



# Nitro Blast

The Newsletter of the  
USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23)  
Association  
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Editor: Jim Timmons  
Assn. Membership 240

## Davisville Homecoming *Keep the Memories Alive*

### Home sWeET Home

This year's reunion, a Rhode Island homecoming, was by any measure an unqualified success. It was by far the largest (almost 100 former crewmembers and guests for dinner, 64 for trip to Battleship Cove and 80+ for memorial ceremony) by far. The optional deep sea fishing trip, in which several of our members took part, was also successful.

Try as it might, the Rhode Island weather could not put a damper on the activities. All of New England had been under a steady downpour of rain for weeks preceding the reunion so there was no reason not to believe it would continue to rain during the reunion. We were fortunate to complete all of our activities without the inclement weather.

The accommodations at our headquarters, the Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Crossings in Warwick, were excellent and the staff very accommodating. The night before the reunion officially got underway the hotel provided their airport shuttle bus for our group of 20 early arrivals to go a local restaurant for dinner.

There were a lot of new faces among the 60 or so former crew members who made it to Warwick for this year's reunion. Here is a list of crew members who attended: Howard Root, Jim Caithamer, George Gregory, John Mahler, Gordon Ahner, William Connors, Bill Lewis, Kenneth Marvin, George Livemois, John Holland, Ed Marino, Richard Artale, Jerry Satterfield, Robert Knoll, Alan Hallock, Lee Smith, Bob Theirrien, Wallace Carey, Juan Reyes, Jim Timmons, Don Skillman, Brian Evans, Russell Garbutt, Joel Magallanes, Gary Corley, William McBurnie, Joe Gentleman, Phil Wise, John Giles, Raymond Smith, David Ferretti, Howard Robinson, Rob Drake, Mark Sikes, Peter Scott, David Burgess, William Flynn, Bob Eberlein, Paul Licker, Roy Rose, Dan Corcoran, Ed Cadoret, Bill Wasser, Russell Erickson, Ralph Caldwell, Bob Peiffer, Jim Hugo, Dominick Berardi, Jose Silva, Brian Lenihan, Bruce Lemmond, Kenneth Vincent, Kevin Clavin, Oscar Santiago, Bob Stewart, Gary Attean and Jan Huyck..

Friday's lunch on board the USS Massachusetts (BB-59) and receiving a couple USS Nitro (AE-23) artifacts from our fellow shipmates of the USS Joseph P. Kennedy (DD-850), while at Battleship Cove, were the highlight of our day tour.

The Association dinner, raffle and auction Friday evening was special. Bob Eberlein read a citation received from the Governor of the State of Rhode Island welcoming the USS Nitro Association back home. Professor Paul Romanski, former Commanding Officer of the USS Pyro (AE-24) and USS Wichita (AOE-1), of the Naval War College was our guest speaker. He gave a power point presentation on the UNREPs of the War with Iraq and the mission of the multi-tasked auxiliary ships of today's Navy and the Navy of the future.

After an excellent dinner, the awards for youngest AE-23 attendee (Brian Evans), oldest AE-2 attendee (George Livemois) and attendee traveling the furthest (Rob Drake, San Diego) were presented. Oscar Santiago won this year's raffle item, a cast bronze statue of the Lone Sailor with Seabag valued at \$120.00. The auction brought in excess of \$1,000 this year because of some truly exceptional items. Thank you all for contributing. A check for \$500 from the auction was presented to the Island X-1 Davisville Seabees for their Memorial Park Building Fund.

Jim Caithamer, who took in excess of 250 pictures of the reunion activities, has been kind enough to make them available for viewing and/or printing on Sony's Image Station website. Here is the Sony URL:

<http://www.imagestation.com/album/?id=4289844307&code=5644894&mode=invite>

### 2003 Memorial Ceremony

The day on which the weather really had to cooperate was Saturday, the day of the joint USS Nitro/Seabee Memorial Ceremony. As we gathered in front of the Crowne Plaza, in

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preparation to board our two chartered buses for the trip to Davisville (foul weather gear in hand) the skies were overcast and threatening rain. Bad weather was also in the forecast. Although threatening, the weather cooperated and it only sprinkled after the memorial ceremony was completed.

As for the ceremony itself, the Seabee veterans at Davisville did a tremendous job of setting up the Memorial Park for all of the 400 people in attendance. The Navy Band Northeast provided their Brass Quintet to provide music before and during the ceremony. CBMU 202 from Groton, CT. provided the Color Guard. Several of the Seabees Veterans of America national officers were on hand for the ceremony.

Taking part in the Ceremony representing the Nitro Association were Bob Eberlein, Jim Timmons and the wreath bearers Joel Magallanes representing the AE-23 and Lee Smith representing the AE-2. As the names of deceased members of both associations were read, the wreaths laid, the *Navy Hymn and Taps* played, emotions ran high and there were few dry eyes. It was truly a meaningful experience for all attendees.

After the ceremony the Nitro people had an opportunity to mix with the Seabee veterans and look at all of the work being done at the Memorial Park. Prior to going to Carter's 19<sup>th</sup>. Hole for the clambake, the Nitro attendees re-boarded the buses for a trip to Pier #1 where the AE-23 was tied up while homeported at Davisville. The piers at Davisville are now used by car carrying ships bringing Volkswagens and other cars to New England from Europe. We were unable to gain direct access to the piers but got as close as possible.

After our short trip to the piers, the buses deposited us at the restaurant for the clambake. We had reserved the entire restaurant, patio, bar and had tables set up on the lawn in order to serve all of the attendees. The clambake was marvelous and consisted of clam chowder, crab cakes, whole lobster, clams, chicken, fish, sausage and potato. It took a bit of doing to feed 400 people, but once the food lines were formed, everything went very smoothly.

Many of our members bought chances to win prizes from the Seabee raffle and many were winners. Again, the weather cooperated and the rain held off. Over the course of the next couple of hours the Seabees became acquainted with their BGB (Big Grey Boat) counterparts of the Nitro. The Island X-1 officers and members were very gracious hosts and I am sure all of our members had a wonderful time. We returned to the hotel about 5 PM after a very full day.



2004 Reunion



"Continuing Service to the Fleet"

JULY 2003

Nashville, Tennessee will be the site of our 2004 reunion. We are starting the process of locating a hotel to serve as our reunion headquarters. We have a list of tentative activities (Grand Ole Opry, Ryman Auditorium, visit to the Parthenon, wreath laying ceremony, etc.) for Nashville but any suggestions would be appreciated.

## **USS Nitro (AE-23) at the James River Reserve Fleet**

In April of this year, Brian Evans and I had an opportunity to go back on board the Nitro at the James River Reserve Fleet. We were permitted to document the ship with both videotape and still camera and those tapes and pictures were shown at the Providence reunion.

The videotape runs about 1 ½ hours long and shows most of the compartments on the ship, from stem to stern and from the 04 level through the hold level of the superstructure and the 1<sup>st</sup>. platform level of hold #2 where we made a very interesting discovery. The videotape has generated such interest that we will be making copies available through the Nitro Ship's Store. If you would be interested in obtaining a copy, please send me an email. The anticipated price of the tape will be \$12.00 plus \$3.95 S/H. I will let you know when the tapes become available.

Because the fate of the Nitro is still not known but presumed to be destined for scrap in the future, this may be the most thorough documentation of the ship that we will be able to obtain.

## **Association Officers Elected**

Your Association officers for the 2003-2005 term are as follows:

**President** – James Timmons; **Vice President** – Robert Eberlein; **Treasurer** – Robert Peiffer; **Secretary** – Phil Wise; **Master At Arms** – Oscar Santiago; **Trustee #1** – Juan Reyes-Matos; **Trustee #2** – Paul Licker.

## **Association Ship's Store**

We have a number of new items in the Nitro Ship's Store. Among these are a new Nitro lighter with the profile of the AE-2 on one side and AE-23 on the other, hull number ball caps for both ships, Association coffee mugs, new patches, 9" tall collectible Navy bears (other branches are also available) and much, much more. Check out the web site at:

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/nalc820/stores.htm>

## TAPS

We are saddened to inform you of the very recent passing of James Balf (MMCM, AE-23 from 1972-73).

A note from Daniel Hennessy, LCOL, USMC (Ret.) informs the Association of the passing of VADM Thomas J. Walker, CO, AE-23, 1960. He died in May, was cremated, flown to Hawaii and put aboard USS CONSTELLATION. He was buried at sea from "THE CONNIE" at the end of her last deployment from Iraq, on the way to her last port, San Diego.

### ✂ 2005 Reunion possibilities ✂

From Paul Licker:

Let's go back to sea! This time there will be no watches, chow lines, sea and anchor details, just pure fun and relaxation. Not far from the attractions of Central Florida is the unbelievable beauty of the Bahamas. Carnival Cruise Lines **Fantasy** sails every Thursday, from Port Canaveral, for 3 days to Nassau, where she stays all day and all night. While there, you can spend the day at the beach, playing golf, duty free shopping, exploring historic forts or the lavish Atlantis Casino and Resort, or taking advantage of an array of water sports that are available. You'll return from this getaway with more memories and more photos than you ever thought possible in less than a week. The approximate cost of this trip is \$470 per person, which includes port taxes, all meals, accommodations in an outside cabin (with window), and entertainment on the ship. Here is our chance to go back to sea but this time in lavish style. If you have any questions about this trip, please get in touch with via Email, [Pesachbenschlomo@aol.com](mailto:Pesachbenschlomo@aol.com) or call me at home in the evening at 321-757-6830.

Oh yes, Port Canaveral is located just a hop, skip and a jump east of Orlando, home of the Big Mouse. A local travel agency here will handle all Cruise arrangements. They will also be able to accommodate any and all of our travel needs to Florida if you wish. They will be accessible via an 800 number when the time comes to make arrangements.

**Editor's note:** *Airfare to Port Canaveral is extra.* Paul notes in an email to me that typical expenses for our "land" reunion are around \$750 for 2 people (hotel \$350; bus tours, dinner \$200; shopping and addl. meals \$200 plus mode of travel to and from reunion \$???) , so a chance to go to sea again might not be that much more expensive.

We took a poll at the reunion and so far here are the results: Cruise 12 votes, Jacksonville 5, New Orleans 4, so far. If you would like to vote for the location of the 2005 (South)

*"Continuing Service to the Fleet"*

reunion, please take time to fill out and return the reunion questionnaire attached with this newsletter. Those who voted at the reunion are not eligible to vote again.

### Nitro Membership Update

USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association membership continues to grow. Our membership roll now stands at 240. The following shipmates (Nitro tour dates) have signed on as members during the month indicated:

**May** – Frank Jackson (64-65); Edouard Cadoret (72-74)

**June** – Bruce Lermond (69-71); Jan Huyck (59-61); Dominick Berardi (43-45); Raymond Smith (64-66); Raymond Walters (44-45)

### ◆◆ *The Crow's Nest*

#### "The Muster List Project" ◆◆

We have a project for the membership to consider. We have been presented with an opportunity to obtain Muster List hard copies for the USS Nitro (AE-23) for the years 1959, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68 and 1970 from the USS Pyro Association for the cost of duplication. The microfilm which has the Pyro's muster lists and diaries also contains the diaries and muster lists of the Nitro and several other ships. The approximate cost to make copies of each year's records would be as follows:

**Officers Diaries and Muster Lists:** Approx. 36 pages per year including a second copy for back up = \$5.40 to \$7.20 per year to obtain the officers diaries and muster lists for the years listed above.

**Enlisted Diaries and Muster Lists:** Approx. 57 pages per quarter (times 4) including a second copy for back up = \$34.20 to \$45.60 per year to obtain the enlisted diaries for the years listed above.

We would also have to pay for the person's time to make copies from the microfilm and print the back up copies of each year. This cost would be \$15.00 per year. The total cost for the Officer and Enlisted Diaries and Muster Lists would be between approximately \$51.60 and \$67.80 per year for the years listed above.

It is important that we, as an association, obtain as many of these lists and diaries as possible so we can preserve and pass along the history of who and when people were on board the AE-23. This is the least expensive way of obtaining this material. As I suggested at the Nitro Assn. business meeting, I would like to see if there are individuals or maybe a group of people who would like to purchase the diaries and muster lists

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for the year they were on board. Please talk with your fellow shipmates to see if we can make this happen. The Nitro Association will contribute some funds for this project, however, by sharing the burden, we can accomplish so much more.

We would also like to consider obtaining microfilm from the National Archives for the year's that the Pyro Association does not have. The years we want to acquire would be from 1971 to decommissioning in 1995 and 1962 and 69. The price for the microfilm of each year is approximately \$34 per roll. As mentioned previously, there are several ship's listed on each roll of microfilm so perhaps we can be in a position to return the favor to the Pyro Association by being able to supply them with copies of lists for the year's they don't have. After we obtain the additional years of microfilm, we would then have to go through the process of making hard copies as mentioned above.

It is going to be an expensive proposition, to fully document the rosters of the USS Nitro (AE-23) from commissioning to decommissioning, but it doesn't have to be accomplished this year or next. If we can obtain the records for a few years at a time, the project can be completed over a short period of time. So, if you are interested in *The Muster List Project*, please make your checks payable to the USS Nitro Association and make a notation about the year(s) to be copied. If the costs for a particular year's copies are already covered, we will apply the funds to another year or the general fund. The Association will also record, in the archive book, a list of donors and they year they donated

#### ✂ *The Nitro Sage* ✂

*My husband and I divorced over religious differences. He thought he was God and I didn't!*

*I used to have a handle on life, but it broke.*

#### Nitro Blast Newsletter

%James Timmons  
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Waukesha, WI 53189

*Address Service Requested*

JULY 2003

#### A Final Thought

As one of the Seabee officers at the Memorial Ceremony at Davisville said, "there must be a Master Chief in charge of the weather" because the weather turned out okay when the reunion activities were to be held outside.

This reunion had the largest turn out to date, which is an indication that the reunions are catching on. There were a few new faces in the crowd and a few old ones that have been missing from the pass. Our annual dinner had an overwhelming 98 persons in attendance. Good food and good company - what a combination for a reunion, not to mention the large selection of door and auction prizes. A hearty thank you for all those who donated and bid on these, many one-of-a-kind gifts.

I know there was some discussion as to why Nashville, TN. is the site of next years reunion. On our web site, there is a reunion questionnaire and at the bottom is a listing of the reunion years and city choices for YOU, the member to vote on. The Association officers really need this section filled and returned to us, so we can keep a tally as to the cities that YOU, the members, would like to visit. We have enclosed a questionnaire with this newsletter, which covers the next few reunion years. Please, take time to vote for your first, second and third choice, just in case there is a tie for cities.

Jim and I now have information to start to line up next years hotel and events. If you have any suggestions, by all means let me know, and maybe they can be incorporated in the 04' Nashville Reunion. Y'all come now.

*Fair winds and following seas,*  
Bob Eberlein, Founder, Nitro Assn.



**USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association  
Future Reunion Questionnaire**

(please fill out and return to address below as soon as possible)

(If you know of fellow crewmembers who would be interested in the Future reunion sites, make a copy and pass along)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

I/We will \_\_\_\_\_ will not \_\_\_\_\_ be attending the **2004 Reunion to be held in Nashville, TN., 17 -20 June 2004.**

Anticipated date of arrival: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Adults \_\_\_\_\_ Children \_\_\_\_\_ (ages of children \_\_\_\_\_) attending.

I/We will need hotel room(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No. If yes, number of rooms \_\_\_\_\_ (attendee responsible for reservations)

I/We will most likely Fly \_\_\_\_\_ or Drive \_\_\_\_\_ to Nashville

**Nashville Group Activities:** I/We would be interested in attending the following group activities:  
\_\_\_\_ Wreath Laying Ceremony (at Ft. Campbell – if possible or Nashville War Memorial as part of day tour)

(Check one of choices below)

\_\_\_\_ Day at Opryland or

\_\_\_\_ Day tour of Nashville with visit to the original Grand Ole Opry (Ryman Auditorium) and Centennial Park to see reproduction of Parthenon (includes the world's only full-scale replica of the Athenian Temple in Athens, Greece), etc

Other Suggestion \_\_\_\_\_

*Circle one reunion city choice for each year:*

**USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association YR 2004 Reunion: Region (Midwest): Reunion City – Nashville, TN, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Detroit, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Chicago (last reunion site)**

**USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association YR 2005 Reunion: Region (South): - Bahamas Cruise (12 votes\*), Jacksonville (5 votes\*), Norfolk, Atlanta, Orlando, Dallas, San Antonio, New Orleans (4 votes\*), Charleston, SC (last reunion site)**  
*\*Votes taken at Providence reunion where a cruise was suggested as a site.*

**USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association YR 2006 Reunion: Region (West): Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, OR; Seattle, Salt Lake City, Denver/Boulder, Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Diego (last reunion site)**

**USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association YR 2007 Reunion: Region(East): Boston, Portland, ME; New Haven, New York, Pittsburgh, Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Providence (last reunion site)**

**Please return completed questionnaire to:**

Mr. Robert Eberlein, Vice President

USS Nitro Association

12215 Ashland

Granger, IN 46530-9654