



Nitro Blast

JAX Port Call in June

Keep the Memories Alive

Make Your Jax Reservations Now!

If you have not yet made your reservation for the Jacksonville reunion, now is the time to do so. The Nitro Association has blocked a group of 25 guestrooms for Wednesday, 16 June (for early arrivals) and 35 guestrooms for each night - Thursday, Friday and Saturday (17 - 20 June). Our guestroom rate is \$89.00/night for 2 adults and children 18 years old or younger. Included with the room rate is a full breakfast buffet for two adults per room.

The group rate is available for up to 3 days prior to and 3 days after the reunion. Each person will be responsible for making his or her reservations. Individuals may call the hotel's toll free reservations number at 1-800-843-6664, or make your reservations on line at: <http://www.omnihotels.com/FindAHotel/Jacksonville/MeetingFacilities/USSNitro6.aspx>.

When placing your reservation for the 2010 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 till 12 PM (noon) the date of arrival.

Anyone requiring special assistance should inform the hotel when making reservations.

Reservations must be received on or before the cutoff date of **5/26/2010**. On the cutoff date, all unreserved guestrooms will be released back to the hotel for resale. Reservations received after the cutoff date will be accepted on a space and rate available basis.

HOTEL PARKING: Special parking arrangements have been made at PROPARK PARKING located on Water Street adjacent to the hotel. Parking is \$10.00 per night with "in and out privileges". For those who wish to move their cars in and out of the ProPark lot during their stay at the hotel, a special parking pass is needed. ***In order to receive this discount, Pro Park must be used and guests must***

register at the hotel prior to parking their car. At that time, the hotel will issue the special parking pass for the guest.

The hotel's parking garage is also available for our group's parking and the charge is \$12/night. ***if you choose to park your car in the parking garage, you will not have "in and out privileges"***. Valet parking is also available for \$18/night with "in and out" privileges.

Airport Transportation: Express Shuttle (904) 353-8880 provides transportation from Jacksonville Airport to hotels in the Jacksonville area and the charge to the OMNI for 1 person is approximately \$32 and for 2 people would be \$15/pp. The shuttle cost goes down the more people you have in the group. We are also considering a possible shuttle run with the Nitro Duty Car (my van) to pick people up from the airport.

If you plan on flying into Jacksonville, let me know what your itinerary is as soon as possible.

Reunion Updates

Activities Finalized:

We are at the time where deposits for transportation and some activities are being paid by the Association, so if you are coming to Jacksonville for the reunion and haven't done so, please send in your activity payments as soon as possible.

Inside this Edition

April 2010
Volume 12, Issue 4

Editor: Jim Timmons
Association Membership 325

1	Jax Reservations
1 & 2	Reunion Updates
2	Crows Nest & Reunion Drawing
2 & 3	Medical Form
3	IRS Bennies and VA Info
3	Lone Sailor Statue
4	Navy Times Article Recaps
5	Association Membership
5	Guest Columnist
5 & 6	Chaplains Corner
6	A Final Thought

Newsletter of the
USS Nitro Association
PO Box 1254
MISHAWAKA IN 46546-1254

Friday AM: A trip to historical St. Augustine. Once we arrive in St. Augustine, attendees can break up into smaller groups to see whatever they might want to see. Sites visited and lunch would be on your own and we are planning on leaving St. Augustine about 1 PM. Trolley tickets can be purchased for those in our group who want to ride the trolley instead of walking. We need a minimum of 20 people for a group rate; otherwise, individual tickets will cost \$16.95 per person. Let us know if you want trolley tickets.

Friday afternoon we will drive back to Jacksonville via the Atlantic Ocean Hwy A1A. When we get back into the Jacksonville area, we will make a stop by the Atlantic Beach where you could get some ice cream, a beverage, maybe do a bit of shopping and wiggle their toes in the sand for a bit.

Our Friday evening Association dinner is a casual sit-down dinner followed by our raffle and auction, where we will draw a winner for our raffle item (a Lone Sailor snow globe) and auction off items provided by our attendees. Most

of these items are Navy or military related, such as caps, patches, T-shirts, flags, videos. Other non-military auction items have included stained glass, paintings, fishing tackle, golf balls, etc. Auction items do not have to be expensive. So if you would like to donate an item, please bring them to the reunion.

As in the past, half of the money raised, up to \$500, from the raffle/auction will go towards a local Jacksonville non-governmental funded military charity such as the Navy/Marine Corps Relief Fund or the base Chaplain's relief fund. The balance of the money raised from the raffle/auction will either be put in the Nitro Association general fund or an Association named project fund such as our ongoing Prepaid Military Calling Cards fund.

Saturday AM is scheduled for our trip to Naval Station Mayport for the Nitro Association wreath laying ceremony followed by a short tour of the base or ship and lunch at the Ocean Breeze (former "O" Club).

In the afternoon, our group will board the tour boat, *Lady Wyndham*, between 1:30 and 2 PM for a two-hour cruise of the St. John's river. We could also schedule some time either before or after the cruise to visit Jacksonville's Lone Sailor Statue because it is not that far from the boat landing. Upon completion of the cruise, we will return to the hotel for the evening. There is no further activities planned, so you will be free to do as you please Saturday evening.

Golf and/or Fishing:

So far we have had no takers for either the golf (Thursday AM 6/17) or fishing (Wednesday (6/16) outings. If you are interested in fishing, contact either Juan Reyes (203-874-3797) or Paul Licker (321-757-6830). Those interested in golf should contact Steve Tyas at 904-669-5020.

Reunion Drawing

By Nitro Executive Board

Those attendees making their guest room reservations with the Omni Hotel by 21 May 2010 will have their names placed on a list for a special drawing. The drawing will take place prior to the reunion and the winner or winners will be notified at our Friday night Association dinner.

Reunion Medical Forms

By Jim Timmons

As mentioned in the October 2009 issue of the *Nitro Blast*, in case a medical emergency, we are requiring medical forms be filled out for all reunion attendees. If you did not receive a copy of the form, please let me know and make additional copies of the form, if needed.

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:

SC2c Charles Marble (AE-2) WW2; Coxswain George Miller (AE-2) WW2;

The Nitro Sage

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

You ask your kids to pass the 'bug juice'.

You ask your wife when liberty expires.

You tell your kids "your restricted" instead of grounded.

If you do not wish to fill out the form, it must still be returned with the "opt out" clause checkmarked and signed. It is vital for the Nitro Association to have the necessary paperwork, at hand, in order to proceed with any necessary medical treatment or assistance as soon as possible.

Retirement Bennies

*From an article in the Wolcott Post, CT
Provided by Karen Reyes-Benzi*

" Date: Sun, 7 Mar 2010

Even for you younger folks--keep this in mind! If you are or know a vet with these service years, please pass along--

DD FORM 214-SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFIT. Please share this with anyone who's had active duty service between January 1957 to December 31, 2001 and planning for retirement. In a nutshell it boils down to this:

You qualify for a higher social security payment because of your Military service, for active duty time from 1957 through 2001 (the program was done away with 1 January 2002). Up to \$1200 per year of earnings credit credited at time of application - which can make a substantial difference in social security monthly payments upon your retirement. You must bring your DD-214 to the Social Security Office and you must ask for the benefit to receive it!

Social Security website:
<http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm>

This is something to put in your files for when you apply for Social Security down the road. It is NOT just for retirees, BUT anyone who has served on active duty between January 1957 to December 31, 2001.

FYI - this benefit is not automatic, you must ask for it! We've all been on active duty between 1957 and 2001 or know someone who has.

Passing on good information for all you military folks when you apply for social security. I know this may be too early for some of you to think about social security but, keep living and you will reach that age. "

Editor's note: Check out the website for complete details, as you may already be receiving some of these credits.

Important Veterans' Information Center Listings

From Ed Gibbons

Ed has supplied the Nitro Association with a very comprehensive listing of web links to various governmental and Veterans information centers. The list is too long to be printed here but we have made arrangements to put his email and the links on our web site. Please go to www.ussnitro.org/VAbenefits.htm to view the listing of agencies dealing with veterans.

Thanks Ed for supplying this list to our members.

Lone Sailor photo & location



Navy Times Article Recaps

1. Congress looking into problems at Arlington National Cemetery.
2. Two Seabee battalions now active in Afghanistan.
3. Navy plan calls for women to be stationed on four submarines by 2012.
4. SecDef Gates and Joint Chief Chairman ADM Mullen says dropping 'Don't ask, don't tell' policy is the right thing to do. More military leaders speak out in opposition to change in 'Don't ask, don't tell'.
5. Navy to move nuclear carrier to Mayport Naval Station.
6. Navy of 2030 could look quite different than today's navy. Use of lasers and robots for defense
7. Navy scrambles to find ships for European ballistic missile defense.
8. Costs associated with fitting-out new LCS ships continue to rise.
9. Vietnam War was last conflict that saw enlisted battlefield promotions to officer.
10. New woodland and desert cammies coming for sailors.
11. With military suicides on rise, VA discusses update of screening and research.
12. Cruiser CO fired. She was referred to as a 21st. Century "Captain Bligh".
13. Navy at forefront of Haitian medical and supply effort
14. Navy HM1 awarded Silver Star for heroism in Afghanistan.
15. Faulty welds found on LPD cause Navy to require inspections of ships built at two Gulf Coast shipyards.
16. President requests 1.4% pay raise in FY 2011 budget. Lowest increase in pay since 1962.
17. Naval Weapons Station, Charleston CO fired after soliciting a prostitute.
18. Quadrennial Defense Review calls for up to 32 additional warships for Navy by FY '15.
19. Navy establishes 1st. Cyber Command at Ft. Meade, MD. Mission is to defend against attacks on defense computer networks.
20. Naval base at Pearl Harbor and Hickam Air Force Base will merge commands.
21. A recent Military Times poll reports its subscribers (mostly active-duty military) oppose gays serving openly in the military by 51 to 30%.

Navy Times Article Recaps

22. USCG to experience lower budgets and manning levels in near future.
23. Service dress uniforms may return to all military assigned to Pentagon. Fatigues, seen after 9/11, may be on way out.
24. Military shuts down all fast-food restaurants in Afghanistan. No more Big Mac or Whoppers.
25. Carrier-based unmanned jet tests could begin in 2011.
26. New Joint High Speed Vessels, for carrying marines and soldiers, could be in operation by the end of 2011.
27. Effective Sept. 1, operations in Iraq will be changed from "Operation Iraqi Freedom" to "Operation New Dawn".
28. By Sept 30, all paper service records will be converted to digital electronic records.
29. Navy close to having vote on new style enlisted 'Crackerjack' uniform. 13 buttons on trousers will be decorative; there will be a hidden zipper.
30. Two more skippers sacked for inappropriate relationships.
31. JTF F-35 jet test problems delay entry into service by another year. Navy considers pulling out of contract in favor of more F/A-18s.
32. Seabee and Army divers help repair Haiti's main port. Several USCG vessels had problems either before or during Haiti deployment.
33. Navy proposal to name an amphibious ship after the late PA Sen. Murtha draws criticism.
34. After SEAL mini-sub fire and major cost over runs, Navy looking at alternative sub, which offers substantial savings of about \$70M/per sub.
35. A government tuition assistance program for spouses of active duty personnel, temporarily halted, has resumed. Program's boss resigns. Application surge could cost \$2B.
36. Senate committee looking at cuts in active duty personnel and benefits to slow costs in military health care.
37. Defense agencies looking at the correlation between prescription drugs and suicide rate of active duty and recently released military personnel.
38. House and Senate committees hammer Navy brass on ship building cost overruns.
39. VA to re-open claims for ailing Gulf War vets involved in 1991 war.

Navy Times Article Recaps

40. Vietnam veterans groups threaten to sue VA over three Agent Orange related diseases, so those suffering from the disease can get VA benefits. Could be as high as 186,000 claims.
41. LCAC upgrades could keep them in service for another 10 years.
42. Navy envisions the 'riverine' boat squadrons to expand missions, after leaving Iraq and Afghanistan, into humanitarian and other conflicts.
43. If Iran continues with its attempts to make nuclear-grade materials, Obama administration weighing possibility of naval blockade.
44. One Hundred and four F/A-18s grounded because of cracks in airframes.
45. Mayport to be future home of east coast Littoral Combat Ships (LCS).
46. Military continues to face shortages of doctors and nurses.
47. Survey shows that PTSD is a major threat to military marriages.
48. An increase in Honor Code violations at US Naval Academy prompts review of code.
49. Navy hopes that new workout program will cut down work related injuries as well as improve fitness.
50. Size of Navy Consolidated Brig at Miramar will be increased by 50% in order to hold expanding population.
51. Illnesses from Iraqi 'burn pits' similar to those suffered by first responders during 9/11.
52. Many sailors find fault with new Navy Work Uniform. Navy plans some fixes
53. Navy reviews cutter-style frigates as means to fill projected 'small warship' gap in future years.
54. Former SecNavs support idea behind building a National Naval and Maritime Museum in Washington DC
55. SecDef Gates issues first changes in 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'. Major change involves witness credibility and providing statements under oath.
56. Court orders Marine's father to pay damages to funeral protesters.
57. Navy tightens rules on fraternizing for officers and enlisted as well.
58. Command ball caps all but outlawed, except for underway bridge watches and command training teams.
59. USS Harry S. Truman, to use breathalyzers to curb alcohol abuse

Nitro Association 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 325.*** The following shipmates (Nitro tour dates) have signed on as members during the month indicated:

December: Chester LeSage (68-71), Daniel Reiger (70-72), Robert Traugott (68-72)

January: Harold Crook (64-66), Jack Mulhern (71-73),

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

2010 Nitro Assn. Dues Classifications

Regular Association Membership Dues are \$25.00 (including S/H). The dues packet this year will include an USS Nitro Association watch cap (with a silhouette of the USS Nitro (AE-23) and the hull numbers of both the AE-2 and AE-23 directly embroidered on it), quarterly newsletters, membership certificate (for **new** members only), crewmembers directory and a laminated membership card.

Active Duty Membership Dues - FREE

A new classification of dues for former USS Nitro (AE-23) crewmembers, who are still on active duty, has been created. Former Nitro crewmember, still on active duty, will receive the items described in the regular association membership packet at no charge to them. In order to qualify for this classification of membership, the active duty person will 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".

Associated Membership Dues are \$14.80 (\$12.50 dues + \$2.30 S/H) This classification of membership is 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**).

All USS Nitro Association memberships are valid for one calendar year (Jan - Dec.).

Guest Columnist

Ron (Spider) Webb BM3, 1960-63

Hi, I am pleased to pass on a few things that I remember from my time in the Navy and on board the *Nitro*. I arrived at boot camp in December 1959 at Great Lakes north of Chicago, Ill. After boot camp, I was assigned to *USS Nitro (AE-23)*. I spent a few weeks in Norfolk, Va. waiting for transportation to the ship.

I was put on a plane and left for the Med. about the middle of March 1960. I spent a couple of days in Morocco then went to Naples, Italy for a couple days. While in Naples, I had my first liberty in a foreign country (I do not remember a lot about that night) HA HA. I then took a fight to Beirut, Lebanon where I met the *Nitro* the end of March and was put in the First Division. This was all very new to me, as I had never been at sea or this far from home before. I wanted to see and learn everything I could. We hit all the usual ports Gulf Juan, France; Naples Italy; Livorno (Leghorn), Italy and many more. We returned to the U.S. I think in late August or early September to Davisville, RI. We then spent a couple of months in the yards in Boston.



In August 1961, we left for the second Med. cruise. On that deployment, I think it was about November, we were steaming North along the coast of Sardinia or Corsica and we hit a very bad storm. The winds over 100 knots and seas better than 30 to 40 feet high. The forward starboard gun was damaged so badly that the gun could not be rotated. Also two Officers were

badly hurt trying to check the forward ammunition holds. I think it was on this cruise that we saw a large dead whale while in the Med. We returned to the States in late March. In September of 1962, we left for Bremerhaven, Germany and Portsmouth, England. After returning to the U.S., we were deployed to the Caribbean on the Cuban Blockade. After the blockade, we returned to Davisville and got ready for another Med. Cruise.

I got married on January 24, 1963 and left for the cruise on February 6. This was the ship's and my third Mediterranean cruise. I think I enjoyed this cruise the best of the three. We hit two ports that were very nice Rapallo and San Remo, Italy, which were very different from the usual ports of call. I was discharged while the ship was in the yards at Brooklyn, New York in December of 1963.

There were times that I did not like being in the Navy, at the time, but now it does not seem so bad. I guess it gets better with time. I do know one thing; I would not trade one day of being in the Navy or being on the *Nitro* for anything. That was a very special time for me. I met some very good friends that I still have today, and being in the association I have made many new friends. I joined the association in 2002 and have been able to make about six of the reunions since then, and hope to make many more.

Sincerely,
Ron (Spider) Webb BM 3
USS NITRO 1960-1963

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Deanna Smitha

First off, my best wishes to all of you of various faith communities who have celebrated special holy days in recent weeks. It is truly a time of contemplation, reflection and in many

cases, joyous celebration, which are at the basis of our faith journeys.

The world of the mundane has also been very with us in recent days, and if you are like I am, you've been involved in putting the final touches on things like our tax returns and other "mandatory" items of the season. I have a number of friends who work as accountants and tax preparers, and I can assure you, that in the words of almost every one of them—they're killing a lot of trees right now.

On top of the yearly rush to the post office (or now adays, to the e-mail equivalent of filing our returns), 2010 has also brought the once-per-decade event called the National Census. Not only do we send in our tax returns, but we are also called upon by our national government to participate as citizens in counting OUR numbers. The results of the census will be used to prioritize and

direct the efforts of our governments to provide what is needed in services and goods (roads, schools, etc.) in our daily lives.

Both the tax season and the census have been fraught with episodes of people who prey upon others to commit crimes of fraud and larceny. Stealing information often constitutes in other events that may take away hard-earned savings, peoples' homes, and so much more. There are many warnings out there concerning being accurate with the necessary documents submitted to the government, and at the same time not becoming a victim and yet another statistic proving that unscrupulous and just plain "bad" people are out there, and will take advantage of folks where ever they find the opportunity.

My charge to you this month is to continue to be a responsible, caring citizen by doing one's lawful tax duty,

and also to participate in the 2010 Census. My concern is that you do both carefully, truthfully, and at the same time vigilantly, making sure that you don't become a victim of unscrupulous tax preparers/companies or criminals posing as census workers to gain access to your information, your home and belongings, and your livelihood. Allow the mundane to be just that—mundane, and not a time which will present trials and develop difficulties for you and your loved ones.

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

Grace and peace....

Chaps...

A Final Thought

After I left the USS Nitro (AE-23) for Hospital "A" school at Great Lakes, IL, it seemed strange to be a land sailor. The days of haze gray and under way, long hours of UNREP, foreign ports of call and now living in old World War Two plywood buildings that were long past their prime. Story was they could burn down before one could get out it.

My class was the first group to occupy the new male barracks. The new corpsman school building was in the process of being completed. Naval Hospital Great Lakes is now closed for the most part and I have been informed next year the last

corpsman class will graduate in June.

My "All Navy Lunch Bunch" has three corpsmen, and if there are to be official closing ceremonies, we hope to be there. I guess nothing last forever.

I have been in contact with the Naval Station at Mayport (Jacksonville) and everything is a go for our June reunion. Let's hope the Master Chief of the Weather is good to us once more. For those of you who have not made your reservations, now is the time to make them.

If all goes well, we may be going aboard another ship for our wreath ceremony. For you first time

attendees this is a real treat, as going aboard ship will bring back a ton of memories. Hope to see ya there!

Fair winds and following seas,

Bob Eberlein, Founder,
USS Nitro Association.