

**The City of Ponchatoula
& The USS Shipmates Association
Would like to thank these
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Lions Club of Ponchatoula

Jani King, Gulf Coast

Ronnie & Laurie Perrin

J. Parker Layrisson, Attorney

Cart-N-Swim, LLC

Doug Wells

The Ponchatoula Times

Jim Perrin

**USS Ponchatoula
Shipmates Association
Reunion**



May 4, 2010

Ponchatoula, Louisiana

Greetings

Robert F. Zabbia, Mayor
City of Ponchatoula

Observance & Raising of Flags

United States Navy

Invocation

Glynn Fendlason

Pledge of Allegiance

Presentation & Special Awards

P.F. Hammond, USS Ponchatoula Association
Mayor Robert F. Zabbia

Recognitions & Proclamation

Mayor Robert F. Zabbia

Bell Dedication

P.F. Hammond

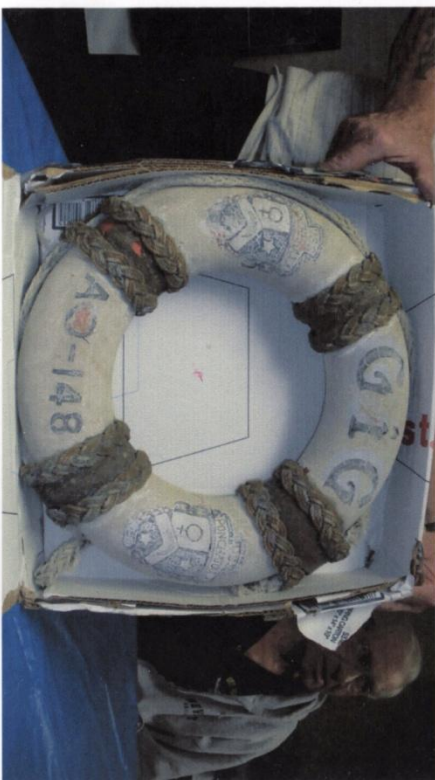
Proceed to Country Market

Flag Raising
Ronnie Perrin & Minutemen
Ponchatoula Jr. High JROTC
National Anthem, Glynn Fendlason

USS PONCHATOULA SHIPMATES

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>William C. Albon</i> | <i>George E. Augustine</i> |
| <i>James N. Ball</i> | <i>Thomas M. Botwinski</i> |
| <i>Raymond Brown</i> | <i>George Burnham</i> |
| <i>John J. Bury</i> | <i>Ken Childress</i> |
| <i>Thomas S. Davis</i> | <i>Vernon J. Dowda</i> |
| <i>Donald R. Duderstadt</i> | <i>Henry L. Elledge</i> |
| <i>Ralph Fall</i> | <i>Charles E. Fletcher</i> |
| <i>Richard V. Golden</i> | <i>Perfecto Gurule</i> |
| <i>Dave W. Hall</i> | <i>Larry L. Hamm</i> |
| <i>P.F. Hammond</i> | <i>John C. Hearn</i> |
| <i>Phillip Jones</i> | <i>Kenneth A. Lawson</i> |
| <i>Barry Litchfield</i> | <i>Hector F. Lopez</i> |
| <i>Robert R. Luedtke</i> | <i>Robert L. Mandsager</i> |
| <i>Jimmie E. McAninch</i> | <i>Joseph W. McGarvey</i> |
| <i>Dennis M. Mooney</i> | <i>Roland Odom</i> |
| <i>Francis J. Pachel</i> | <i>Phil Rehlander</i> |
| <i>Ronald L. Reiner</i> | <i>John J. Rockwell</i> |
| <i>Norman L. Rogers</i> | <i>Harry W. Sanford</i> |
| <i>Walter A. Satalino</i> | <i>Jimmy R. Schmerse</i> |
| <i>David H. Schneider</i> | <i>Rodger M. Smith</i> |
| <i>Adam Snyder</i> | <i>Kenneth M. Snyder</i> |
| <i>James W. Temple</i> | <i>Gary J. Utgard</i> |
| <i>Abel F. Valadez</i> | <i>Steven L. Van Meter</i> |
| <i>William J. Vasek</i> | <i>Randy Voss</i> |
| <i>Bobby Weatherley</i> | <i>Richard J. Weber</i> |
| <i>Thomas W. Welsh</i> | <i>John Yates</i> |
| <i>Richard W. Zimmerman</i> | |

From: McAninch Dorelle (dore56@gmail.com)
To: swnave@yahoo.com;
Date: Thu, May 6, 2010 10:04:13 PM
Cc:
Subject: SWAMP TOUR PICTURES FROM PONCHATOULA REUNION - FOR JIM AND BETTY
BETTY - HOPE THESE COME THRU. THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE A PICTURE OF THE CAPTAIN'S LIFE RING. YOU CAN ENLARGE THE PICTURE AND PUT IT ON YOUR WALL.
I'LL SEND THE FLAG PHOTOS NEXT.
DORELLE & JIM MCANINCH



05/02/2010

6/2/2005



From: McAninch Dorelle (elrod56@gmail.com)
To: smerse4@yahoo.com;
Date: Thu, May 6, 2010 10:22:46 PM
Cc:
Subject: Flag Raising Ceremony for Jim and Betty Schmerse

Betty: Hope these photos are ones you might like to add to the ones you took.

I enjoyed meeting you at the reunion - you certainly made me feel a part of the group. Thank you so much

Fondly, Dorelle McAninch



DSCN2147



DSCN2149



DSCN2150



DSCN2155

PONCHATOULA GOES TO SEA By Jim Perrin

The crowd cheered loudly that July afternoon as twelve year old Cynthia Tenety broke a bottle of champagne on the bow of the U. S. S. Ponchatoula. The Ponchatoula and her sister ship the Yehara, slid down the ways at the East Coast Shipyard at Bayonne, New Jersey, making a huge splash that concluded the dual launching ceremony. Little Cynthia, the daughter of the shipyard superintendent, Vincent Tenety did a commendable job and was justly proud of her part in the ceremony.

About 1,400 miles southwest of Bayonne, New Jersey, other children were also very proud of the launching of the Ponchatoula. Hundreds of children in the small Louisiana town that was the namesake of this new tanker had done their part to support the war effort. The Ponchatoula school children, with the active support of their parents, scoured the community looking for scrap iron and aluminum. Old stoves, car parts, bed springs, pots and pans, all went into the enormous pile of metal next to the grammar school during the fall scrap drives. Ponchatoula principal Will Ed Butler reported that the 1942 drive netted about 475 tons of scrap metal, or 633 pounds of scrap for each of the 1,500 children in the Ponchatoula schools.

In 1944, an additional 95 tons were collected, and it took fifty Army trucks to move the scrap from the schoolyard to the railroad track for shipment to a steel mill. Because Ponchatoula far exceeded the total of scrap metal expected for a town of its size, the federal government recognized the effort by naming a pursuit plane, and the tanker Ponchatoula in her honor. The Navy had a procedure of naming battleships for states, cruisers for larger cities, and tankers for rivers. The fact that Ponchatoula was named for the nearby Ponchatoula River allowed the town to be honored for the achievement of its school children and stay within the Navy naming regulations.

The U. S. S. Ponchatoula (AOG-38), a Sequatchie class tanker had been laid down by the East Coast Shipyards, Inc., 7 June 1944. Using mass production

techniques such as the use of large pre-welded units, and operating on a multi-shift schedule, the tanker was launched in a little more than seven weeks on July 30, 1944. After launching, work was continued on the Ponchatoula as another hull was begun on the ways where the Ponchatoula had been assembled. The Ponchatoula was just over 220 feet in length, 37 feet in beam, and displaced 2,700 tons. The vessel had a top speed of ten knots, and had a complement of 62 men and officers. The Ponchatoula had an armament of one three inch gun, and two forty millimeter rapid fire anti-aircraft guns. Although she had these weapons, as a floating gas station the Ponchatoula was an inviting target for enemy submarines and aircraft. Too slow to run away and not designed to fight enemy warships, tankers depended on other vessels such as destroyers and destroyer escorts for protection.

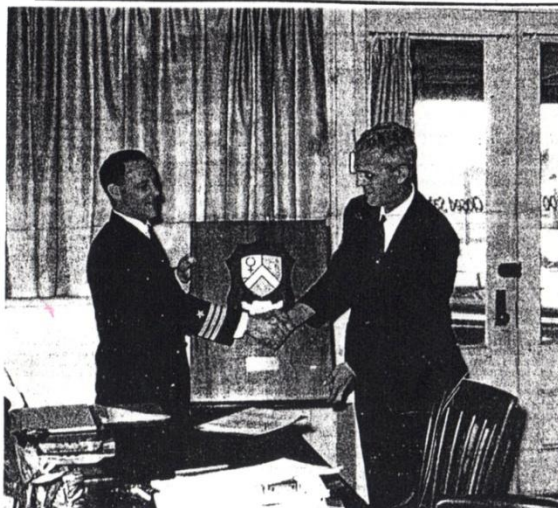
The Navy accepted the ship on Sept. 30 and she was commissioned as the U. S. S. Ponchatoula on October 6, 1944. After a shakedown voyage in the Atlantic waters off the New Jersey coast, the Ponchatoula steamed from the east coast to begin aiding the U. S. Pacific fleet in the war against Japan. She docked in the Dutch West Indies, took on her cargo of fuel oil, proceeded through the Panama Canal and arrived at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands. During February 1945, the Ponchatoula shuttled gasoline from Pearl Harbor to Canton Island, and in March she delivered aviation gasoline and diesel fuel to Ulithi in the Caroline Islands.

In May 1945, the Ponchatoula steamed in a convoy to the island of Okinawa, where Army and Marine troops were fighting a bitter battle with entrenched Japanese troops. Besides the fighting going on ashore the supporting ships of the Fifth Fleet had to endure weeks of intensive attacks by Kamikaze pilots trying to crash their planes into American ships. The Ponchatoula arrived off the invasion beaches on May 16, and thereafter shuttled oil and gasoline from large fleet tankers to the fleet's smaller vessels in the general area. The Ponchatoula earned a battle star for her operations in the combat area around Okinawa. She continued to shuttle fuel in this area until the end of the war.

On Dec. 14, 1945, the Ponchatoula slowly steamed east across the Pacific to the west coast of the United States, in a voyage that must have seemed so much

slower for her crew that longed to return to their families. With the end of the war the Navy began to dispose of the tremendous numbers of naval vessels produced by America's "Miracle of Production." The Ponchatoula was decommissioned at Mare Island, California, April 24, 1946, and was stricken from the Navy list May 31, 1946. She was transferred to the Maritime Commission Sept. 9, 1946, and was later cut up for scrap. It is ironic that the Ponchatoula, as many vessels do, ended up in a large pile of scrap, as it was the vast pile of scrap collected by Ponchatoula's school children that produced a vessel of this name.

Although the Ponchatoula did not become a famous warship during her brief career, she did her part to bring the world's bloodiest war to a successful conclusion. The same can be said for the citizens of Ponchatoula, both those who bravely fought in the front lines, on the seas, and in the air, as well as those at home who backed the attack with their own home-front sacrifices. Ponchatoula has a right to be proud of her "Greatest generation!"



Plaque Presented

Mayor C. J. Dufreche, Jr. accepts the heraldic plaque of the USS Ponchatoula from Commander Morgan E. Wirt in ceremonies last Monday. The plaque was made by men aboard the ship from wood from Hawaii, where the ship is based. It will hang in the new City Hall.

The Enterprise Newspaper - Ponchatoula, LA - 1966

NEW PONCHATOULA

By Jim Perrin

In the months following American victory in World War II, the American military forces were rapidly and sometime chaotically demobilized. The Navy had many hundreds of surplus ships which were decommissioned, and many sold for scrap metal. The U. S. S. Ponchatoula (AOG-38), a Sequatchie class tanker was one of these vessels which were eliminated from the Navy inventory. Although the Ponchatoula had done good service in 1944 and 1945 in the western Pacific, her slow speed, small capacity, and the surplus of naval shipping rendered the ship expendable.

The years following the end of the war saw reduced naval budgets as the United States had the world greatest Navy and no potential foe with a comparable strength. Some American leaders also argued that the navy was not as vital to American defense as it had been formerly. The Korean War (1950-1953) and the growing power of the nuclear armed forces of the Soviet Union largely brought popular opinion around to agreement on the need for strengthened American defense forces. In the 1950's the Navy began to modernize its forces with faster and more sophisticated warships.

The modernization of the Navy included the authorization to construct a new class of fleet tankers that combined speed and an enlarged capacity to deliver fuel to the fleet. One of the vessels ordered in this modernization effort was named the Ponchatoula, the second Navy vessel within ten years to be named for this southeastern Louisiana river. Perhaps the name Ponchatoula was readopted because of the relatively short period of service of the prior World War II tanker, or perhaps because of the continuing respect for the outstanding contributions made by citizens of the city of

Ponchatoula (named for the nearby river) during the war. Regardless for the specific reason for the re-adoption of the name Ponchatoula, the citizens of this community were proud to again have a naval vessel bear that name.

The U. S. S. Ponchatoula (AO-148) the sixth tanker in the Neosho class of fleet oilers was laid

down in Camden, New Jersey by the New York Shipbuilding Corporation on March 1, 1954. The new Ponchatoula dwarfed the World War II tanker, being more than three times as long as the older vessel, and twice as fast. The new vessel displaced 38,000 tons when fully loaded, as compared with the older ship's 2,700 tons. The new Ponchatoula had a complement of 324 officers and men as compared to the World War II tanker's 62. Although the Ponchatoula was a support vessel rather than a combat warship, she was armed with two five inch guns and twelve rapid-fire three inch anti-aircraft guns mounted in several gun tubs.

The launching of the Ponchatoula into the waters of the Delaware River took place on July 9, 1954 at Camden, New Jersey. She was moved across the river to Philadelphia and work continued to complete the vessel. She was commissioned Jan. 12, 1956, and began her long naval career. Like her predecessor, the new Ponchatoula was assigned to the Pacific fleet, and after commissioning she made her way to the West Coast. She arrived at Long Beach, California on March 10, 1956 and underwent a shakedown cruise off the California coast. In the fall of 1956, the Ponchatoula was ordered to the Far East, which would be her home waters for most of her active career. While enroute to the western Pacific, the Ponchatoula assisted a disabled Panamanian merchant ship that had been battered by two typhoons.

The Ponchatoula soon arrived at Sasebo, Japan, and became part of the Seventh Fleet. Her home port was at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands, and the Ponchatoula frequently loaded there with fuel for use by Navy vessels in the Far East. The Ponchatoula accompanied the Seventh Fleet in early 1958 as the Navy sailed into harm's way in the Formosa Strait off the coast of Communist China. The Communists were again threatening to invade and occupy several small islands off the coast of China, notably Quemoy and Matsu. President Eisenhower ordered the Navy to the area to symbolize American determination to support the nationalist Chinese forces holding these small islands. Eisenhower's tough stand, and the presence of the Seventh Fleet off shore forced the Communist Chinese to back down and the crisis subsided.

After the confrontation with Communist China, the Ponchatoula resumed her duties as a floating gas

station to the fleet. In 1962, the ship was part of a task force that was engaged in a series of nuclear tests in the Christmas Islands. In 1963 she began a string of historic operations assisting in recovery operations for two successful Project Mercury spacecraft each carrying a single astronaut that splashed down in the Pacific.

Hostilities began to escalate in Viet Nam in the summer and fall of 1964. The Ponchatoula was deployed to the South China Sea in October 1964 to support fleet operations off the coast of Viet Nam. She refueled numerous warships in these waters in 1964 and 1965 as the bombing campaign against Communist targets in Viet Nam began. The Ponchatoula's crew was given a break from combat operations in the summer of 1965 when the ship was assigned to the task force that recovered the Gemini Four spacecraft as she splashed down in the Pacific.

The Ponchatoula returned to the combat operations near Viet Nam, only to be reassigned to aid in the recovery of the Gemini Six and Seven spacecraft, which each carried two astronauts. During the spring of 1966, the Ponchatoula set a Navy record by refueling hundreds of vessels from her huge storage tanks. During the period from November 1967 to June 1968, she pumped 74 million gallons of fuel to awaiting ships.

In the fall of 1968, the Ponchatoula aided in the recovery of the Apollo 7, spacecraft with its three man crew. Following this activity, she headed back to the coast of Viet Nam, and was supplying the fleet's fuel needs in 1969. In the summer of 1969 and into 1970, the Ponchatoula returned to Pearl Harbor and serviced the fleet in the Hawaiian area.

During the 1970's & 1980's the Ponchatoula served on various duty stations in the western Pacific and near Hawaii. Although she was performing well, newer and more modern fleet oilers were being added to the Navy's Pacific fleet. The Ponchatoula was stricken from the Navy's active duty fleet August 31, 1992, and on May 1, 1999 she was transferred to the Maritime Administration's National Defense Reserve Fleet. She is presently berthed at Suisun Bay, Benecia, California.

During the 43 years between her launching in 1955 and her transfer to the reserve fleet in 1999, the Ponchatoula rendered meritorious service to her country, helping to stop Chinese aggression in the

Taiwan Strait, assisting the space program, and supporting our troops in Viet Nam. Named to honor this area, the Ponchatoula, and the many hundreds of blue jackets who served aboard her over the decades, deserve the accolades of this community for services rendered in behalf of our nation.

In May 2003, numbers of former Ponchatoula crewmen gather in our city for a reunion. It is fitting that they chose Ponchatoula, Louisiana, as the site of their reunion this year. It is more fitting that our community honor those who served on our namesake vessel, and render their associations with the name Ponchatoula even more cherished.

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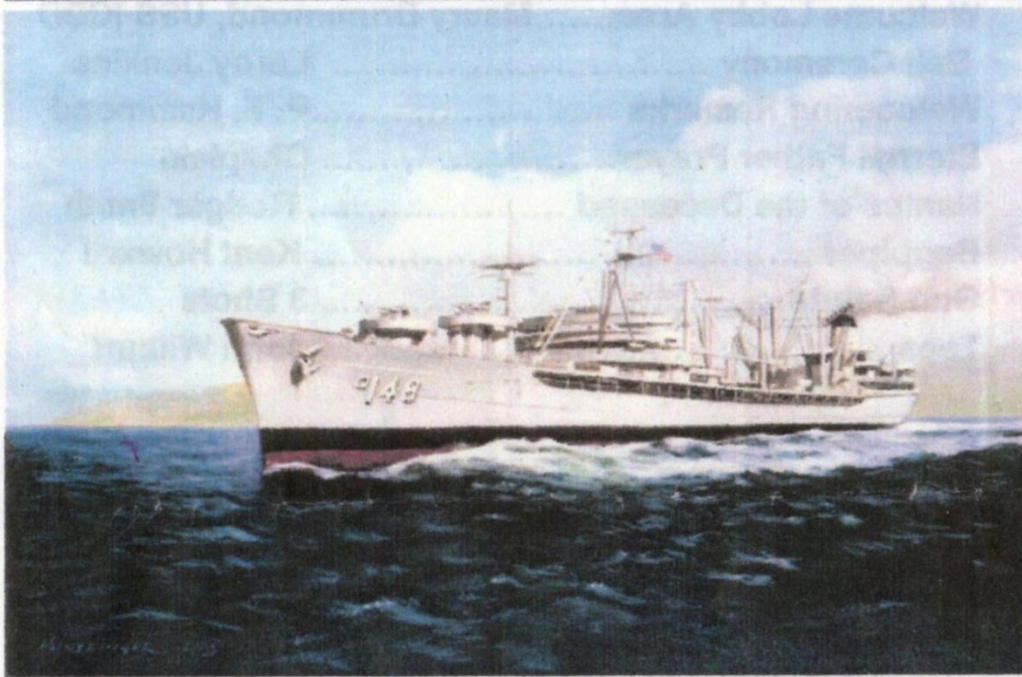
Ponchatoula school children joined the war effort. Some members of Mrs. Julia Welles Hawkins' class stand atop a massive pile of scrap they and other Ponchatoula students collected. Ponchatoula grammar school can be seen in the background. (Photo courtesy of Mike Berner)



# USS KIDD & Veterans Memorial

Baton Rouge, LA

*The Staff of the USS Kidd Welcomes the former crew members, families, and friends of the USS Ponchatoula AOG38/AO148/TAO148*



## USS PONCHATOULA

AO148/TAO148 Neosho-class Fleet Oiler 1956-92  
AOG38 Mettawee-Class Gasoline Tanker 1944-46



**REUNION**  
**MAY 3, 2010**  
Baton Rouge, La.



# USS PONCHATOULA REUNION

USS KIDD Veterans Memorial, Baton Rouge, LA

May 3, 2010

Ceremonies begin 10:30 AM



## A G E N D A

Welcome Lobby Area.....Maury Drummond, USS KIDD  
Bell Ceremony ..... Leroy Jenkins  
Welcoming Remarks .....P. F. Hammond  
Eternal Father Prayer..... Chaplain  
Names of the Deceased ..... Rodger Smith  
Bagpiper ..... Kent Howard  
Gun Salute ..... 3 Shots  
Taps ..... John Wilburt



## The Navy Hymn

Lyrics by Reverend William Whiting and Music by Reverend John B. Dyke

**Eternal Father, strong to save,  
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,  
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep,  
Its own appointed limits keep.**

**Oh hear us when we cry to Thee,  
For those in peril on the sea! Amen.**

**Eternal Father, lend Thy grace To  
those with wings who fly thro' space,  
Thro wind and storm, thro' sun and rain,  
Oh bring them safely home again.**

**Oh Father, hear a humble prayer,  
For those in peril in the air! Amen.**

**Oh Trinity of love and pow'r,  
Our brethren shield in danger's hour,  
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,  
Protect them where so e'er they go.**

**Thus evermore shall rise to Thee  
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea! Amen.**

### SAILOR'S PRAYER

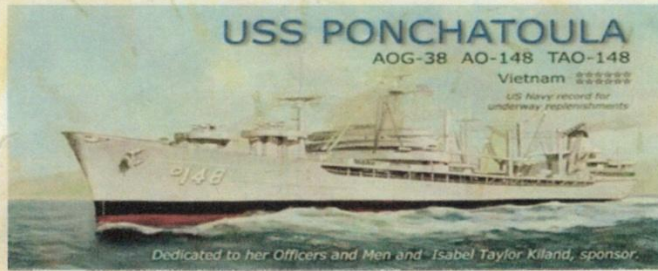
"The Lord is my pilot. I shall not go adrift: He lighteth my passage across dark channels; He steereth me through the deep waters. He keepeth my log. He guideth me by the evening star for my safety's sake. Yea, though I sail mid the thunders and tempest of life, I shall fear no peril for Thou art with me. The vastness of thy sea upholds me. Surely fair winds and safe harbors shall be found all the days of my life; And I shall moor, fast, and secure, forever Amen.

## USS PONCHATOULA AO148 AWARDS



## USS PONCHATOULA DECEASED SHIPMATES

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| BAILEY, Bill                   | BM2          |
| BATTLE, Orrin "Dutch"          | SM3          |
| BEASLEY, Franklin D. "Frank"   | DK1/DKC      |
| BLACK, R. G.                   | MM1/MMC      |
| BLANEY, Eugene                 | MM3          |
| BROPHY, Billy J.               | GMG3/GMG2    |
| BRYANT, Ralph                  | RD1/RDCM     |
| BURRIS, Wayne                  | SM1/SM1      |
| CAMPBELL, Hugh J.              | RMC/RMC      |
| CLAIBORNE, Dell Ross           | GM3          |
| CODY, Jim                      | MMC          |
| COSTELLO, Charles G.           | QM3          |
| CUNNINGHAM, A.                 | MM3          |
| DUGAN, Danny                   | BMSN         |
| EVANS, John W. "Jack"          | SN           |
| FRAME, Lee J.                  | EN3/EN1      |
| GILCHRIST, Thomas E.           | GM3          |
| HERBERT, Robert W. "Bob"       | LTJG/LCDR    |
| HILDEBRANT, Archibald "Archie" | MMC/MMC      |
| HOFFER, George J AOG-38        | ENS/LT       |
| KIRBY, David                   | BM3          |
| LIBBY, Sumner                  | MM3          |
| LEWIS, Alvis H. "Buddy"        | SFP2         |
| LAUGHERTY, Robert E.           | CS3/CS1      |
| LINDQUIST, A., "Bud"           | SMSN/SMC     |
| MUSSCHE, John                  | BM1/BMC      |
| NOLDAN, E.                     | MM1/MMCM     |
| NORRINGTON, C.                 | MM1/MMC      |
| PHILLIPS, Perry                | SN           |
| RAGSDALE, Jim "Rags"           | HT2          |
| ROBINSON, George               | Unknown      |
| ROY, N.L                       | MM2          |
| STEPHENS, Donald H.            | PN2/PNC      |
| SWEARINGER, Jesse              | Unknown      |
| ZAREK, Lawrence J.             | BM1 - Ensign |



## USS PONCHATOULA SHIPMATES ASSOCIATION

Please join us for the  
Bell Dedication to the City  
Of Ponchatoula  
10 o'clock a.m.

@

Ponchatoula City Hall  
125 West Hickory Street  
Ponchatoula, Louisiana 70454

Shipmates Luncheon  
@ Rockefellers Restaurant  
@ 11:30 a.m.

### *Please choose from one of the following Lunch Entrees*

~ **Catfish Mardi Gras** – Lemon pepper seared Catfish Fillet, topped with tail-on-jumbo shrimp sautéed with assorted vegetable in a thai chilo beurre blanc and served with Zydeco vert

~ **Chicken Parmesan** – Chicken tenders breaded in Italian breadcrumbs and fried golden, topped with marinara, melt Romano and jack cheeses, and mounted on cavatappi pasta tossed with marinara. Served with haricot vert

~ **Grilled Center Cut Pork Chops** – Two boneless center cut pork chops, seasoned and grilled to perfection, topped with melted garlic butter and served with haricot vert

~ **Fried Shrimp and Catfish Platter** – Jumbo tail-on shrimp and Mississippi catfish fingers, fried to a golden brown, piled on Texas toast, and served with house salad and stuffed potato or seasoned French fries

~ Tea, Water, Coffee & Dessert also included  
Cash Bar will be Available

Mayor Robert F. "Bob" Zabbia  
City of Ponchatoula

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[Menu](#)

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