

A SERIES OF SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

By: Russ Felt

Somewhere in the past came an awareness of relatives and others who have been involved in unique events and experiences. This project is intended to bring attention to some of those people. They may be appropriately called UNSUNG heroes. They should not be forgotten. This is an attempt to preserve something of their stories. These biographies include Felt/Paesani relatives and friends. There are lessons to be learned from each of these people. The biographies are brief and there is much more that could be told about each life.

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Francis Herron
Sister Mary Kenny
Rae Marie Campbell
Gino Paesani
Dave Poller
Wilfred Norman Maxfield
Clayton Brainerd

Note: Random House Publishing (9/2/2008) gave approval (in binders for family and friends) for using Chapter Seven in the McCain book in the biography of Francis Herron

Note: Sterling Lloyd Literistic Inc. (10/6/2008) gave approval to use Chapter Seven in the McCain book in the biography on Feltonline.com website

Approvals on file with Russ Felt- This is for the Herron biography

Francis 'Josh' Herron (Felt line)

Charles and Nina Felt Herron married and lived in Lehi, Utah, at 564 West Main Street. Their home was designed by the Architect of the LDS Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, Utah. The two storied home is now

neglected and in disrepair but one can still readily see its beautiful potential. Charles and Nina Herron had three sons, Mark, Max, and Francis. This short biography is about Francis who was born in Lehi, Utah, 5 Mar 1913.

Francis enlisted in the United States Navy as a Seaman Apprentice on 15 Aug 1934 in Salt Lake City, Utah. During his Navy experience he held various ratings and served on several Submarines (14 to be exact). He was transferred to Fleet Reserve 1 Feb 1957 after 22 yrs of service. He was honorably released from Active Duty with the designation of Torpedoman Chief.

Francis Herron



Current Congressman and Presidential Candidate John McCain wrote a book about his father, John Sidney McCain, 'Faith of My Fathers'. He wrote of World War II and his father's role in the submarine service.

Francis Herron served under John Sidney McCain

aboard the USS Gunnel from May of 1942 to June of 1944. Chapter Seven of the book offers insights of what Francis Herron experienced.

"The USS Gunnel served as a reconnaissance and beacon ship for Operation Torch, the American invasion of North Africa.' The Gunnel operated near Casablanca and arrived in advance of the invasion. Its mission was to remain undetected and to reconnoiter and photograph the beaches to seek the best landing sites. At dawn of the invasion, the Gunnel was to fly its flag on the surface and leave for the Canary Islands. Friendly fire was a concern and an allied plane started a turn and bomb run at the Gunnel. A crash dive was ordered and the bomb landed closely enough that crew members were struck by 'flying paint chips' from the Conning Tower from the blast." Francis Herron was there.

Off the Canary Islands the Gunnel was hunted by German submarines. The Gunnel was ordered to Scotland and was 'spotted and chased' by a U-Boat. During that time and a long way from Scotland, the engines of the Gunnel failed (Apparently those engines were faulty in several submarines). Auxiliary engines used for lights and air conditioning were used for very slow propulsion. The Gunnel was redirected to Falmouth, England. During

the voyage three ships of unknown origin were spotted and as they approached, the Gunnel prepared to fight. At the very last moment, the ships were determined to be Allied and a catastrophe was averted. The Gunnel made Falmouth and after repairs, went to Scotland and then to New Hampshire where it was outfitted for combat duty in the Pacific. Francis 'Josh' Herron was on that voyage.

John McCain was loved by his men who referred to him as 'Captain Jack'. "It is said that he made a point of knowing all about the personal lives of the men under his command." The Gunnel had eight officers and 72 enlisted men on board and John McCain knew each one by first name. It was said that 'Captain Jack' knew who was married and how many children each had and who was single. He knew whose wife was expecting a child and which gender they hoped to have. It is reasonable that he knew all about Francis Herron and his life. He would even have known about Francis' life back home.

After a night partying in Fremantle, Australia, the crew was called together. The Commander said to them, "Fellows, we're going to fight the ***** Japanese. We're gonna fight these ***** and we we're going to lick'em. We're not gonna let these J...s hide from us. We'll fight'em even if we have to go into their harbors to find them, and they're gonna be ***** sorry we did. I'll tell you that. Now, every man who wants to go with me, take one step forward, and anyone who doesn't, stay right where you are." With roaring approval every man stepped forward. Francis Herron stepped forward.

It is said that John Sidney McCain never lost the respect of the men who sailed under his command. He taught them their duty, as they taught him his, and he made them proud to carry out their duties. He looked after his crew. Francis Herron was one of those men.

On return from a patrol to Fremantle, Australia, an Allied Bomber mistakenly made a bomb run at the Gunnel and the bombs narrowly missed but shook the submarine. At dock the Commander called for the two largest men on board. After determining the proper signal was given to the Bomber and that it was ignored, the commander told the two, "Men, I want you to go find the ***** who did this to us, and take care of them. You got that?" They did not find the Bomber crew.

The Gunnel patrolled between Midway and Nagasaki. On 18 Jun, near Korea, they sighted seven large Japanese freighters and two smaller vessels. The ships were at full speed and they changed course every ten minutes. The Navigation Officer determined they were headed to Shanghai. The Gunnel surfaced to increase its speed to get ahead of the convoy during the night. The Gunnel submerged near dawn and stayed at periscope depth until close to the convoy. Torpedoes were fired and freighters were sunk. The Gunnel dove and depth charges were dropped to attack it. The click of the detonator could be heard in the Gunnel at first. "But the explosion was the worst." Crew members bent their knees to absorb the shock of the depth charges. It was said that other crews had men with broken legs who stood too rigidly. One of the ships dropped a grapnel, trying to 'hook' the Gunnel, but it dragged along the port side 'rattling slowly and excruciatingly.' The Commander later said, "The chains of Marley's ghost sounded much like that to old Scrooge." The Gunnel submerged to 300 ft and ran at that depth for several hours. Nearby Destroyers were sent to attack the Gunnel. Water was allowed to flood the submarine tanks to keep it submerged at those great depths. The air was foul and religious men worshipped. During the night, the Gunnel surfaced. A Destroyer was spotted and the Gunnel was turned astern and the order given to fire the stern torpedoes. The Destroyer was firing and the order given to submerge. The Destroyer was hit but depth charges were released to hit the Gunnel. "The awesome sounds of exploding depth charges and collapsing bulkheads as the warship rapidly sank close astern of the Gunnel was an unforgettable

experience for all hands.” Francis Herron was on board. Would he have been the torpedoman to fire the torpedoes?

The Gunnel submerged to 300 ft and remained on the bottom for some 18 hours. On 20 Jun this was the experience of the crew with everything being done to reduce the need for failing oxygen levels. Some men wept and some become delirious and one had to be strapped down. The crew grew toward ‘frantic desperation.’ “Now they were sweating out endless hours, fathoms down, exhausted, slowly suffocating while their sub faced the imminent prospect of lying dead in the water.” The temperature reached 120 degrees and the humidity was 100 %.

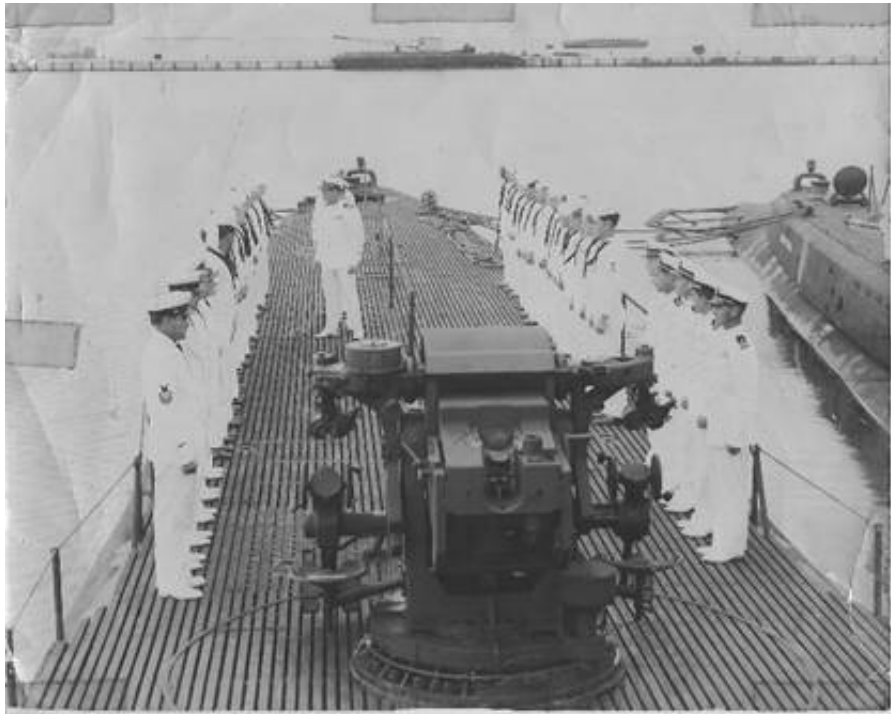
The decision was made to slowly surface and fight it out with whomever and try to run as the batteries were re-charged. The other option was to surface, destroy classified materials, scuttle the Gunnel and put the men overboard to be captured.

Upon surfacing, the Gunnel spotted a Destroyer but was not detected and the Gunnel ran for safety.

The Gunnel reached Midway some ten days later and the commander said, “I suspect the men...were never so happy to see that dull uninteresting island.”

Francis Herron was there for that experience.

Norine Fox and friends vacationed in Hawaii and were given a tour of a submarine as given by Francis. Norine lived across the street from the Herron family in Lehi, Utah



USS Cobbler (courtesy Art Stapleton)
Captain William Holman's Inspection Photograph
Francis is front left

(Follow-up email from Art received 3 May 2008 explaining the photograph above)

“Russ, the dress inspection was dockside at Key West and it was the Cobbler. Aft of the boat, across the water is a quay, or sea barrier. On the website, there's a picture of Cobbler at dockside, across from the ODAX, SS 484 which had just been reconstructed for guppy air supply, the 5 inch cannons removed. Memorial Day, 1947. The quay is seen again aft. Cobbler, later, was reworked, too, as was the Odax.

I was not there at the time of the dress inspection, but I know the Captain and several others in the picture, including Lt. Clarke, the Electronics Officer as the first person directly across from Josh. It was taken just before I arrived on board about July 1946.

You are doing a very nice thing to save remembrances of people worthy of such attention. Josh was calm under stress when things would go wrong. He stood up for crewmen who probably needed harsh treatment. A man's man, he did not tattle to the officers when we had infractions to deal with.”

(Courtesy of Art Stapleton)

Francis married Marjorie Mooney. Marjorie served in the military for five years. She has referred to Francis.” as a wonderful man” and that he was “the dearest of men.” Marjorie also said that Francis held the now Senator John McCain (Presidential Candidate in 2008) and then a child, on his lap at a ship party.

Francis kept in contact with his widowed mother, Nina Felt Herron. He sent her a photo of the first Pan American Clipper airliner to return to continental United States from Hawaii. Francis was stationed there and managed to get his letter and the photographs on the aircraft. He instructed his Mother to keep it all and that it might be of value sometime in the future.



USS S-23
Pearl Harbor,
Hawaii.

Dearest Mother,

I suppose you will be surprised when you receive this letter by air mail.

You see I am sending it back on the Clipper ship that came over here the other day. This is the first air mail from Hawaii to the U.S.A. so keep this letter and envelope for a souvenir. It may be worth a lot of money some day.

Just think, if I were to come home on the clipper ship, I would be home in 24 hrs.

They are only carrying a limited amount of mail so I was lucky to get in on it. I am in a hurry so I will close

With Love
Francis

Lock this up in your Trunk.





Francis was a gifted artist. As a boy he would paint on the walls of his bedroom, upstairs in the Lehi, Utah home. This writer saw those paintings from time to time. Recently, the current owners were asked if the paintings still exist upstairs but they said no.

Francis Herron did heroic things by virtue of his enlistment in the Navy as a Torpedoman. He did not receive the accolades given to others in public, but never-the-less he was a hero and an example to others.

Marjorie J. Mooney was Chief Yeoman, USNR. She served five years, four months, 18 days. Marjorie and Francis were very happy.



DD 214
Separation Document

First enlisted as Seaman Apprentice 15 AUG 34
(Rate) (Date)

At Salt Lake City, Utah

Born 5 MAR 13 at Lehi, Utah
(Date)

Qualifications Qualified for submarine

Ratings held Sea 3/a, Sea 2/c, Sea 1/a, TMC, UM2, TMI, TMO

Certificates

Special duties for which qualified Submarine

Service (vessels and stations served on) From To

U.S.S. S-23 March 1935 to June 1937

U.S.S. S-12 June 1935 to December 1937

U.S.S. S-20 December 1937 to October 1938

U.S.S. Cachalot October 1938 to September 1939

U.S.S. Pike September 1939 to December 1939

U.S.S. Gullfish December 1939 to August 1940

P.S. Squadrons 1-2, January 1941 to May 1942

U.S.S. Astor May 1941 to December 1941

U.S.S. Scorpion May 1942 to June 1944

U.S.S. Cobbler December 1944 to July 1948

U.S.S. Gilmore July 1948 to October 1949

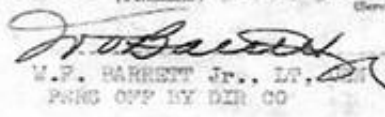
Submarine New London, Conn. October 1949 to October 1952

U.S.S. Barb October 1952 to February 1953

U.S.S. Toro February 1953 to December 1955

U.S.S. Chiyo December 1955 to January 1957

Rating at transfer TMC Active Permanent -268-27-30
(Service Number)


W.P. BARRETT Jr., LT, USN
PRNG OFF BY DIR CO

U. S. Navy.

SEE CHAPTER 7, IN THE ENCLOSED BOOK. FRANCIS WAS PROMOTED TO CHIEF BARBERIAN AFTER THEIR LAST PATROL.



of the
United States Navy

This is to certify that

Francis Elaine Herron _____ # _____ Torpedoman, Chief _____
*was transferred from active duty to the Fleet Reserve of the
United States Navy on the 1st day of February 1951
after 22 years of service.*

*This certificate is awarded as a Testimonial of Faithful
and Honorable Service.*

W. B. Bate
U.S. NAUTICIAN JR., LT. *U.S. Navy*

Francis Herron designed and drew these three logos. Current internet sites of the USS Cobbler and the USS Toro use his Logo designs. He had artist ability.





USS Cobble Plank Owner Crew
(Crew that first sailed the Cobble)
(Josh is in the 5th row from the bottom, 4th person from the left)



Down The Ways
Francis Herron was on the Cobble this day
(From Art Stapleton, Cobble crew 1946 - 1948:))

"Josh was the Chief of the Boat when I first arrived at Key West at age 19. He certainly was an extremely confident man, an excellent teacher, and he would wag his finger under our noses when we came back from liberty ashore with a bit too much on our breath.

My most memorable item for Josh was his artistic talent for sculpting. One item I recall was a sculpture of female form, like a small mannequin made of "Plastic Wood". In those days Plastic Wood, other than clay, was used to form all kinds of things because as it hardened, it resembled wood, but hard as a rock. It came in cans which had to be kept closed or it would harden.

Plastic Wood consisted of sawdust and a varnish-like liquid which hardened after being exposed to air. Josh was proud of his sculpture which seems now to have been about 12 inches tall. Off duty, he would knead a bit of the plastic into position, let it harden, then carve and sand it to his requirements.

Josh asked me to photograph himself and the sculpture, which I did, and gave him the print. I thought I had a copy, too, but could not find it among my memorabilia.

In both ship's party pictures (attached), Josh is at top left, with glass raised in response to a toast, and getting a big smooch from unknown, and the first at left in Captain William Holman's Inspection photo.

We were all sorry to see Josh leave us sometime in late 1947, I recall. Great guy, but he never talked with me about himself or family."

Art S.

Received this email 3 May 2008 from Art Stapleton

Marjorie Troy also provided a large bound book, Submarine Operations in World War II that belonged to Francis. In the book is a photograph of the Crew of the USS Cobbler (Francis designed the Logo). Mark Maynard, a crew member and in the photograph, said that it was taken in June or July of 1946 and he provided many names of those in the photograph



Front Row, kneeling, left to right:

Mark 'Jack' Maynard, J.E. Storm, Bill Sether, J. Kurht, Geroge Bodrog, ?, Guy Matthews, Frank Minick

Second Row, left to right:

Henry Trembly, Robert Kutzlub, Roy Platz, ?, ?, Leo Feeny

Third Row, kneeling, left to right:

A.N. Glennon, ?, ?, ?

Fourth Row, Standing, left to right:

Wayne Ramay, ?, Al Henderson, Tommy Ploy, Gus Krause, Browning, Josh Herron, W.G. Holman, Vic Howell, G.W. Clark, Cy Bracht, W. Wright, R.B. Poage

Fifth Row, (on the cigarette deck ladder):

C.K. Moore, Herman, Coleman, Glendening (standing on cigarette deck ladder with his torso behind the rail)

1st row on cigarette deck:

Schumaker, ?, Mike Garret, ? (sitting), Jesse Mason, Bill Medinger, Ray Downen, Harry Todnem

2nd row on cigarette deck:

?, ?

Top Row:

?, ?, Bill Rieneke, ?, Hugh Doran