



# Nitro Blast

## Nitro Returns to Seattle

*Keep the Memories Alive*

### Seattle 2009 Reunion

*By Jim Timmons*

**Bremerton** - The Seattle area holds special meaning for our AE-2 members because the USS Nitro (AE-2) was built (1919) and commissioned (1921) at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. The USS Nitro (AE-2) ship's bell is also on display at the Naval Museum in Bremerton.

#### Hotel Selection

We were hoping to have the hotel information available for you in this newsletter; however, we are still reviewing proposals.

The site visits have been completed and we are discussing activities for our Seattle reunion. There is so much to see in the Seattle area, you might want to come to the reunion early or stay late.

Here are a few suggestions of places you might want to visit: Seattle harbor cruise, Boeing tour, The Museum of Flight and other museums, Mt. Rainier; Space Needle, Underground Seattle tour, baseball at Safeco field, and Pike Place Fish Market (see the throwing of the fish).

Some of the places mentioned above will be included in our tour. All of the details and more should be available on the USS Nitro Association website: [www.ussnitro.org](http://www.ussnitro.org) and our Yahoo NitroCrewmembers web site: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NitroCrewmembers/> shortly or will be sent to you by email or USPS as soon as they become available.

We will be blocking a group of 25 guestrooms for Thursday night (18 June), through Saturday night with checkout on Sunday (21 June). There will also be a group of 10 rooms reserved for early arrivals on Wednesday.

As we have done in the past, Friday and Saturday will be tour days. We are attempting to setup a visit to one of naval stations in the Seattle area where we hope to hold our wreath laying ceremony, take a tour and have lunch at one of the mess halls. The other day will be a tour of downtown Seattle (exact details to be determined).

#### Nitro annual meeting and dinner

We will, of course, hold our annual business meeting and dinner, and again hold our raffle/auction after dinner. Attendees are encouraged to bring a Nitro or navy related item for our auction. This event has become very popular, and half of the proceeds will go to a local military non-governmental funded charity. *(Seattle Cont'd Page 2)*

### Cruisebook to CD Project

*By Jim Timmons*

Just imagine the song "Memories" playing in the background as you read this article!

Does anyone wish now they had a copy of a cruisebook or two from the time you were on board Nitro? Well in the not too distant future you might be able to obtain one.

We are considering requests from members to make copies of cruisebooks available through the ship's store. With the help of our former shipmates, we would like to make this happen. The Association would like to "borrow", from our members, cruisebooks that we currently do not have.

Copies of the pages, from these borrowed cruisebooks, would then be made by either taking pictures of/or scanning the pages. Once the pages have been copied, we would then transfer them to CDs.

Each of the ship's divisions would have their own section and a separate section *(Cruisebooks Continued on page 3)*

### Inside this Edition

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Editor: Jim Timmons

Association Membership 314

1	2009 Seattle Reunion
1	Cruisebook Project
2	AE-23 Scrapping Update
2	Active Duty Membership
3	Veterans Records
3	T-shirt Contest
3-4	Navy Times Article Recaps
4	Nitro Membership Update
5	Guest Columnist
6	Chaplains Corner
6	A Final Thought

Newsletter of the  
USS Nitro Association

PO Box 1254

MISHAWAKA IN 46546-1254

(Seattle) *Continued from Page 1*

We are very anxious to see what kind of attendance we can generate for this reunion and would like to get the word out to all of the former Nitro crewmembers living in the Western region of the US. So, anyone knowing a former crewmember living in the West is encouraged to contact them. We will also be sending notices of the Seattle reunion to many of the newspapers on the West Coast and in the western part of the US.

If anyone has any questions concerning next year's reunion, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

## AE-23 Scrapping Update

By Jim T.

Unfortunately, there is no update on the "recycling" of the USS Nitro (AE-23). We have placed several phone calls and sent several emails to the top officials at ESCO Marine in Brownsville, Texas, as well as contacting other individuals in the ship recycling industry, without receiving any reply concerning the time line for the scrapping of the USS Nitro (AE-23).

This is particularly disappointing because of the cooperation we received prior to the Nitro being towed to Brownsville. A formal letter to the President of ESCO Marine, on behalf of the members of the USS Nitro Association, is now being drafted, with the hope that it will generate a positive response.

If and when we receive a reply, it will be printed in the *Nitro Blast* and posted on the Nitro Association web site:

[www.ussnitro.org](http://www.ussnitro.org)

## AE-23 Active Duty Members

( *Looking to the Future* )

By Jim Timmons

As mentioned in our last newsletter, the Nitro Association has set aside funds for any active duty sailors, who served on board USS Nitro (AE-23), to become fully paid members of the Association, if they wish. The active duty person would need to supply the Association with a copy of their military ID (to show active status) as well as a copy of their NAVPERS 1070/605 entitled "History of Assignments".

### Getting the Word Out!

It is our goal to reach as many people who have served aboard Nitro and are still on active duty as possible, and your help is required to do so. If you know

of any former shipmates who are still on active duty, please contact them and let them know about our offer.

We will be submitting an article to the *Navy Times* about our active duty memberships. If there are any other publications that are read by active duty personnel, please let us know about them, or feel free to submit an article. Local and metropolitan newspapers might also be an outlet for this information as well.

### The Nitro Family

If nothing else, we want to let these active duty sailors, who are members of our Nitro family, know we are thinking about them and supporting them in their military endeavors. If not now, at some point in the future, they will reflect on their time aboard Nitro, and we want to be there to help wherever possible. This is just another example of how we are following our motto of "*Continuing Service to the Fleet*"

### *The Crow's Nest - News for and about Crewmembers*



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

David Peschek, RM3 (AE-23) (1967-69)

#### Nitro Assn. News and Notes

As always, we are trying to keep our database records up to date, so if you could take some time to review your listing in the 2008 Crewmember Directory we would appreciate it. Please notify us of any changes that need to be made so the listing can be correct for the 2009 directory, which will be printed next April.

#### The Nitro Sage

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

*You have tattoos for every port you've visited and cruise you went on, and when you tell the story of how you got them, it begins with "Well, we started drinking at this bar and ...."*

*You put out a Plan of the Day at home!*

(Cruise books Continued from Page 1)

would contain the cruise photos, possibly with some period music playing in the background.

We would like to make this a "first-class" project (no pun intended). So if you would be willing to "lend" us your cruisebooks, please let me know what cruise or cruises you have. The Nitro Association has cruisebooks from the following cruises: 1968-69 Med cruise, 1970-71 Med cruise and the 1995 decommissioning Crews Book.

There are a lot of memories out there just waiting to be shared with your former shipmates, so please give **Project - Cruisebook to CD** some serious consideration. I know that these books are valuable to you and we will make every effort to make sure they are not damaged in anyway.

## Veterans' Records

*From Veteranprogram.com*

HOUSTON, TX (October 21, 2008) In order to alleviate the strain on the National Personnel Records Commission (NPRC), and Veterans Affairs (VA), U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs introduced today that veterans can permanently store their service medical records (SMR), legal records, or military records in their new, user-friendly, Records Archive Division (RAD).

Too often we hear stories from veterans around the world that their service medical records have been misplaced or lost - that is unacceptable, stated Michael Clark, RAD Director

Using RAD, veterans can also gain access to their records with promptness and accuracy. According to VA (*Veterans Continued on Page 4*)

## Nitro Association T-Shirt Contest

*Jim T.*

We have had requests from our Association members to add T-shirts to our Ship's Store. At this year's reunion in Branson, I brought the subject up at the Annual meeting and passed around an example of what the T-shirt might look like. It was decided at that meeting to make a contest out of the design process, so that is what this article is about.

We would like to come up with a design for two T-shirts (one for the AE-2 and another for the AE-23). These are T-shirts for these ships, not necessarily about the USS Nitro Association. Using the ship's hull numbers, profile or other suitable ship's pictures, come up with a design and a color scheme that would compliment a white T-shirt.

We are considering a blue T-shirt as well; however, some colors do not silkscreen as well as others so for now we will work on coming up with a white T-shirt design.

A prize or two (to be determined) will await the winner or winners of the contest. So, put your thinking caps on, get your family involved - husband or wife, girl or boyfriends, kids or grandkids - it doesn't matter as long as we come up with a novel way to celebrate these two great ships and the crews who sailed aboard them.

Please send your artwork to the Association or myself. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. My phone and email address is in the Crewmember directory. Please submit your entries by 29 February 2009. A decision will be made in March and hopefully we will have T-shirts for sale at our Seattle reunion.

### Navy Times Article Recaps

- 1 Opportunity for E-7 drops for 3<sup>rd</sup>. straight year. New Chief evals to reflect updated standards of MCPON.
- 2 President Bush nominates first woman to rank of four star General.
- 3 Navy has little to tell about nex-gen cruiser program labeled CG(X).
- 4 ACLU becomes involved in prayers at Naval Academy.
- 5 Navy holds missile defense exercises in Gulf region near Iran.
- 6 Ship name 'America' to live on as Amphib assault ship.
- 7 Obama interviewed by Navy Times. Full transcript at [www.navytimes.com](http://www.navytimes.com)
- 8 Rave reviews for newest USCG cutter.
- 9 New E-6 and below, khaki shirt & black trouser, service uniform became available July 31.
- 10 Cities might bid to host Army-Navy football game in future.
- 11 Future LHAs may have civilian crews.
- 12 French nuke sub takes part in global anti-sub training exercise.
- 13 Last regular-enlisted active duty USCG Vietnam vet retires
- 14 New Ensigns to get 4-week SWO course before joining fleet.
- 15 Zumwalt X1000 class DDG limited to 3. Updated Burke class to be built.
- 16 New 9/11 GI Bill to take effect Aug 09. Not all happy with contents.
- 17 National War Powers Commission suggests scrapping 1973 War Powers Act in favor of War Powers Consultation Act of 2008.
- 18 Top JAG billet to become 3-stars.
- 19 Recruiting duty now open to E-4s.
- 20 The naval term "Shipmate" comes under fire.
- 21 Proposed bill could restore Agent Orange related benefits.
- 22 Congressional panel reviewing "don't ask" policy.
- 23 Increased use of bombs in Afghanistan due to lack of foot soldiers.
- 24 Carrier USS George Washington's skipper and XO fired after investigation of fire on board carrier. Six other sailors punished as well.
- 25 All military branch corpsman training moving to San Antonio. Plans to widen recruitment of medical staffs.
- 26 Gen. Petraeus to head up US Central Command.
- 27 Carrier USS Kitty Hawk to be decommissioned in Bremerton, WA, January 09 after ten years in Japan.
- 28 James River Ghost Fleet has only 34 ships remaining.

(Veterans *Continued from Page 3*) statistics, it can take a veteran up to six months to get their records after a request has been made. Using our service, a veteran can receive their records in three business days or less, Clark added.

For veterans working on a service-connected benefits claim, a Veteran Service Officers (VSO) access to a veterans service medical records is vital. Getting civilian medical records is just as important. Rather than contacting multiple agencies to request records, a veteran can make one stop and have their records faxed or mailed to the agency of their choice.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) entitles veterans to have copies of their medical records on request. Through RAD, veterans have access to any of their personnel records stored with speed, efficiency, and accuracy. A veteran can also request to have their records sent to any agency or provider in a timely manner. Veterans may also supply contact information to their providers and have them fax records to RAD for immediate security and storage.

*About U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs:* Launched in March 2007, U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs researches and distributes compensable benefits information to U.S. veterans. Also, they are a major conduit for free services available to veterans.

*Contact:*

Beth Ann McGruder  
U.S. Veteran Compensation Programs  
info@veteranprograms.com or  
<http://www.veteranprograms.com>

## Nitro Association Membership Update

USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association membership continues to grow. ***Our membership roll (cumulative total from***

**29** DoD looking at revamping number of years needed for retirement. Possible reduction to 10 yrs service.  
**30** Navy PR tasks may be outsourced.  
**31** Minor radiation leak on board sub USS Houston upsets Japan.  
**32** SEALs open doors to USCG.  
**33** New Navy PT gear draws flack from sailors. Revisions on the way.  
**34** Navy to use automated and unmanned systems more in future.  
**35** USS Intrepid museum carrier returns to pier 81 in NYC.  
**36** American Airlines waives luggage fees for troops.  
**37** Bunker Hill class cruisers set for series of upgrades over next 5 years.  
**38** Navy Sea-Shore enlisted rotations to be for fixed period of time and an attempt to more equally balance.  
**39** USCG looks to streamline command structure over next 5 years.  
**40** New Amphib ships having problems passing InSurv inspections.  
**41** Problems reported with military receiving absentee ballots.  
**42** Sailors advancing in pay grade may not be able pin on new rank until leadership courses completed  
**43** New memorial honors Pentagon 9/11 victims.  
**44** USAF have more problems with nukes. Missile officers receive NJP for falling asleep while on duty.  
**45** Military Sealift Command RADM fired for drunkenness and sexual advances toward subordinate.  
**46** Navy attempt at ships going from payday cash to electronic cash cards (Navy Cash) running afoul of GAO.  
**47** USS Pueblo sailors remember CDR Bucher at New Hampshire reunion.  
**48** AT&T and AAFES charged by organization with unfair monopoly phone rates in war zone  
**49** Marine's family will not receive Medal Of Honor after USMC and Dept. of Navy approved it.  
**49** Navy and USCG step up drug enforcement in Gulf of Mexico  
**50** Carrier USS George Washington arrives in Japan.  
**51** Navy set to demolish Cold War era Gunner's Mate School at Great Lakes  
**52** 3.9% pay raise effective Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>.  
**53** Somali pirates attack US fleet oiler but were repelled by security force.

**'98 to present) now stands at 314.** The following shipmates (Nitro tour dates) have signed on as members during the month indicated:

**August:** Joe Price, EM3 (70-72)

**September:** Michael Sanyk, MM2 (68-71)

**October:** Roger Sherwood, MM2 (68-72)

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

***2008 Association Dues are \$25.00 (including S/H of Assn. Packet).*** The dues packet includes an USS Nitro Association "challenge coin" (Nitro Assn. crest on one side and the US Navy emblem on the other side. Coin will have rope edging), quarterly newsletters, membership certificate (for **new** members only), crewmembers directory and a laminated membership card.

Additional AE-2, AE-23 or Nitro Association challenge coins may be purchased for \$10.50 each (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 and/or children of former or deceased USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) crewmembers 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 is \$14.80 (\$12.50 dues + \$2.30 S/H) per calendar year.

## Guest Columnist

*Juan Reyes-Matos, Association Trustee*

It was sometime during the winter of 1963, that the US NAVY sent me a post card inviting me to visit their Naval Reserve facility. I always wanted to be a Marine just as my brother was during the Korean War, but the Navy had a head start. So, it was on February 12, 1963 that I proudly became part of the Naval reserve, signing for 6 yrs along with other classmates and friends. Vietnam War was on going, and that gave me a reason to really go and defend our great Nation and to help other achieve freedom as we Americans have enjoyed.

After a year and half of drilling once a month and going to 2 weeks cruises on destroyers, I finally went on active duty. A month in NY receiving station sweating the long mess cook duty and anxiously waiting for my order to the future mysterious ship, IT ARRIVED!!!. Orders to the USS NITRO (AE-23). Boy!! Was I bombarded with question and comments from others sailors. Ammunition ship???? Tough duty! Feel sorry for you, and won't wish it on anyone else. I couldn't wait to be on board the Nitro and see for myself the agony that I will have to endure.

Flew to Rota Spain and stayed there for another month waiting for further orders. Sailors came and sailors went and I was still in Rota. Perhaps the Nitro was not ready for Juan dynamite, aha!!! Finally I landed in Livorno, Italy where duty assignment awaited me all this time (I don't know how they functioned without me all this time!). "Request permission to come aboard", I saluted the OOD. "Permission granted!!!!". "Where have you been Sailor?" "Oh!! Here and there I answered". (he laughed). What a

beauty!! Biggest ship I ever being on. Was assigned to First Div. (deck). They needed expertise and good humor (not the ice cream). At any rate, it was there that I became part of a family of strangers who extended their hands and taught me how to be a full time sailor.

The Nitro was now my home away from home. It was there that I learned to share and learned to get along with so many other sailors that when the chips were down they will help you get up and set you straight. Howard Root was my next bunk buddy and one of the first to really make me feel at home. One of my duties was keep the compartment



clean. I was a very Happy sailor, nothing bother me, and laughter was priority. Became the First Lieutenant's Yeoman and I

was the ship's interpreter when on Spanish port (I don't know who interpreted for me). Three Med cruises, Curacao cruise and others. I received my first field injury (no Purple Heart) while stealing second base at Nitro softball game. (too bad)

I remember the first time I met Capt. Stickles; it was during a Thanksgiving dinner in the mess hall. I was sitting on the long booth type seat and music was playing. As a happy fellow that I am, I was dancing (bouncing) with the music and as I bounce the seat made the Capt. bounce also. He looked at me and said "Happy sailor, yes sir I replied" not knowing who he was. Can you imagine this? Think about it!!!. Any way, he liked me and I like him. One time while replenishing, I was the line tender for the load going across. Rough sea, windy and the 500 lbs. bombs were swaying uncontrollable, and at one

time, I couldn't hold it any more and when it was ready to hit the railing I let go of the rope. Speedy Gonzalez was not match for me, and ran toward the fantail just in case they went off. (sorry!!) .

Another time, as I was standing watch over the winch reel (for breakaway emergency), there was a fire below my station. The firefighter put the fire out without given it a second thought. My trust on my peers and fellow sailor during that dangerous event , strengthened my faith and tells me the character of those who put their lives at risk for the sake of others and the ship. I have nothing but to be proud of the men that I served with in Nitro. I miss her.

I wish that some day, some how I can have a piece of her for my memories. However, it is my memories that live within me. Nitro was good to me, the officers and enlisted men that serve aboard her are one of a kind. There is so much to write, but not enough space to detail my feeling for the Nitro. Under the command of Capt. Stickles, the Nitro was the safer place to be. The home away from home. Nitro you will always be in my heart. THANK YOU for being my home away from home. Thank you for the values, strength, and commitment you bestowed on all of us. To my shipmates, thank you!

NITRO, because of you, we who serve on board are still together thru the Association to continue to share your service to the fleet. You might be gone, but not FORGOTEN.

FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS,

Juan Reyes-Matos  
1964-66, YN 3  
Fist Div.

## Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Deanna Smitha

Our nation has once again successfully survived the multi-faceted endeavor of a general election. The anticipation of a new president/commander in chief at the helm of our country weighs heavily upon the minds of many, in the midst of incredible trials and challenges to be faced in the days ahead.

Our troops overseas and at home will follow the orders and directives set before them in the coming days, just as they have done so faithfully in the past. The direction/ scope/ goals of the newly elected administration will become

clearer in the days ahead, and the impact they will have on us all—and especially those whose lives are in harm's way—will be monumental.

No matter what side of personalities and ideologies you have favored through the election, we are now called to not be “red-states” or “blue-states,” but the UNITED STATES. This sentiment was echoed by both candidates at the pinnacle of the election process, and is sage advice to us all. To move forward, as we are known to do and be as Americans, we MUST come together and be that “united” nation—while able to disagree at times—and bind ourselves together for the common good.

I believe that our message in this moment needs to remain simple and focused. The message to ourselves and to the world must be of strength, purpose, and unified resolve.

May God continue to give our leaders and our country strong resource and direction in the days, weeks and months ahead.

Fair winds and following seas, and richest blessings to you and yours.....

*Grace and peace....*

Chaps...

### *A Final Thought*

For you political junkies, earth calling, come home. Veteran Day has now passed and I hope you had the day off to attend an activity so you could get a heart-felt thanks from the rest of the populace.

Turkey day (Thanksgiving) not far off now. Man, were does the time go? With the Holiday Season upon us and the economy circling the drain, for some there seems little to be thankful for. Big lending companies and automobile

manufactures asking for a handout to survive. For Joe the plumber who's unemployed, he's on his own.

In my local area we have one US Army unit arriving home and another one getting ready to deploy. No matter what time of year it is, there will always be someone who is manning the watch. Be it Army, Air Force, US Marines, US Coast Guard and of course, the US Navy. So as we celebrate the Holidays, let's remember all of them and their families.

Next year the Association will be in Seattle, Washington, so let's be making plans to meet there, especially the West Coast members.

From the other Association officers, our families, we wish each and every one, a joyous Holiday Season. Bless you all.

***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.