



**After Action Report- CDSG Annual Conference 1992
St. Babs X: Los Angeles / San Diego (15-18 August)
Mark A. Berhow**

Here is the post-mortem on the LA/SD St. Babs X meeting just held August 15-18, 1992. Sam Stokes was the official point man and coordinated the efforts to put the meeting together. I feel he did a fantastic job and deserves a vote of thanks by all members, attending or not, for the efforts he put into planning and running this meeting. Sam made most of the arrangements under the aegis of the Fort MacArthur Military Museum Association, which should be considered the official 'host' of this meeting. I volunteered to have at this report business, so here it is.

ST. BABS X SITE VISITS

Day 1 (August 15)

The August dates of the conference held the tantalizing promise of the fabled temperate summers that Southern California is famous for. Alas, this was not to be. A weather pattern of record high temperatures and high humidity had firmly ensconced itself over the area, which meant hot days (and nights) during the conference. Luckily, we did not experience any of the "shake and bake", hot weather earthquakes, or any civil disturbances which had plagued Los Angeles over the last couple of months. I guess we shouldn't complain about the weather. Many of the participants arrived the day before and even got in a little pre-conference sightseeing at some of the sights not on the official agenda. Those attendees that arrived at the Los Alamitos Armed Forces Reserve Center spent an inexpensive but warm night in the transient officers quarters on base. The rest of us arrived the next morning.

On Saturday morning, after waiting a while to get someone with a key to our classroom in Building 6, we set up shop, checked almost everyone in, handed out the books, dailies and lunches. Then we gave directions to our first tour stop, Point Vicente Park in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, the location of the Point Vicente Military Reservation (ca 1942-1974). We all climbed into our cars and headed out to the freeways for a 45 minute drive out to the tip of the Palos Verdes peninsula. No one seemed to have any problem finding the park and we all gathered to visit Battery Harry C. Barnes (BCN # 240) (2 x 6" BC). A Coast Guard officer was on hand to unlock the battery and let us look inside. Most of the interior lights remained, but the inside of the battery had been modified somewhat to into rooms of some sort, and did not look like it was currently being used for much of anything except storage. The northern emplacement was intact, but the southern one is covered by soil erosion from the hill behind. Next we headed to the Nike launch area of Site LA - 55, and were able to go into the bunkers and look around. They are currently used for storage by the city and the elevators looked to be intact. Several adventures braved the burrs and cactus to walk around the Nike site to the ridge side over looking Long Point to visit the six 1930s era BESSs located there. Other structures located in the vicinity, such as the Long Point Panama mounts, the

WWII BESSs and two WWII SCR 296 radar sites and the IFC site for the Nike battery are all now long gone.

After having lunch in the park at Point Vicente, we headed back south to the West Seabench Reservation, a WWII searchlight location. The site has 4 "gun block" concrete pads with an unusual bolt pattern (8 bolts, 32" diameter) located in a rough "V" pattern at the tip of the point, along with the foundations for a small building and some possible underground bunkers or trenches. The final speculation that I heard was that they were blocks for some type of naval ordnance. Then we headed over to Seabench Reservation proper, now private property and fenced off with no trespassing signs. We found an open gate and many of the group headed in to see the five remaining 1930s BESSs and a triple WWII BES. Now mostly filled with trash, the BESSs will no doubt soon be gone as a large resort will be developed in the area. It is speculated that the sixth 1930 BES was incorporated into the WWII structure.

Next, the group headed to the White Point Military Reservation, currently an undeveloped park owned by the City of Los Angeles. This was the location of Battery Paul D. Bunker (BCN #127) (2 x 16" BC), the PSR for Bunker, six 1920s BESSs, one WWII BES and the launch facilities of Nike site LA 43. Most of the park is fenced off and abandoned, but we were able to drive right up to Battery Bunker and park. The City Recreation and Parks Department had unwelded one of the doors to the main magazine area and the group toured the trash-filled and graffiti-lined corridors of the battery. Much of the overhead rail system for moving shells is still intact. In the generator room an overhead girder with part of a hoist still remains. Outside, behind and up the hill behind the west gun pit is the escape hatch for the PSR (entrance has been buried), and along the ridge to the east of the battery the tops of the buried BESSs can be seen. The Nike site is overgrown and the buildings have been vandalized, but otherwise it is intact. The City has plans to develop the park in the future as money is available. They plan to save and interpret both the Nike site and Battery Bunker. After we were finished exploring White Point, some of the group headed over to the museum to buy up the books on sale in the museum shop. The shop was gracious enough to give away Fort MacArthur post cards to whomever wanted them. Then we returned to Los Alamitos for dinner and the first evenings presentations, which wrapped up at about 11 PM. We retired to our warm bunks for a short nights sleep.

Day 2 (August 16)

We got off to a slower start this morning, as we did not have to be at our first official stop, the Breakers Hotel in downtown Long Beach until 9:30 AM. Some of the group stopped by to see the lone gun mount of Battery JAAN #2 at Bluff Park at the intersection of Ocean and Cherry Street in Long Beach. The guns of Battery Lodor (4 x 3" Ped), which had been removed from that battery before it was covered over in 1927, were re-emplaced at JAAN #1 (Cabrillo Beach) and JAAN #2. We had a very nice breakfast just for our group in the Skylight Room near the top of the building before going to visit our objective for coming here—the WWII era BES located in the cupola of the building. We climbed the steep stairs and marched over some water tanks to climb to the upper level of the BES, which had the typical slotted window "pillbox" look of many BESSs. The back wall of the BES had been removed, but the azimuth scope pedestal was still there. Two other BES stations were located on the level below the cupola, but little remained of those stations save some wires and a steel bracket for a roof. After actually showing our liability releases to the building manager, we headed back over to San Pedro, stopping to visit JAAN #1's lone gun mount along the way.

Upon arriving at Angels Gate Park (ex-Upper Reservation of Fort MacArthur), the group gathered atop Batteries John Barlow and Saxton (4 x 12" M each in a single linear battery construction), a very clean Taft era mortar battery. The Los Angeles Unified School District has jurisdiction over about a third of the Upper Reservation, which includes the mortar battery and gave us permission to go inside the battery, which is currently used for storage. The District representative opened all the doors of the battery and let us wander where ever we wished. This was the first time I had been into the battery and it was certainly worth the wait! All of the shell rails were intact overhead, as were the doors separating the powder rooms. Several of the shell rooms had been converted into rooms for the movie "Midway" and could still be seen. As Nelson Lawry observed, one could expect Captain Matt Garth to come driving through the tunnel at any minute! It was interesting to see the shell tables, which had been built into the shell rooms in this battery. We were also able to visit the power room, (carefully stepping over the remains of a dead possum) which was largely intact, except for the generators and the power board equipment salvaged by the museum for the restoration of Battery Osgood-Farley's power room. The two plotting rooms and some reserve magazines or storage areas to the rear of the battery were also open for examination. All in all, Batteries John Barlow and Saxton were in great condition compared to some of the other modern era batteries around the country, and except for the San Diego and Hawaiian batteries (which are on military property and not generally accessible), it is the only place to see a true Taft era Mortar battery in the United States.

We headed back to the museum for a group photo and lunch at Batteries Osgood and Farley (1 x 14" DC each, in a single structure). The Fort MacArthur Military Museum is housed in the corridors and galleries of this battery. The volunteers here are working to restore the battery to its pre-1940 condition, a project that is helped by the excellent and unaltered condition of the battery. The magazines of Battery Osgood hold a number of displays and photos of the Fort in its heyday, while one of the shell galleries holds a number of shells, a shell table, a host and a 14" shell. The other shell gallery has been converted into as theater for the viewing of video tapes. The Osgood gun put has been partially excavated and the museum hopes to have a full scale replica of the M1910MI 14" gun on display soon. The volunteers have also restored the power room and communications room, complete with a number of displays. Most of the rooms and corridors are open during museum hours. Outside the museum are 3 16" shells, a monument to the 3rd Coast Artillery Regiment, some mines, a restored Nike-Ajax missile and a 155 mm M1918 GPF gun. Pleasant surroundings indeed for our noontime repast indeed!

By the time we had finished touring Barlow and Saxton, Pat Murman--the museum's Jack of All Trades--had managed to remove the lock off of Battery 241 (2 x 6" BC). We headed over after lunch to the battery which now serves as a base for the Korean Friendship Bell which was erected in 1980. Inside the battery we were able to view the three Worthington motors and GE generators still inside the battery. The motors look to be in very good condition, which lead Elliot Deutsch and other to speculate how easy it would be to get them to run again. We were joined by the members of a old car collectors club so we had over 100 people look inside the battery. The interior of the battery are under the museum's jurisdiction and we hope to be able to conduct tours on a regular basis in the future.

Next on the agenda was a visit to Batteries Leary and Merriam (1 x 14" DC each in a single structure). This battery has been modified first for the HECF-HEDP in 1944 and then for the IFC site for Nike battery LA 43 in the 1950s. Still, all facets of the use of the structure, from gun battery to command post to

radar site can clearly be seen. We were able to wander about the fenced area inside the Marine Exchange, where the BCs and some of the WWII BESSs are. We didn't check until the last minute to see if the interior of the battery was locked, so some of the group missed the interior tour. Those who did go in got to wander through the largely abandoned rooms and corridors and even crawl through some of the holes and crevices inside (taking care to avoid skunks!). Following these tours, the group headed out to look at the remaining Panama mount of Battery Tactical #6, the remains of the SCR 296 radar for Battery 241, the three remaining 1920s BESSs at Pt. Fermin (one in Angels Gate Park near the Panama mount and two at the tip of Point Fermin) and the gun blocks for the Gaffey Bulge AMTB battery (2 x 90 mm mounts) before heading to the Middle Reservation.

We then gathered near the 24th St. entrance of the Middle Reservation of Fort MacArthur, which is now used as a housing facility for the Los Angeles Air Force Base in El Segundo. A slight delay was caused by Dale Floyd locking his keys in the car, with the motor running. Some deft manipulation by Bolling Smith with a long iron rod managed to get the lock open. Earlier that day the fellow from the school district also locked himself out of his truck. I hope this isn't a new St. Babs tradition developing here! We were able to visit the site of the single 1926 emplacement for the 14" railway guns, but not much else was visible of the other harbor defense remains which included two 3" AA guns and the 90 mm gun blocks of the Navy Field AMTB battery. I enjoyed opportunity of being able to see and photograph the 1918 vintage barracks and officers quarters around the parade ground, not to mention the important museum contacts I made with the Air Force personnel. By 5:30 we were heading back to Los Alamitos for dinner and another evening of talks.

Day 3 (August 17)

After checking out of Los Alamitos, the group headed out in detachments for San Diego and Imperial Beach. As the Bolsa Chica Military Reservation was not on the "official" agenda, a number of attendees headed to Huntington Beach to visit that site. Driving up to the site, which is now privately owned and slated for development, the intrepid adventurers had to pass a number of no trespassing signs on their way out to visit the buried mounds of BCN #128 (2 x 16" BC) and Battery Harry J. Harrison (BCN #242) (2 x 6" BC). As soon as they arrived at the batteries, Tom Vaughn told me that the blue security truck drove up and asked his group what were they doing there. As Tom tried to explain that they were with the Coast Defense Study Group here to look at old gun batteries, the guard nodded his head and said "Oh you are with the fence company" and promptly drove off, leaving the "fence company employees" free to go about their business of photographing the mounds of dirt. The PSR for 128 is located just behind the batteries under a telephone yard and this time the owner was friendly and even let Bolling Smith climb down the escape hatch on Friday. Little else can be seen except the gun pads of Harrison and some of the concrete of 128. The Panama mounts of the Bolsa Chica 155 mm battery are visible on the State Marine Preserve next to the lagoon waters behind Pacific Coast Highway. A few other side trips may have been taken, that I didn't hear about before we all met Al Grobmeier at the Naval Radio Relay Facility (NRRF), Imperial Beach (ex-Fort Emory) just before 1:30 PM.

The visits to the San Diego Naval Facilities was most certainly the highlight of the trip for me. The Navy is notoriously uncooperative and we feared we might get canceled at any time up to the actual time of the tour. Many have tried to visit the facilities here and few have succeeded. Yet, here we were. One of the Navy officers asked me "What kind of pull do you guys have? I have never seen them let a tour go through here like this!" Al Grobmeier and Gene

Fredrickson deserve the kudos for pulling these visits off. After arriving at the NRRF, we were briefed by the Executive Officer, LCDR Sansom, before being led on our tour which included Battery 134 (2 x 16" BC, not armed), the PSR for 134, Battery Imperial (4 x 155 mm on PMS), Battery Homer B. Grant (2 x 6" BC) (BCN #239) and the site of a fire control tower and the C.O. quarters of Fort Emory. The two concrete batteries were in excellent condition, though the interiors had been completely remodeled for rooms. Battery Imperial was covered by iceplant, though the mounts were marked by cones. The PSR is currently not used and we were able to look inside. Following our tour some of the group headed for the Mexican border to visit FC site #13, which is now in a state park, though seldom visited except by illegals and Immigration Officers, while others headed to the hotel near Point Loma for dinner and presentations that started at 6:30 PM.

Day 4 (August 18)

An early start was signaled by the call to board a hired bus at 7:45 AM for the trip to the Navy facilities on Point Loma. The first stop was at NRAD, the Naval Research and Development Facility, that controls most of the western side of Point Loma. We picked up Tom LaPuzza, the Public Affair Officer, who guided us on the trip. As access to the NRAD facilities is very limited, the PAO had to be along to keep our cameras tightly reigned. Still this was a most unusual and unique opportunity to visit the area. First stop was Battery Strong (2 x 8" BC) the first 8" long range barbette battery built in 1937. We were able to tour the inside and look at both gun pits, though the railway to pit #2 was partially covered by a roadway built to the top of the battery. Next we drove past the entrances PSR for Strong and the HDSD radio station to the rear of Battery #237 (2 x 6" BC) ("Woodward") for a photo session of the rear of the battery. We were not allowed in front or inside. We were able to examine some interesting underground storage facilities (reserve magazines?) just behind Battery #237 on the other side of the road. Next we headed to the site of Battery North (4 x 155 mm PMS) locating one or two of the Panama mounts, but could find no sign of Batteries Zeilin (2 x 7" NP) or Gillespie (3 x 5" NP). Turning around, we drove to the HECF-HEDP for the HD of SD and were able to tour the inside and outside of this building. Just in time as they were remodeling and in a month or so it will be closed to unclassified personnel. A couple of the employees there were shocked to find that we had plans to the place, especially as they did not and grateful for a copy of the RCW. Next we headed to Battery Whistler (4 x 12" M), currently the Arctic Submarine Research Lab. Whistler has been covered by a 2-3 story building, but the mortar battery is readily discernible on the lower level. Of great interest to the group was part of the barrels and the breeches of a 12" naval gun (from the USS Arkansas) and a 16" naval gun. Many pictures were taken of the breeches being opened and closed. It was here that Mr. LaPuzza left us (following several "huzzahs") and we headed to the Submarine Base where we met Dr. Ron May, our guide for the next segment of the tour.

We parked near the remaining Army buildings of Fort Rosecrans and walked up to Battery White (4 x 12" M), which many felt was the most impressive battery to be seen during the meeting. After clearing up a slight misunderstanding over photographic privileges, we were allowed free reign to examine the interesting two level battery. Except for some additional construction in the second pit, much of the battery was intact and the powder and shell galleries were only slightly modified. We were able to walk the entire length of the two tunnels, which connected a road from the post proper to the top of the ridge. Then we visited Battery McGrath (originally 2 x 5" BP, later 2 x 3" P), now used to store confiscated explosives. Following that tour we stopped at the officer's club for lunch on the lawn next to the breakwater. Next we stopped briefly to

look at Dr. May's current archeological dig on the site of the 1797 Spanish defensive work Fort Guijarros, on our way to Batteries Calef and Wilkeson (2 x 10" DC each in a single structure), an early "Endicott" battery. The battery was impressive in its sheer volume of cement. The top of the battery is used for parking and there are a number of odd buildings up there. The rest of the battery houses the base recycling center and the Navy underwater diving equipment. We were able to visit all four emplacements and examine the two remaining intact powder hoists, and part of some of the shell hoists in the battery. Then we boarded the bus back to the hotel, where the "official" meeting ended. Several people then journeyed to Cabrillo National Monument to see the back of Battery Thomas Q. Ashburn (2 x 16" BC) (BCN #126), Battery Point Loma (4 x 155 mm, PMS), a distant view of Battery Charles Humphreys (2 x 6" BC) (BCN #238), Battery Cabrillo (2 x 90 mm, AMTB) and the numerous fire control and searchlight stations in the area and/or out to the border to see FC site #13 if they didn't get to the day before.

PLANNING

The main problem was coordinating efforts to contact a number of public agencies controlling the old Army reservations, as well as setting up our stay at AFRC, Los Alamitos. Sam recruited Gene Fredrickson, Al Grobmeier and I to help him make the appropriate phone calls and write the letters needed to gain entry to some of these sites. As things went, once the right contacts were made, we were able to visit almost everything we wanted to see.

We had no problems with the Los Angeles sites, except for failing to secure permission to visit Bolsa Chica from the developing company. As it turned out, anyone who wanted to visit that site had little problem. We have to thank the following folks for helping us out: At AFRC, Los Alamitos, Sgt. 1st Class Deborah Sparkman and Maj. Eldon Powell helped with the arrangements for our billeting and getting a classroom for our meeting room; CDR James Dwyer and Lt. Holly Russell of the USCG for making the arrangements to let us into Battery #240 at Point Vicente; the Director of Public Works of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes for arranging to let us in the Nike battery at Point Vicente; Robert Garcia, Director of Angels Gate Park for making the arrangements for getting us into Battery 127 at White Point Park and to Museum volunteers Tom Thomas and Pat Murman for their help at the museum; Doug Dunivan and Frank Perez of the Los Angeles Unified School District for getting us inside Batteries John Barlow and Saxton; Chris Watkins and Chris Cori for the fine breakfast and tour of the BES at the Breakers Hotel; Major Robert Morallo and Tech. Sgt. Kathy Charles of the Los Angeles AFB for arranging the tour of the USAF property at the Middle Reservation of Fort MacArthur.

San Diego proved to be a tougher nut to crack. The Navy's legendary reluctance to allow tours visit their facilities looked to be daunting, yet was overcome. Al Grobmeier was instrumental in arranging the tour of Fort Emory with LCDR Richard T. Sansom, Exec. Officer of the NRRF facility there. Gene Fredrickson was gracious enough to use his contacts to help arrange our visit to NRAD, which required a trip down there to finalize the arrangements with Tom LaPuzza, the PAO. Dr. Ron May and Sam arranged for the tour of the Submarine Base. We need to thank Howard Overton, the Superintendent of Cabrillo National Monument for his efforts, even though a communications snafu prevented us from formally going on his tour.

EXECUTION

Things went pretty smoothly and on time during the meetings, with the exception of an occasional snafu here and there, usually due to a

misunderstanding. The AFRC billeting officer thought that we would all arrive Friday night and as a result held up the check in of the Saturday crew till Sam went over and smoothed things out. Everything else went on schedule in L.A. The catered box lunches and coolers filled with sodas kept the group together, while CDSGers managed to keep themselves in film supply. The Best Western Airport Inn at San Diego left much to be desired as the AC for the meeting room did not work, forcing attendees to consume a number of beers and sodas during the presentations that night. The biggest snafu was that Howard Overton of Cabrillo Natl. Mon. thought we were coming on Monday afternoon instead of Tuesday afternoon and was very upset when we didn't show. Sam is not quite sure what happened with Mr. Overton, but it points up the importance of sending a paper copy of the final schedule to the people with whom you have made arrangements to visit sites.

We had an interesting assortment of evening presentations, including the ubiquitous Business Meeting and assorted announcements. The presenters included (please excuse me if I forgot someone) Glen Williford on the evolution of the 8" batteries and "Glen and Roger's Excellent Adventures" to the harbor defenses of Kodiak and Seward, Alaska, Nelson Lawry on the Battery Berry's "new" base line in Portland harbor, Bill Allcorn on Nova Scotia forts, Bud Halsey and Dick Whistler on the Panama forts and the upcoming Panama Special Tour, Jim Loop on the American Nike Program, Terry McGovern on existing harbor defense ordnance. We also had two guest speakers on Monday night; Suzanne Duberry of the Pacific Southwest Branch of the National Archives on what harbor defense material can be found in the Pacific Southwest Branch (and how to find it); and Ron May of the San Diego County Office of Archeology on the archeological digs on the site of the Spanish fort at Ballast Point, Fort Guijarros. We had several other volunteer presenters who did not get to speak due to a lack of time, including Bob Burt who has been bumped for two meetings now. Several speakers were well over the time they said they would speak. To prevent this from happening in the future, we feel that the future St. Babs organizers need to request that presenters set and adhere to a time limit for their talks. If a presentation goes over the allotted time, the organizer will have to stop the talk, and allow the next speaker to go on. ALL SPEAKERS SHOULD HAVE THE COURTESY OF KEEPING THEIR TALKS TO A REASONABLE TIME (SAY UNDER 1 HOUR PER TALK) AND KEEPING THE TALK UNDER THEIR ANNOUNCED TIMES. Everyone should have a chance to give their talk. If future presenters feel they have more than say 45 minutes of material to present, simply ask to give two talks.

Once all the arrangements were made, things went pretty much as planned. We were able to visit a number of sites that are generally inaccessible to the lone visitor. Other than the few points made above, we feel the meeting was a success and that all attendees enjoyed their visit to Southern California.

Corrections to the St. Babs handouts

- 1) In the **Los Angeles Fire Control Locations** list, I have noted that all 6 1930 BES stations at Seabench MR are extant. However, B ' ' ' 3 station has apparently been incorporated into or destroyed by the WWII construction there.
- 2) In the **Gun Batteries of HDSD** list, I inadvertently left out Battery Zeilin, a temporary work containing two 7" naval guns on pedestal mounts, which should be in the WWII Temporary section. Also, in that same section Battery North (four 155 mm GPFs) is noted as only having field mounts (FM). Based on what we saw on our visit to the battery, this should be corrected to Panama mounts (PM).