



Nitro Blast

The Newsletter of the
USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23)
Association
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Assn. Membership 297

"A 'Show Me' Reunion"

Keep the Memories Alive



Branson Reunion



"Military Friendly" is a very good description of Branson, MO. American flags adorn almost every building in this town of 6,000 residents. With over 8 million visitors coming to this small town within a nine-month period each year, one is really compelled to find out why.

My understand is that Tony Orlando is one of the primary personalities to promote the honoring of veterans who visit Branson, and this practice is evident at every performance at every show in this small SW Missouri town.

Branson may not be the easiest reunion town to reach, for those having to travel great distances, but it is well worth the effort. The best judge of the popularity of a reunion location is found in the testimonials from our fellow Navy association members having held recent reunions there. Both Bob Eberlein and I have received many positive comments about reunions that have been held in Branson.

Having just returned from my hotel site visits to Branson, I can say without reservation if you can't find anything to do in Branson you probably have your eyes closed. Shows from the styles of Andy Williams and The Lawrence Welk Show to Rock and Roll to Country & Western or Gospel abound.

If shows are not your particular cup of tea, you can find plenty of places to golf, go fishing or spend a day at Silver Dollar City (a cross between Disneyland and Six

Flags set in an 1800s theme). There are plenty of antique and craft shops and loads of shopping centers.

If you want to see an American town wrapped in Red, White and Blue, visit Branson!

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The reunion will be held Thursday, 19 June through Sunday, 22 June 2008. While our schedule of activities are still somewhat up for grabs, Saturday we will hold our wreath laying ceremony at the Branson Belle Showboat's landing, just prior to taking a two hour luncheon/show cruise on Table Rock Lake. For all of our group activities taking place away from our hotel, we will travel by chartered motor coach.

* For those of you who might not remember, **Show Me** is the State of Missouri's nickname.

✂ Reunion Headquarters ✂

While in Branson, the Branson Towers, (web site: <http://www.bransontowers.com/>) will serve as our reunion headquarters. In choosing the Branson Towers



to host our reunion, it offered the best combination of ease of access, room rate, appealing décor, while maintaining its small "local" hotel flavor. You will find any number of places (lobby and staircase landings) and the

hotel's interior courtyard (which surrounds the pool building) to hold private conversations with shipmates you haven't seen for sometime.

While not on "the strip" (Hwy 76), the hotel is within easy driving distance of most shows and attractions. Shopping in the immediate area covers anything from Kmart to The Shoppes at Branson Meadows and restaurants from The All American Café to Wendys, KFC and Long John Silvers.

We have reserved a block of 30 rooms. The special guestroom rate for a spacious "Double Queen" standard room, with occupancy of up to four people per room, for the reunion is \$59.95/per night plus tax. There are also a limited number of "King" standard non-smoking room available for the group rate of \$69.95/per night plus tax. The room rates also includes a complimentary deluxe continental breakfast, and there is a restaurant on premises for a more complete breakfast. If you want to reserve a "King" room, don't wait to reserve your room because they will go fast.

For families or extended families, Branson Towers has a limited number of two-room suites, which will sleep a minimum of 6 comfortably for \$40/night additional. Limited smoking rooms are available but the majority of the guestrooms are non-smoking rooms. Handicap rooms are available as well. ***Anyone requiring special assistance should inform the hotel when making reservations.***

Each person will be responsible for making their reservations and may do so by calling the Branson Towers at 800-683-1122 or 417-336-4500. The Branson Inn should be ready to take our reservations anytime after Thanksgiving, so please wait until that time to place your reservations

When placing your reservation for the 2008 reunion, let the reservation clerk know you want to reserve a room for the **USS Nitro Association** reunion for "x" number of nights. Your credit card will not be charged until you check out and you may cancel your reservations up to 48 hours prior to the day of your arrival. Additional room nights, before or after the reunion, may be made at our reunion group rate on an "as available" basis.

Another Nitro Skipper Located

We are pleased to let the former crewmembers that served with Commanding Officer Howard Loving (80 - 82) know that he has just joined the Nitro Association.

The Crows Nest

Reunion DVD: The 2007 Washington, DC Reunion DVD will available shortly for purchase from the Ship's Store. The DVD will be approximately 1 hour in length and include both video and still pictures of activities and sights from this year's reunion.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy of the DVD, please send your payment of \$15.00 to:
USS Nitro Association
PO Box 1254
MISHAWAKA, IN 46546-1254

Navy Times Article Recap

- 1) Only about 13 percent of post Vietnam era have health insurance.
- 2) Test scores and evals to play larger part in advancement formula.
- 3) Navy plans perks to keep valued sailors in Navy. Will pay up to \$90K to keep sailors with critical ratings.
- 4) Black Sea training to spreads word about "1,000 ship navy" to new allies.
- 5) Military to receive a 3.5% rise in basic pay for 2008.
- 6) From VA: Vets without service-connected ailments could face longer waits. House OKs expanding WWII vets benefits.
- 7) SECNAV unhappy with amphib ship builder. Third LPD clean-sweeps builder's trials, unlike first two LPDs which are still beset with problems.
- 8) Shipyard bosses blast back about Navy late design modifications as a big part of cost overruns.
- 9) Navy reviewing workout clothing. Could include running suits. First PT uniform approved.
- 10) Admirals to review new maritime strategy. First since late 1980s. Must project US ideals no just react to threats.
- 11) Carrier JFK Philly mothball delayed, now in Norfolk.
- 12) Two new UK aircraft carriers ordered. Flattop style decked carrier will replace ski-jump style carriers.
- 13) Navy creates new PT standards and starts enforcing old ones.

- 14) Navy buys 2 Swedish shallow water boats for Riverine Combat Boat units. Riverine Squadron 1 returns from first Iraq seven-month deployment.
- 15) San Diego - new ship simulator so realistic it can make you seasick.
- 16) New class of cruisers (14 to 25,000 ton) on Navy drawing boards. Looking at replacing gunpowder projectile guns with electronic railguns firing projectiles capable of a range of 250 miles.
- 17) Persian Gulf vets and medical experts urge Congress for more action on Gulf War Syndrome.
- 18) Admiral Gary Roughhead nominated as next CBO. Could place more focus on Pacific Theater of ops.
- 19) HMCS Stephen Murray received Bronze Star with 'V' for work in Afghanistan.
- 20) Navy divers help in Minnesota bridge collapse searches.
- 21) Navy ship discovers WW2 mine during Black Sea ops. Navy divers find Vietnam era rockets in SE Georgia river.
- 22) British/US N combine ships in joint carrier task force exercise.
- 23) USS Wasp to carry V-22 Osprey to Iraq for first deployment.
- 24) New postage rates makes sending packages to troops more costly. Congress being asked to allow discount for these packages.
- 25) Quality of submarine prop photo draws questions about satellite images available to civilian community.
- 26) Army engineers warn that Mosul, Iraq dam is going to collapse, which could endanger city of 2 million.
- 27) Australian Navy reported to be facing severe crew shortages.
- 28) 10,000 sailors unable to take leadership course needed for advancement because of their commander's decisions.
- 29) Joint public-private Hampton Roads housing venture in works for "single" ship-board junior enlisted, who now must live on board ship when in port. Editor's note: **"What?"**.
- 30) Great Lake recruits get hands on Battle Stations training (from flooding, fire fighting and mass casualty drills to standing bridge watches) on board \$82.5 million Trayer ship simulator.
- 31) Former San Diego RTC training ship, Recruit, has become California historic monument.
- 32) Reduction of 18,000 enlisted billets over next six year to hit sea/shore rotations and advancements hard. Hardest hit ratings are personnel specialists, engineering and combat systems.
- 33) USAF struggling for explanation of nuke bombs being flown over USA.
- 34) 5 T-AKE (dry cargo ships) planned to be built for \$2.5 billion.
- 35) Senate OKs \$109B for VA and military construction.
- 36) Iraq fails most benchmarks, set by US, to show political and military progress.
- 37) USCG's first 418-foot cutter nears completion.
- 38) CO of USS Constitution (1800s frigate) fired for assault, cruelty and maltreatment.
- 39) Decommissioned destroyer tender Acadia may become shelter for homeless in Hawaii.
- 40) Seabees re-establish NMCB11, which was disbanded in 1969.
- 41) Navy to wear test new WW2 style khaki uniforms for officers and CPOs while enlisted will see new "whites" with blue piping on cuffs and bib and side zipper blouse. Thirteen buttons on blues pants to be decorative only (hidden zipper).
- 42) Presidential commission offers plan to fix military disability system. Recommends revision of VA rating system.
- 43) Blackwater Security under scrutiny after Baghdad shootout.
- 44) Women in uniform cite extended deployments and military conflict with marriage and children as reason for leaving services.
- 45) DOD undecided on which service will gain command for UAVs.
- 46) Google Earth satellite notices Navy barracks arranged in shape of swastika. Navy to spend \$600 million to modify.
- 47) Ford class carrier to cost more than projected \$11 billion.
- 48) Progress on Walter Reed Hospital infrastructure and patient care is coming along very slowly.
- 49) Navy decommissions last rescue and salvage ship, USS Safeguard. Military Sealift Command will operate with civilian crew.
- 50) Final Arleigh Burke-class DDG is being built at Bath Iron works.
- 51) "Coddled", "unrealistically impatient" and "narcissistic praise junkies" are just a few words, at Navy conference describing the potential recruiting pool of births from mid to late '80s.
- 52) USCG cutter Pacific based CO sacked, citing "lack of confidence" in ability to command
- 53) VA still having problems securing personnel data
- 54) FY 2008 war cost to top \$189 billion.



Prepaid Military Phone Cards



We still have five (ship-to-shore) military prepaid phone cards available to be sent to relatives or neighbors who are serving in the Persian Gulf region. Please send us their complete FPO address. We will place the purchase of additional prepaid phone cards on the agenda for our business meeting.



After a recent opportunity I had to preach in a civilian parish local to a large military base, I attempted to articulate and advance the stance that support for our troops (always a priority in my personal and professional view) may not, and sometimes should not be coincidental to supporting an action or policy which has put our troops - soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardmembers - in harm's way. While some seemed to recognize the possibility that these two issues might not go hand-in-hand, others seemed to reflect that support for one side of these MUST be tied to the other inseparably.

Having a substantial period of my military consciousness being occupied with the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and southeast Asia, I was reminded of the great error projected upon many of our troops who fought honorably and came home-or not--because of the view of our presence there. Those who vilified the war seemed to also project the same feelings upon those who served, and there has been tremendous negativity even amongst vets in regards to their feelings about involvement in that conflict. Our Vietnam vets have had to deal with the mental and emotional fallout of the seemingly inability of major segments of our population who can't separate the troops from the policy/action into which they are called to serve.

As mounting opposition to the current southwestern Asian military efforts has surfaced, both in the population and in Congressional circles, we hear echoes of "to support our troops you MUST support the war" segment of thought versus concern for the welfare of the troops which will not again heap stigma of guilt and wrongdoing upon our troops honorably serving in a very difficult, complicated and tenuous military effort. It has not been our troops who have made the decisions to do what they have had to accomplish and deal with. That's way above most of their pay grades. Yet they serve with extraordinary skill, courage, fortitude and faithfulness. Our service members are awesome!

Despite whatever outcome, or length of time this conflict might continue, may we once again

contemplate and put into action attitudes and actions which lift up the welfare and well-being of our American fighting forces, and not try to tie that welfare to the successes or non-successes of those who the electorate has chosen to call the shots and "lead" us in the prosecution/execution of the policies and actions of the conflict. It is my hope and prayer that we, as a people and a nation, can grow beyond our previous mistakes and misgivings, and give our troops, first and foremost, the backing and support they deserve, regardless of other factors.

Fair winds and following seas in your endeavors, continuing to serve the fleet and "making the critical difference.

Grace and peace....

Chaps...

****T A P S****

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

None this quarter

From Navy Times: *Little Known Honor for Vets !*

An engraved Presidential Memorial Certificate is available to families of deceased, honorably discharged veterans by contacting the closest national cemetery or VA center.

A form for the certificate can also be downloaded from:

<http://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-0247.pdf>



Nitro Membership Update



USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association membership continues to grow. ***Our membership roll (cumulative total from '98 to present) now stands at 297.*** The following shipmates (Nitro tour dates) have signed on as members during the month indicated:

September: Howard Loving, Commanding Officer, AE-23 (80-82)

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

2007 Association Dues are \$24.60 (including S/H of Assn. Packet). The dues packet includes a "challenge coin" of either the AE-23 or AE-2 (your choice), quarterly newsletters, membership certificate (for **new** members only), crewmembers directory and a laminated membership card. Additional challenge coins of either the AE-2 or AE-23 may be purchased for an additional \$10.50 (S/H included) as long as supplies last. These coins will not be reordered - when they are gone, they are gone!

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 are not included in this classification**). The cost of the Associate Membership will be \$14.50 (\$12.50 dues + \$2.00 S/H) per calendar year.

The Nitro Sage

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

You continue to fold your skivvies as you were instructed in boot camp.

The ships you served on are now war memorials or tourist attractions.



A Final Thought



Good Grief Charley Brown, it's that time of year again? Halloween candy and costumes have been replaced with Christmas items already. Animated characters we knew from the 1960s Christmas specials are now selling stuff on the tube. Is there no shame for corporate America? Mail boxes filled with catalogs hoping to make a year end killing. Christmas films beginning to hit the movie houses shortly, somehow Santa Claus seems to change with every movie.

At this Holiday Season, take time to remember others, be it friend, acquaintances or just someone in need of a friendly greeting. For Christians, let's remember what Christmas is all about. And since I do not have knowledge of other religions, or holiday customs, do what is right in your practice.

Another Holiday Season and we still have men and women who are far from home and will have the same feelings as we did as when we served on active duty. All the greeting messages from government officials mean nothing when one is far from the comfort and safety of family and friends. Well, maybe a box of rum balls might help?

From the Association officers, their families, my family, and me we wish you all the best for this Holiday Season and hope to see ya in Branson in June.

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>

