see **NEW ITEMS**, p. 1.)

We're also happy to welcome two more highly competent individuals to your Foundation's Board of Directors. Since our preceding newsletter edition, Dick Boyd and Jack Russell have come "on Board." Dick has agreed to fill the Treasurer vacancy caused by charter Board Member Steve Sanders' departure from the area (see **SEPTEMBER SEND-OFF**, p. 2.)

For some time Board Secretary Charlotte Bullard has been largely occupied with caring for her husband Dillard. Following treatment for a troublesome lung

condition, Dillard received a liver transplant this past January. He spent 5 of the following 6 months in intensive care. Now out of ICU, he's in a pulmonary care hospital in the Los Angeles area, receiving follow-on treatment for the lung condition. We wish him a full and speedy recovery, and we look forward to Charlotte's resumption of her valuable work with the Foundation.

On June 19 the Foundation Directors were pleased to receive Texas Instruments, Inc.'s donation of a full-sized model of the new Joint Standoff Weapon. The JSOW program, one of the present-day jewels in the Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division's crown, was featured in the **NOWADAYS AT NAWC** column of the Spring 1997 issue of *The China Laker*.

We again commend Dr. Lloyd Smith, Program Manager for the NAWCWPN elements of this government-industry development effort. Smith, who retired June 16 after 30+ years of government service, exemplified the NOTS-NWC-NAWCWPN tradition of seeking low-risk, low-cost engineering solutions to meet demanding operational requirements at low unit-procurement cost.

In accepting this outstanding addition to the Foundation's "arsenal of exhibits," we're pleased to note that both the NAWC Commander and the prime contractor Texas Instruments recognize the importance of communicating not only the historical aspect of the JSOW weapon, but also the superb management techniques employed in the effort. Our hearty congratulations to the entire JSOW team!



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

21 April '97  
Boca Raton, FL

*The letter from Mary Agnes Sellars that so aptly prompted "Coming Up for Air" in the Spring '97 China Laker also reminded me of my own debt to Capt. R. F. Sellars.*

*In 1964, when serving as Commander, Naval Surface Weapons Laboratory, he flew to London where I was marking time in the Office of Naval Research, to notify me that I was selected for the position of Technical Director of NSWC out of forty applicants and wanted my response personally. I can hardly describe how deeply I was affected.*

*At the time my career as a Navy scientist was pretty much in limbo, what with BuWeps going down the drain and attempts being made to downsize the three jobs that no longer fitted, namely the Chief Scientist, the Chief Mathematician and the Chief Engineer—the last of which I held. But Capt. Sellars remembered what I had done at NOTS and, without requiring my application, put my name in the hat with one hand and pulled it out with the other.*

*It was wonderful to be needed again in the Navy's laboratory system. He changed my life for much the better. Bless him.*

Barney (Bernard Smith)

April 1997

*I arrived in China Lake in November 1955 about 10:00 p.m. The sky was black velvet studded with diamonds. What a beautiful sight.*

*But the next morning all I saw was sand and not a blade of grass. All I could say was, "How could you do this to me?"*

*It took some time, but China Lake became the happiest time of my life.*

*I will always cherish Commander Bates' letter to me. I hope all the darling children I read to are still reading books.*

Sincerely,  
Jane LaRosa

These two letters and the Commander Bates letter Jane LaRosa refers to have been passed to the China Lake Historian, along with vintage photographs of the Station Library that Jane sent along. Cdr. Bates' 1970 letter commends her for "12 years of outstanding service as a Librarian at the Naval Weapons Center." Ed.

THE CHINA LAKER is published quarterly by  
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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## THE NAVY'S VILLAGE

Excerpts from *Magnificent Mavericks*  
by Elizabeth Babcock

- ...since everything belonged to the government, your assumption really was that it didn't make much difference if it moved from one place to another. So rocket boxes and every other kind of wood appeared as fences, and I don't think that very many people bought many nails or anything else in those days.

Dr. James H. Wiegand

As the largest community completely built and run by the U.S. Navy, the "village" of China Lake presented unique management problems for the Station's military and civilian managers. The Deputy Commander managed the service organization, including the community, from the military side of the NOTS organization.<sup>1</sup> However, an overwhelming majority of China Lake residents were civilians, and the level of necessary community facilities and services fluctuated in direct response to the recruitment and retention needs of the technical organization. For this reason, Station civilian leaders also needed to participate in community management.

The day-to-day task of running the community was in the capable hands of John O. Richmond, who had come to the desert in 1944 as the Station's first Executive Officer. Commander Richmond retired from naval service in June 1946 and stayed on to serve as manager of what amounted to a full-scale town. Richmond was head of the Services Department until December

<sup>1</sup> The position of Deputy Commander was retitled Executive Officer in 1950.

1948, when he became the Station's first official Community Manager, with responsibility for controlling "all matters which concern the operation, administration, and welfare of the community and its related activities."<sup>2</sup> These matters included the Fire Department, housing and recreation services, and a kaleidoscopic variety of community-management challenges presented by the spirited residents of China Lake.

During the Station's early days of hurried construction, wartime expedience had necessitated that the Navy furnish its tenants with furniture, landscaping services, lumber for fences, and a variety of other materials and services necessary to establish the amenities of civilization. By the time the community was well-established, the expectation that the Navy would provide for such needs was equally entrenched.

Pilfering of small items, or "cumshaw," was widely regarded as one of the benefits of living at China Lake. "If you wanted to take a typewriter home, you could take it home, and there were those who didn't necessarily take them back," LeRoy Jackson recalled. The "can-do" attitude that the Station's employees brought to their jobs carried over to home-improvement projects, where the prevailing philosophy was that there was nothing wrong with "appropriating" Navy materials to improve Navy housing. "We'd build fences and actually additional rooms," Rod McClung said, adding that:

Some people would build a complete additional room on the house when

<sup>2</sup> Station Order No. 33-48, December 16, 1948, "Command, Staff and Departmental Organization of the Naval Ordnance Test Station, Inyokern, California."

the Navy wasn't looking. Then when they left, the Navy would have to decide whether to tear it down or whether it was good enough to go ahead and let the next person have it and charge them more rent. But there were homes built in Ridgecrest in which there wasn't a piece of lumber in the house any longer than 4 feet because that was the length of the ammo boxes....

By 1948 the Navy had begun a long and arduous process of withdrawing some of the benefits that became available elsewhere with the growth of the community. In the early days mail services, for example, were provided through the work place, so that an employee might come back from lunch or an appointment and find that a mail-order tire had become an impromptu paperweight on his desk. Such deliveries increased the difficulty of keeping the Navy's items and personal property separate. But after home delivery of mail became available in June 1948, office delivery of personal mail gradually abated. The practice of cumshaw, however, was more difficult to curtail, and the long reeducation process began slowly.

#### A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION

- The Community Council has been and will continue to be the one agency to which I turn when the collective opinion of the community is needed.

Captain Walter V. R. Vieweg

While Richmond kept the community running smoothly and made logistic and policy recommendations to Command, the residents of China Lake had their own vehicle for influencing community governance. The Employees Welfare Association (EWA) was established in November 1945, apparently as an outgrowth of employee meetings Commanding Officer James B. Sykes instituted as evidence that he was interested in the opinions of the obstreperous civilian population with which he had to deal. The association was designed to promote civilian welfare and to act as a liaison between civilians and the Navy.

Representatives were elected in a ratio of one for each 50 employees. These representatives in turn elected a 14-member board of directors, which operated in certain respects like a city council, making recommendations to NOTS Command.

During the first years of its existence, EWA concerned itself with such matters as housing rental rates; postal, medical, and veterinary services; and access to shopping facilities. A gala Fall Fiesta was EWA's primary source of revenue during the years 1947-54. Crowds of up to 10,000 swarmed aboard the Station every October to attend air shows at Armitage Field and take part in barbecues, dances, and drawings for automobile prizes at Bennington Plaza.

Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of EWA was the NOTS Employees' Federal Credit Union, which was granted its charter on November 26, 1947, with total assets of \$45—a \$5 share deposit from each of its nine charter members. Its first loan, made a few days later, was for \$10, an amount needed to tide a member over until payday. McClung recalled that when his wife, Lorraine, came home and excitedly reported on this new investment possibility, he decided to investigate. He found that the organization's administrative assets consisted in their entirety of one file cabinet, one desk, and one employee, who worked a grand total of 2 hours a day. Nevertheless, the McClungs were among many China Lake residents who decided to become members. Assets grew rapidly—to more than a million dollars by the credit union's tenth anniversary.

In 1949 NOTS Command extended the right to vote for EWA representatives to all adults living in China Lake rather than just to Station employees; this change was made to give the entire community a voice in its own representation. To reflect this broadened member base, EWA was renamed the China Lake Community Council in April 1950, and the community was divided into precincts for the purpose of electing representatives to serve on the council.