TRSMA
THE ROHNA SURVIVORS MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION
www.rohnasurvivors.org
February 2023

The 2022 TRSMA Salt Lake City Reunion was thoroughly enjoyed!

By: Deborah Sanchez
TRSMA Vice President & Reunion Coordinator

As most of you know, the 26th in person Rohna Survivors Memorial Association reunion has come and gone. Held in Salt Lake City, Utah, it was 5 days of camaraderie and activities, and even though it was a bit smaller in number than other reunions, we still had 5 full-time and 3 part-time attendees that joined us for their very first time!

Wednesday night held the traditional welcome dinner, then our first full day dawned, and our tour with quick witted, entertaining Wyn, who possessed a wealth of information about everything Salt Lake City, took place. Besides riding around the city of Salt Lake and learning about its history and that of the Mormon religion, we also toured the State House and Pioneer Village before going to the wonderful Tabernacle Organ recital. A delicious lunch at the Chuck-a-Rama buffet afterwards, then back to our hotel.

Friday morning's class about the organization's past, present and future was well attended and Girls (and Boys) Night Out that evening had most everyone in the group attending. Now that's a first! Afterwards some of the group continued the fun at a piano club.

Our President, Jason Markiewitz arrived in the 'wee hours' of Saturday morning and conducted the annual membership meeting later that same morning. Saturday night's banquet dinner began with Cynthi Stefenoni leading us in singing the National Anthem and Dolly Williams giving the Invocation. The guest speaker was our very own Lt. Col. Jason Markiewitz! The evening concluded with our raffle where not one, but TWO beautiful quilts were grand prizes! Jane Downing, Ruth and John Canney's daughter, made another gorgeous quilt which she brought with her and generously donated to the raffle. It was an unexpected bonus so we had two incredible quilts to give away.

Sunday morning's farewell breakfast came much too soon, and we had to say our goodbyes. As always, those who could, stayed in the hospitality room until it had to be closed and the reunion officially ended.

This year, 2023, marks the 80th anniversary of the sinking of the Rohna. We genuinely hope you will join us in Harriburg, PA to honor our heroes... the men of the Rohna.

We Will ALWAYS Remember!

Saul Gurman--Rohna Survivor Interviews - 2002 and 2022

By: Janice Pumelia
TRSMA Secretary

The following inquiry was posted to the Guestbook on January 27, 2022.

'My name is Michael Naya, Jr. and I am a 19 year old Kean University sophomore from Kenilworth, N.J. For 5 years I have been interviewing Great Depression survivors, WWII & Korean War veterans. I have been doing this because I love history and one day would like to write a book on the men and women from these events. Throughout this research I have recently learned of the HMT Rohna. I was wondering if your Association might know of any surviving members who might want to share their stories?'

I could not respond to Michael's inquiry fast enough, thrilled that there was a 19 year old young man who had such a keen interest in learning more about WWII. I was able to pass along Saul Gurman's information, a 99 year old Rohna survivor living in Fall River, MA. Coincidentally, Saul was interviewed by Michael Walsh in Charleston, SC in 2002. His interview is contained in Michael Walsh's Rohna Memories Book I. The Rohna board members felt that this 2nd interview with Michael Naya 20 years later would be special for two reasons. First, the interviewer is a young, dedicated college student intent upon hearing the stories of our Greatest Generation. Secondly, this might be one of the last interviews of the few remaining Rohna survivors.

Both of these interviews are rather lengthy and could not be contained in this Newsletter so we have provided the interviews on the TRSMA website so that you may read both of them.

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The Stories Behind the Stars Honors Rohna Casualties

By: Janice Pumelia
TRSMA Secretary

In June I received an inquiry from the guestbook from Dr. Jack Chisum, the Arizona State Director for the organization The Stories Behind the Stars. He had very recently found out about the Rohna after coming across the name Alfredo M. Figueroa from Arizona, a casualty on the Rohna. Some background information is essential here. In 2016 Don Milne, (now the national director of SBTS) received a subscription to Ancestry.com and was immediately drawn into researching WWII military history. He knew that all families during WWII who lost a loved received a banner with a gold star. He also found out that there was no accurate, official list of the 421, 000+ Americans who were killed during WWII. Thus, the SBTS Initiative was created to organize one central digital location to collect the stories of these men and women. These stories would be digitally linked to all memorials and cemeteries by smartphone app so visitors would be able to read the stories of the fallen. This national effort, researched, written and financially supported by all those who want to see the fallen remembered, will ensure that future generations will be able to learn about each of the Americans who paid the ultimate price for our freedom. There are now a total of 33 state directors working on compiling these lists in their home states. Volunteers come from all walks of life eager to construct and submit a story but most often start with a loved one from WWII that they never knew. SBTS has already completed the stories of those men and women who lost their lives at Pearl Harbor. They are in the process of completing the stories of all of those who perished and are buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

So……..where do we come in?? Dr. Chisum has created a file and captured all of the names of the casualties on the Rohna. They are listed state by state so that the state directors can access them and provide their names to anyone who is interested. A memo (flier) has been created to be sent to the state directors highlighting the importance of the tragedy of the Rohna and the significance of the 80th anniversary in 2023, inviting any volunteers to tell their stories. We are hoping to tell the stories of the 1,100+ men lost, by the 80th anniversary on November 26, 2023. Dr. Chisum has now told Alfredo Figueroa's story, making him his 221st story.

We are hoping and asking that anyone reading this article who might also be interested in volunteering to write the story of a loved one lost on the Rohna, to please contact me through my email at: jetpumelia@gmail.com

For more information please access the web page: www:storiesbehindthestars.org so you can get a better idea of what this commitment entails. There will be people who can and will guide you through the process.

The Newsletter is going ONLINE ONLY in 2024!

Yes, it is finally happening, folks! We will be converting our newsletter to an online only format beginning in 2024. We have wrestled with this decision for years and have decided it is time. Printing and mailing costs have risen to a point where we just cannot afford to make and send physical newsletters anymore.

The men who originated this organization would agree that things must "keep up" with today's world if we are to remain viable, so we will no longer be mailing out physical newsletters after 2023. They will only arrive via email.

So, this means that if you are only receiving a printed newsletter, you will need to go to our website at: www.rohnasurvivors.org and use the link provided to register for our online newsletter. This will ensure that the newsletter will be delivered to your email address.

Continuing the connection…

Ruth Canney was the one person in the Rohna Association who received the most updates regarding many of our survivors, their spouses and NOK's; particularly of their passing.

Since Ruth is no longer with us, I would like to reach out to all of you again to keep this path of communication open. We still want to know about the deaths of our members. It is important to this Association that we recognize when a survivor, their widow or a NOK is deceased. Even if we are notified long after the event, we want to know.

The newsletter is the original vehicle used by the organization to keep members informed and it is the only place where we post the information of a survivor, a spouse or NOK's passing. Even though we are converting to an online format for the newsletter, we will continue to include this information.

If you have information regarding a survivor or other member's passing, please contact me with their name and date of passing using one of the following:

Email: debsan1951@gmail.com

Phone: (408) 265-3951 (Home) (408) 656-2246 (Cell)

Deborah Sanchez - 4236 Hendrix Way - San Jose, CA - 95124

ROHNA CLASSIFIED UPDATE

By: Janice Pumelia

Jack Ballo and his team of researchers and filmmakers have been working feverishly to complete the Rohna Classified documentary. Near the end of 2022 he and the entire team were able to visit the National Archives in Washington, D.C. for a week!

It is important to point out that the National Archives, one of the most valuable resources for the making of this film, was closed for two years during the pandemic and has only recently reopened.

His team is making every effort to complete the documentary in 2023 as he would like the premiere to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the tragedy of the Rohna.

We will do our best to keep you informed on his progress but for more accurate and up-to-date information, please visit the film's website at: www.rohnaclassified.com

THE ROHNA SURVIVORS MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION
80th ANNIVERSARY REUNION
June 28-July 2, 2023 ~~ Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

The reunion will be held at the Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey, Pennsylvania,
4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17111
(717) 939-7841 or (800) 637- 4817

Room rate is: $143.19 per night. This includes all taxes, free WIFI and Parking

MAKE YOUR HOTEL ROOM RESERVATION BY June 1, 2023

Please tell the reservation agent at the time of your booking if you require an ADA room.
The hotel airport shuttle is available from 6:30AM to 10:30PM. **Please call the hotel 48 hours in advance of your arrival and give them your flight information. Call: (717) 939-7841 ext.1.**

Registration is $195.00 for adults, $120.00 ages 4 -10 and $10.00 for children under the age of 4.
The registration fee includes the following:

- Welcome Package with name button, itinerary, list of attendees and local information
- Wednesday Welcome Dinner Buffet
- Thursday All Day Tour of Gettysburg
- Friday optional Tour of Hershey's Chocolate World
- Saturday morning Membership Meeting
- Saturday classes
- Saturday night Banquet Dinner & Program
- Sunday Farewell Breakfast Buffet
- Hospitality Room stocked with snacks, beverages & cocktails all 4 days

Registration Fees for all Survivors and Convoy Members are paid by the Association.
Additional funds are also available to Survivors and Convoy Members for this reunion.
Contact Deborah at (408) 265-3951 for more information.

~ Optional tour of Hershey's Chocolate World on Friday - $56 per person ~

All Memorabilia is welcome! We'll display your loved ones WWII memories.

To make your room reservations call the Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey
at (717) 939- 7841 or Toll Free at (800) 637-4817
Our group reservation code is: Rohna Survivors Memorial Association
Be sure to mention this at the time of your booking.

IF YOU STAY EXTRA NIGHTS, 6/25, 6/26, 6/27, 7/3, 7/4 AND 7/5 ARE ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE SAME RATE.

If you have problems making your room reservation CALL DEBORAH at the number below. Give her your reservation confirmation number and she will make sure you get the correct room and rate.

PLEASE JOIN US IN SHARING OLD MEMORIES, MAKING NEW ONES and REMEMBERING THE MEN OF THE ROHNA!

For More Information or any questions, contact Deborah Sanchez ~ Phone: (408) 265-3951
~ EMAIL: debsan1951@gmail.com ~

REGISTRATION FORMS AND PAYMENT NEED TO BE RECEIVED BY June 5, 2023!

THE ROHNA SURVIVORS MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION REUNION REGISTRATION

June 28-July 2, 2023 ~ Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

MY NAME IS:_____

Please circle one of the following: I am a – SURVIVOR CONVOY MEMBER Relative/NOK/Friend

If you are a CONVOY MEMBER (not Rohna), or affiliated with one, PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING:
CONVOY SHIP'S NAME _____

If you are a Relative/NOK/Friend of a Survivor, Non-Survivor or Convoy Member, please give their name and relationship to you below. Also indicate if they are a: SURVIVOR NON-SURVIVOR CONVOY MEMBER
_____Relationship to you_____

The above-named person is: LIVING DECEASED (Please circle one)

YOUR ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

GUEST NAME(S) (Please indicate if your guest is related to a Survivor, Non-Survivor or Convoy Member and how. (Use back of form if necessary.) _____

_____

BANQUET MEAL SELECTION(s): BEEF _____ CHICKEN _____ SALMON _____ CHILD _____

(Please indicate number of each meal for your party, i.e.; BEEF 2 , CHICKEN 3 , etc.)

PLEASE LIST ANY SPECIAL "FOOD NEEDS":_____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, NOTIFY: _____Phone: _____

IS THIS YOUR FIRST REUNION? YES _____ NO _____

BASIC REGISTRATION FEE: ***Number of ADULTS Attending _____ x $195= $ _____***

Number of CHILDREN (age 4-10) Attending _____ x $120 = $_____

Number of CHILDREN (under age 4) Attending _____ x$10 = $_____

~~~ POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL FEES ~~~

Cost for those attending ONLY the Saturday Night Banquet Dinner:
Number of ADULTS ___x $50 =$_____Number of CHILDREN (age 4-10) ___x $25= $_____

Cost for optional Hershey's Tour - $56 pp – Number of people _____x $56= $_____

PAYMENT IS DUE NO LATER THAN JUNE 5, 2023

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: **Deborah Sanchez**
MAIL TO: **Deborah Sanchez ~ 4236 Hendrix Way ~ San Jose, CA 95124**

CONFIRMATION OF REGISTRATION AND ITINERARY WILL BE SENT OUT VIA EMAIL. IF NO EMAIL ADDRESS IS INDICATED, IT WILL BE SENT VIA US MAIL BY JUNE 10, 2023.

CANCELLATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JUNE 8, 2023 IN ORDER TO BE REFUNDED. ANY CANCELLATION RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE IS NON-REFUNDABLE.

We are interested in what snack items you might like to have in the Hospitality Room. Please tell us here:

_____

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Entries from the Guestbook

If you have information regarding any of the items below or any of the items in the guestbook on our website: rohnasurvivors.org, please contact Janice Pumelia at: jetpumelia@gmail.com or by mail at: Janice Pumelia, 56 Garland Court, Brooklyn, NY 11229

My uncle was killed on this ship Pvt Willis Fisk. My dad use to tell me stories about him, you and uncle Bill as kids. Never met you uncle Willis, but I remember you every Memorial Day. Rest Easy Uncle Willis, till me meet, your nephew, Ralph Fisk USA SFC (ret).

~ Ralph Fisk

My mother's uncle, Mario DeLorenzo, was one of those lost on the Rohna. Mario's parents, my great-grandparents, were born in Avellino, Italy before moving to NYC. After the war, since all they had been told was that he was "missing", received word from Italy that he may have been seen there as a possible released POW. My mother and grandmother went over in the mid 50's to find out more, but obviously, that wasn't the case. If not for the internet and your group, no one in the family may have ever found out the truth. Thank you for all you have done to provide closure to all the grand nieces and nephews.

~ Rob Schreiber

My grandmother's fiancé, Ermal Robert "Bob" Lynn Pfc 35497704 was a casualty of the Rohna. When I was a child, I helped my grandmother research the disaster (the book and new reports were coming out at the time, around year 2000) and write her recollection of her whirlwind romance in 1943. She kept each letter and postcard that Bob wrote her, newspaper clippings, and photos, as well as a letter from his friend, Kenneth Guilbault Pfc 31213251, who survived. Bob wrote about his training in many locations including Madison, Wisconsin, where he met my grandmother, Ellen Zobrist. He wrote about being on duty for many long hours and longing to be home to visit his family and his love. He also wrote about hanging out with his friends "Kenny" Guilbalt and William "Bill" Norrod whether it was seeing a movie or enjoying time off base in town. Ellen's writing also referenced a man named Manos, who was with Kenny and Bob as the troop ship was in trouble. Bob could not swim, so he certainly was swept under by the large sea swells. However, the telegram Ellen received simply said "missing in action". She looked for answers long after the sinking and has a letter from the Official Historian of the Royal Navy in 1959. She also has a letter from Andrew Fetsko, who saw one of Ellen's articles in a VFW magazine. It was not until 1944 that Ellen met Bob's mother, Margaret. Bob also had a sister named June, and his father passed away in a farming accident when Bob was around 9 years old. From Ellen's writings, it sounded like the Lynn family attended the Church of God in Mitchell, Indiana, and that Bob had an interest in racing cars and farming, like his father, before enlisting in the Air Force. He would send his government checks home to his mother. There are many small personal details in my grandma's writings but seeing that family members of the few individuals Bob knew may see this, I thought I'd write to let them know that my grandma was so moved by the events of 1943 that she shared these artifacts with my family decades later and held on to the memories of her first true love, Ermal Robert Lynn, until her death in 2003.

~ Stephanie Miranda-Dumas

Research Archives

Here are some helpful websites if you want to conduct your own research. Listing here is **not** an endorsement of any of these sites, simply a primer to help you start your internet research. Most of them don't cost a thing!

National Archives Veterans Records
www.archives.gov/veterans

Honor List of Dead & Missing Army & USAAF Personnel http://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/army-casualties/

Army Air Forces Historical Association
www.aafha.org

Air Force Historical Research Agency
www.afhra.org

US Army Air Forces Personnel Records (Casualties)
Records of USAAF lives lost in WWII
www.usaafdata.com

USAAF General Information
www.usaaf.com

CBI Roundup (Newsletters from WWII)
http://www.ex-cbi-roundup.com

In Memoriam

Roy T. Rawson	Survivor	d. 29 Nov 2005
Fred Robertucci	Banfora	d. 14 Nov 2015
Jane Rushing	Widow - Deceased Survivor - Jewel C. Hall	d. 16 Apr 2021

TRSMA Newsletter
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HONORING A LEGACY

TRSMA 80th Anniversary Reunion Information and Registration Inside!