



Nitro Blast

The Newsletter of the
USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23)
Association
Volume 8, Issue 4
April 2006
Editor: Jim Timmons
Assn. Membership 278

"Nellis AFB visit Confirmed"

Keep the Memories Alive



Reunion Update



(Threat Training Facility - Weapons Museum)

Our visit to Nellis AFB has been approved for Friday, 23 June for our annual wreath laying ceremony, lunch and base tour. We are working on having lunch either at the "O" Club or at the Enlisted Club.

The tour part of our visit to Nellis will include stops at Threat Training Facility (Weapons Museum) and the Thunderbirds area of Nellis AFB. We will have access to gift shops in both areas but may not be able to get access to the Base Exchange (I am still checking on that possibility). We should be back at the hotel mid to late afternoon.

Saturday tour 6/24 - Daytime tour: (see activity form)
Lake Mead/Hoover Dam \$65.00/person.

Since no one has signed up for either the Eldorado Canyon Gold Mine tour or the visit to Sheri's Ranch, these tour options have been cancelled.

If you have signed up for any of the activities listed, and have not yet done so, please remit your payment as soon as

possible. We are now entering a period of time where deposits are being required.

The Orleans Hotel & Casino Recap:

Cutoff date for reserving guest rooms at the hotel is May 21, 2006, so RESERVE YOUR ROOM NOW and avoid the rush of waiting until the last minute!

Nitro's special guestroom rates for the reunion are as follows: \$60/night for Thursday night and \$110/night for Friday and Saturday nights. Additional room nights, before or after the reunion, may be made at our reunion weekday rate on an "as available" basis. You have up to 72 hours prior to 4 PM (Las Vegas) time on the date of arrival to cancel your reservations. ***Anyone requiring special assistance should inform the hotel when making reservations.*** Each person will be responsible for making their reservations. Call The Orleans Hotel and Casino national reservation center at 800-675-3267. When placing your reservation for the 2006 reunion, let the reservation clerk know you want to reserve a room for the **USS Nitro Association** reunion for "x" number of nights.

The following are names of former shipmates who will be attending this year's reunion: Richard Artale, Jim Caithamer, Christine Spurling (Crites), Robert Eberlein, Leo Falconio, Russell Garbutt, George Gregory, Robert Knoll, Lawrence Little, Joel Magallanes, Paul Licker, John Mahler, Edward Marino, Kenneth Marvin, John Meissner, Thomas Papsodero, Robert Peiffer, Howard Root, Oscar Santiago, Mark Sikes, Lee Smith, Jim Timmons, Ron Webb, George Whiteman and Phil Wise.

Recognition of FIVE year members - As of this writing, the following 19 Association members will be receiving their 5 year pins this year: Michael Bizzoco, Raymond Brown Jr., Ralph Caldwell, Manny Carabel, Kevin Clavin, Brian Farrell, William Flynn III, Frank Gauthier IV, Bailey George, Leonard Limoge, Joel Magallanes, John Moliere, Walter Mullins, John

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Sachs, Mark Sikes, William Toohey, Bill Wasser, Ron Webb and George Whiteman.

If you are planning on attending the reunion, you will be presented with the pins at that time. If you are unable to attend the reunion, your pin will be mailed to you after the reunion.

The itinerary for our visit to Las Vegas:

Thursday 6/22 - Afternoon crewmember check-in. 7-10 PM Association business meeting.

Friday: Nellis AFB visit

Saturday: Tour or "Free" day.

Saturday night 7 - 11 PM, Association Annual Dinner/ raffle and auction.

NOTE: Auction Items Wanted - Again this year, we will hold our Annual Raffle and Auction after the Association dinner on Saturday night. Please feel free to bring any items you feel would be appropriate (preferably military related) for auction to the reunion. Auction items need not be expensive. Half of the proceeds, up to \$500, from the raffle/auction will be donated to a charity at Nellis AFB.

If you will be unable to attend this year's reunion but would like to donate an item, you may send it, along with a note, to Bob Eberlein, Bob Peiffer, Phil Wise or Jim Timmons and we will be happy to take it along with us.

◆ The Crow's Nest ◆

Navy Times reports the Maritime Administration will remove at least 11 obsolete ships from the James River Reserve Fleet in 2006.

There are 64 ships in the "ghost fleet," with 54 awaiting dismantling. The agency has been working under a Sept. 30, 2006, deadline to dispose of all the ships.

⚓ Nitro, WV museum ⚓

We have been contacted by the Nitro, West Virginia museum about adding to their collection of Navy items. Some of you may remember that in 1984 the City of Nitro, WV, adopted the USS Nitro (AE-23) and hosted a group of the sailors on a trip from their home port at Earle, NJ.

We have expanded our conversation to advance the possibility of the museum becoming the repository of the USS Nitro (AE-2 and AE-23) artifacts. Details of this possibility will be on our agenda for the Annual Business Meeting during our reunion in Las Vegas. The city is in the

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process of building a new museum, which will be attached to the library and house artifacts from all branches of service, and a major military focus will be on the relationship between the city and the USS Nitro.

Until a final decision has been made regarding the repository issue, we have granted a request received from the City of Nitro, WV, the Nitro WW1 Memorial Commission and the Nitro Museum Association to donate a number of items related to the USS Nitro for their existing display. Among items the Nitro Association will be donating will be ball caps, patches, decommissioning and James River Reserve Fleet videotapes and other ship's store items.

If any of our Association members, have naval items they would like to donate to the museum, please contact Mr. David Bohn, the Nitro Museum Association president at FRA-Nitro@att.net, or you may write directly to him at: David Bohn, President, Nitro Museum Association, 1712 17th. Street, Nitro, WV 25143.



NitroCrewmembers Yahoo Group and Chat Line - We now have another way of communicating with former crewmembers. Our web master, Bob Peiffer, has formed an online service using Yahoo so members can post messages or replies to posted messages that would be of interest to other members of our NitroCrewmembers Yahoo Group. The URL where you can sign up to become a member of this group is:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NitroCrewmembers/>

While this Group is an excellent way to communicate information of general interest to all the group members, we should keep in mind that messages or replies will go to all members. So if you wish to communicate with an individual about a specific item it is best to email that person at their individual email address rather than replying over the NitroCrewmembers Yahoo Group.

Secondly, we are continuing with our Wednesday evening (9-10 PM, EST) Nitro Crewmembers Chat line. To participate in the chat line group, you must be a registered member of our NitroCrewmembers Yahoo Group.

This method of communicating, with other members who are on line at the same time, can be done either by voice (if you have a computer microphone and speakers) or by typing in comments. If you have speakers on your computer, you will be able to hear the conversations between members.

On any given Wednesday evening, there are anywhere from 2 - 6 members on line discussing a wide range of topics, catching up on the latest gossip and in general just having an

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old fashion BS session. If you are able or would like to, please join our group.



USS Nitro Motor Whale Boat



Posting to the NitroCrewmembers Yahoo Group by Jim Timmons -
I have read with great interest the postings about the Nitro's motor whale boat. Here is where we are so far in our attempts to locate it. One of our Association members, Tom Lowe, lives nearby the town of Atco, NJ. and I asked him if he could stop by a junk or salvage yard near the racetrack.

Below is an email I received from him last night: " Hey Guys, I went to that junkyard in Atco today, Wade's Salvage. It's only about 4 miles from where I work. I looked for the whaleboat, couldn't find it, then went to the office. The proprietor said that yes, the Nitro's whaleboat was there but he sold it a few years ago, but forgets whom he sold it to. It's amazing it was there so long ago, but I'm sure it was after 1995 when the Nitro was decommissioned.

I anticipated a little reunion with the whaleboat when I left for the junkyard. I even brought my digital camera to perhaps send some pics to you tonight, but it was not meant to be. Anyway, at least someone in South Jersey is getting some good use out of the old Nitro whaleboat. Oh well. We tried.

I'm curious as to how you found out about the whaleboat in the first place. Apparently the info was old but it's cool that it was even tracked down to that obscure junkyard at all.

Btw, what's the latest news on the Nitro herself? Latest I heard, she was at the James River facility in VA. Is she still there? I was even wondering if an aerial shot of her was even possible on the Google Earth site. I know that pic would be fuzzy, but I was just curious. Take care. Tom "

JT - The lead, as many of you know, came from a former crewmember living in Florida. In Tom's email, he refers to a picture of the Nitro in the James River Reserve Fleet. There is a copy of the picture taken by Google Earth in the Pictures section of the NitroCrewmembers Yahoo Group page. Just go to the blue shaded area to the left and click on "Pictures". If there are any further developments in our search for the whaleboat, we will keep you informed.



2006 Nitro Association Dues Reminder



For those of you who have not yet paid your 2006 dues, this will be the last newsletter you will be receiving. Please renew your dues in order to keep receiving the *Nitro Blast*.



Navy Times Article Recap



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1) Yokosuka Mayor opposes nuclear carrier, George Washington, as replacement for the Kitty Hawk.

2) Fleet Response Plan (FRP) to go Navywide - sub & surface force, Seabee and carrier force. Currently under FRP, the Navy must be able to "surge" six carrier strike groups within 30 days and follow with two more within 60 days.

3) Pear Harbor Memorial Fund hopes to raise enough money to build a new museum.

4) COs of destroyers McFaul and Winston Churchill will keep their commands after August collision.

5) Fewer recruits for SEAL training.

6) Navy Historical Center to help search for the ship Bonhomme Richard.

7) CNO points out challenges ahead for Navy: Too low a number of ships to be built (4 in current budget); beef-up ASW technology; more representation of races in Navy; no plans to compete with USMC force capability (read no naval infantry); rapid response and flexible deployments;

8) Private firms competing to develop better communications gear.

9) Seven MCPOs being considered for next Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON).

10) Moisture-wicking T shirt, made by Under Armor being sought for military in Gulf area.

11) No undesignated sailors after FY2009.

12) Pentagon looking to cut \$13 to 15 Billion from DOD 2007 budget. \$443 billion has been approved. USAF to possibly cut 57,000 (airmen and civilians) and drop 140 aircraft by 2011.

13) Sea/shore rotation of 5/2 can be expected because of drawdown by 2011.

14) 10 ships scheduled for decommissioning in 2006 are Belleau Wood (LHA 3); Austin (LPD 4); Salt Lake City (SSN 716); Thomas Gates (CG 51); Grasp (ARS 51) and Grapple (ARS 53); Osprey (MHC 51), Gobin (MHC 54), Oriole (MHC 55) and Falcon (MHC 59).

15) X-USS Ranger could become museum ship in Portland, OR.

16) Navy to deploy one of three Rivine Squadrons by 2007 as part of new Expeditionary Combat Command

17) EA-18 G Growler to replace aging EA-6B Prowler as primary electronic jamming airplane of the Navy. MH-60R helicopter to replace ASW helicopters SH-60B and F series.

18) Fraternalization and drug usage on board newly commissioned Navy destroyers result in review of pre-commissioning process and leadership issues (both of senior enlisted and officers).

19) Pirate ship attacks off the coast of Somalia draws more attention from Navy. Navy destroyer Churchill nabs pirate ship.

20) New SECNAV Donald Winter was sworn in January 3rd.

21) Marine Corp and Army recall more than 18,000 armor vests.

22) First two CMCs graduate from Naval War College.

23) Navy to close sub base off Sardinia, Italy.

24) Pentagon okays construction of 2 DD(X) ships.

25) Army offering \$5,000 to \$19,000 bonuses to prior-service veterans (all branches) if they want to return to active duty in the Army.

26) GAO criticizes MOS staffing level in Armed Forces. Too little staffing in critical areas and too much in non-critical.

27) Navy considering merger of 84 ratings down to 40 over the next 13 months. Effective July 06, illustrator draftsman, journalist, lithographer and photographer's mate rates will be merged into Mass Communication Specialists. All active duty CTs will become IS techs

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from March thru Oct, 06.

- 28) Several naval families suing Navy for medical malpractice.
- 29) New MREs coming that might even taste good!
- 30) Thousands of sailors and coast guard personnel may now be eligible to receive two medals for hurricane relief work.
- 31) Navy to revise CO selection for Surface Warfare Officers (SWO). Will target officers prior to their XO appointments, similar to way the aviation and amphib communities do.
- 32) Coast Guard icebreaker Mackinaw CO relieved of command after ship hits breakwall during shakedown cruise.
- 33) VA unveils new online gravesite locator. The URL is: <http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>
- 34) Congress drops authorization of Cold War medal, which would have been awarded to military who served from 1945 to 1991.
- 35) Troops get 3.1% pay raise in '06 defense authorization bill along with other bonuses and incentives. '07 budget pay raise projected at only 2.2%.
- 36) Navy Times poll shows morale high, overall, but support for war decreasing among military personnel.
- 37) Military to donate \$11 million worth of equipment and medical supplies to tsunami-hit Indonesia.
- 38) Carrier Ronald Reagan initial deployment, Jan 4th. to Persian Gulf.
- 39) '06 defense authorization bill alters retirement rules, primarily for 0-5 and 06s.
- 40) X-Oriskany to be sunk as fishing reef in Gulf of Mexico by June 1st.
- 41) Combat Action Ribbon (CAR) being reviewed for Navy personnel serving in Iraq. At present some are eligible while others are not.
- 42) The Navy's F-14 "Tomcat" on final tour
- 43) Navy to train enlisted (becoming warrant officers) to fly and teach P-3 Orion and H-60 helicopters.
- 44) Proposed new Navy enlisted barracks in San Diego to be high-rise building with 900 sq. ft. 2 person apartments.
- 45) Naval Station Mayport (FL) being considered for home-porting of nuclear-powered carrier and other ships.
- 46) Surface to Air Missiles (SAMs) becoming a problem for helicopter pilots in Iraq.
- 47) Defense Business Board considering outsourcing military mail service.



Prepaid Military Phone Cards



We are still looking for members to let us know about relatives or neighbors who are serving in either Operation Iraqi Freedom or Afghanistan. Please send us their APO or FPO address and tell us whether the person is serving ashore or afloat.



Chaplain's Corner



I am delighted to announce that our unofficial/ official Association chaplain, Deanna Smitha, Ch, Maj, USAF(ret.) will be writing articles for upcoming issues of the "Nitro Blast". For those who have not met

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Chaplain Smitha, she was Nitro Command Chaplain as a LTJg,CHC,USNR in 1990. Due to an injury sustained while on active duty, her Naval career was cut short. Deanna has served in as chaplain in all branches of the armed forces and retired from the Air Force in 1996.

Being that our crew represents a wide gamut of religious and spiritual background, which is something that I always appreciated and respected among our troops, I might do a short piece making mention of the current controversy across the military services regarding the movement by chaplains from more conservative religious traditions to push the entire chaplain corps toward very narrow, exclusionary stances.

Important to note here is that the chaplain services across the armed forces were under siege and were almost dismantled during the period of the late '70s/early '80s because some groups in the nation felt that having a chaplain corps AT ALL in the military was in violation of constitutional guarantees regarding the "establishment of religion by the state".

This argument was taken clear to the U.S. Supreme Court, argued there by one of the most incredible legal and theological minds of our day, a certain Brig. Gen. chaplain with a concurrent law background, who, as it was, of the Jewish faith tradition and served the military out of that tradition. The "right of free exercise" of one's faith while part of the military was once again reaffirmed, while at the same time making it clear that those serving as chaplains in the U.S. Armed Forces would be totally out of line and in violation of that "right of free exercise of religion" if the chaplain were to proselytize the chaplain's own faith tradition, or for the chaplain NOT to facilitate the proper exercise of the servicemember's own faith background/system/theology.

Interesting how thing can be very differently interpreted by different segments of our society over time. :)

Cheers,
Deanna



****TAPS****



The listing(s) are of former USS Nitro (AE-2) or (AE-23) crew members, which we have received since our last posting:

Leonard Watson, MM1c, (AE-2) passed away Nov. 6, 2002
Henry Jakubowski, BM2c, (AE-2) passed away Feb. 23, 2006
Elaine Olson, LT, (AE-23) passed away March 4, 2006



Nitro Membership Update



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USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association membership continues to grow. ***Our membership roll (cumulative total from '98 to present) now stands at 278.*** The following shipmates (Nitro tour dates) have signed on as members during the month indicated:

February, March - None

April - Howard Schriefer, P.E. (Ship Superintendent, Maryland Shipbuild/Drydock); John Falberg (60-62)

Anyone desiring to become a member of the USS NITRO Association may do so by sending a **check made payable to:**

USS NITRO Association
% Mr. Robert Peiffer
PO Box 1254
Mishawaka, Indiana 46546-1254

2005 Association Dues are \$24.15 (including S/H of Assn. Packet). The dues packet will include a high quality Nitro Association cloisonné lapel pin, quarterly newsletters, membership certificate (for **new** members only), crewmembers directory and a laminated membership card.

There are also Associated Membership dues available for spouses of former or deceased USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) crew members, children of former or deceased crew members or for any former U. S. Navy personnel having an interest in or desire to join the USS Nitro Association. This classification would allow those members to receive a membership certificate & card and 4 quarterly newsletters each year (***dues premiums and crewmember directory will not be included in this classification.***) The cost of the Associate Membership will be \$14.20 (\$12.50 dues + \$1.70 S/H) per calendar year.

The Nitro Sage

"You know you're a Sailor when . . ."

You can swear for five minutes straight without repeating yourself.

You still roll your socks and hospital-corner your sheets.

Now a bit of Naval history - ***What is a clothes stop?***
A clothes stop is a small diameter cord about 12 inches long with metal ends to keep the cord from fraying. This short cord was used to tie laundry to a clothesline or other

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convenient object for drying. Every recruit was issued a length of clothes stops in boot camp instead of clothes pins. They ceased to be issued in 1973.



A Final Thought



April already? Wow, a couple more months and the reunion will be taking place. If you are planning to attend, time to get your reservations made. For those of you who are using the NitroCrewmembers chat line, and are wondering how members of your particular crew are doing, the reunion is a great time to catch up on what has happen over the years.

By now you have heard that the Association may have "found" one of the Nitro's motor whaleboats and that the museum in Nitro, WV. , might become a "permanent home" for the ever growing number of artifacts from our beloved ships.

For those of you attend the reunions and would like to see something in print in your local newspaper, please contact me (EBB23@aol.com) and I'll see if they will publish an article and mention your name. I'll need the email address or snail mail address. This another way to get the Association out to another possible member who has not heard of us.

With the news of a possible sighting of one of the Nitro's whale boats, I have noticed that there has been some discussion between boat crew members on different incidents connected to these craft. I would hope the members are taking time to place stories on their computers and down loading to hard copy or files. The Association is in need of such stories for the history of AE-2 & AE-23. Let's don't let the stories go unpublished and die with time.

Please remember our service personnel who man-the-watch in your thoughts and prayers.

Fair winds and following seas,
Bob Eberlein, Founder, USS Nitro Association.



USS Nitro Web Site



The place for frequent updates on the Nitro reunion, association and other related activities:

<http://www.ussnitro.org>