



Nitro Blast

Jax, That's a Wrap!

Keep the Memories Alive

Ceremony aboard USS De Wert (FFG-45)

The wreath laying ceremony and tour of the USS De Wert (FFG-45) could not have been any better, well almost. After announcing the arrival of former AE-23 Commanding Officer, David Jennings, we had an opportunity to get acquainted with some of the crew who were there to act as our hosts and guides while we awaited the arrival of the bugler and color guard. The color guard did not show, so we revised our program and carried on hardly missing a beat, well almost.

The program got started about 20 minutes late, and on a day where the temperatures were easily over 90°F. With about the same amount of humidity, people started heading for the water cooler and facilities aboard the ship.

The young naval chaplain (LCDR Thompson) from the afloat chaplains' office gave the invocation and the remainder of the ceremony went flawlessly. MU2 Kaufman's, the bugler from the Navy Band Southeast, rendering of *Taps* was outstanding and Deanna's prayer was right again on target, with her review of over 500 years of naval history in the Mayport area. Twenty minutes later, the ceremony was over and our tour of the ship began.

A few of us decided to hang around the quarterdeck and talk with the Command Duty Officer, who also received the Nitro Association's gift of appreciation for our visit, a framed collection of the AE-2 and 23 workjacket patches and an the association crest patch. Needless to say, as we saw last year at NAVSTA Everett, a lot has changed since even the youngest of us were in uniform. The men and women of this command are rightly proud of their ship. We are in very good hands with shipmates like these.

Reunion Wrap Up

Crewmember check-in and the annual business meeting went well. At the business meeting, the battle streamer project has been given the go-ahead.

Bob Eberlein is in contact with a company that makes these streamers and a couple of samples were shown to the members in attendance. A letter has been sent to the Naval Historical Center to see

exactly how many battle streamers the AE-2 and AE-23 are entitled to display.

As with all of our reunions, after adjournment of the meeting and at any other times where there are no official functions, we headed to the hospitality room where members and guests could partake in refreshments.

St. Augustine - Like the Buster Poindexter music lyrics go, it was "feeling hot, hot, hot!" with temps well above 90F the entire time we were in Jacksonville. Bright and early Friday morning we boarded our bus, such as it was, for the trip to St. Augustine. When we arrived in St. Augustine, most of our group decided to take a trolley tour around the old city to be followed up by a more leisurely walking tour of many of the historical sites and shops. The heat was only broken by frequent stops in the air-conditioned shops or restaurants.

Jax Atlantic Beach - After lunch, we reboarded the bus and took a trip up the Atlantic coast, via Hwy. A1A. We passed through many quaint Florida coastal villages and past many million dollar + homes. When we arrived at the Jacksonville Atlantic Beach area, a few of our more intrepid attendees went down to the beach, got some ice cream and shopped; while the remainder of the group went back to the hotel to rest up and prepare for the annual Association dinner.

Our dinner at the Omni was excellent. It was proceeded by Dick Leipfert's reading in recognition of our POW/MIA and our chaplain's prayer. We were joined at dinner by a Jacksonville native, and the oldest AE-2 crewmember ever to attend

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Editor: Jim Timmons
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Newsletter of the
USS Nitro Association
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our reunion, Wilson Adams, 91 years young.

After the dinner, Paul Licker conducted our annual raffle/auction. Through the generous bidding of our shipmates and guests, we raised over \$1,000; half of which was donated to a non governmental funded military assistance fund

NAVSTA Mayport & River Cruise - Saturday, after the ceremony and tour on board the De Wert, we stopped for lunch on base at the Ocean Breeze. What a refreshing lunch, not only because it got us out of the heat and humidity but because it gave us time to enjoy each other's company.

Upon completion of lunch, we reboarded the buses for a trip to our riverboat for a mid-afternoon narrated cruise of the St. John's river. While on board, we munched on cheese and fruit that was followed by an occasional beverage or two. We then returned to the hotel for the remainder of the evening.

We had a very full two days of sightseeing in the Jacksonville area! We were also very fortunate that, with the exception of the evening when we were either in small groups for dinner or inside the hotel, we did not get rained on during any of our outside events.

Reunion Attendees

The following crewmembers attended the Jacksonville reunion. **AE-2:** Wilson Adams, Kenneth Marvin, Dominick Berardi, Bill Lewis and Lee Smith. **AE-23** attendees included Richard Artale, Bill Baer, John Bochicchio, Jim Brown, Ed Cantrell, Gary Corley, Harold Crook, George Demko, Carroll Denison, Pete Dreistadt, Robert Eberlein, Bob Fluder, Russell Garbutt, Ed Gibbons, George Gregory, David Jennings, Dennis Johnston, Tony Keena, Richard Leipfert, David Lesso, Paul Licker, Leonard Limoge, Larry Little, Jeff Marlow, Mike Mullins, Raymond Murray, Harold Odette, Tom Papsodero, Bob Peiffer, Joe Price, Howard Root, Jim Timmons, Bill

Toohey, Steve Tyas, Tom Wibbels, Jeffrey Williams and Phil Wise.

In total, including guests, we had 81 person at our dinner on Friday evening.

Association Donation:

As the Nitro Association has done in the past, half of the funds raised (to a maximum of \$500) was donated to the NAVSTA Mayport USO center, which works quite closely with the chaplains' offices on the base to provide emergency funds to base and afloat personnel. Chaplain Thompson and the son of one of our attendees, who is stationed with one of the helicopter squadrons at Mayport, both made the suggestion of choosing the USO as the recipient of this year's donation. Because of the generous bidding on Friday evening, we were able to write a check to the USO for \$500.

2011 Nitro Association Reunion

By Nitro Executive Board

The New York City area will be the site of our next reunion in June of 2011. Mark these dates on your calendar now, 16 - 19 June. Because there are so many things to do and places to see in NYC, we are considering extending the reunion to Tuesday through Sunday so we may partake in more group activities. We need your input about extending the reunion dates prior to making hotel site visits in October, so please let us know if you would be interested in arriving earlier than usual and taking part in additional group activities.

Special Raffle Item - In addition to our anticipated homeport visit at Earle, we will have a special "secret" raffle item for our raffle/auction that follows our Association dinner. The special raffle item will be one of a kind and very much Nitro related. One of our Association members is having the raffle item made specifically for this year's 'homecoming' reunion, and when you see it you will want to purchase lots of raffle tickets.

Help needed - We are also looking for persons who might be interested in

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:

John Meissner, YN2, AE-2, 1943 - 45; Cosmas B. Young, AE-2 (WW2)
William Leroy Williams Jr., AE-23, (mid 1960s);

The Nitro Sage

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

You call out "swabbie" when your kids spill something on the deck.

Your kids can identify the smell of diesel engine exhaust a mile away.

You can clear 13 buttons before your wife has her shoes off.

helping to set up this reunion by either recommending hotels on the outskirts of the city or in nearby New Jersey. We also need to locate a bus company for our transportation needs.

A letter has been sent to the Commanding Officer at NAVWEPSTA, Earle to request a visit for our wreath laying ceremony. If granted, this will be part of a day trip on either Friday or Saturday. Other activities are still being considered.

Veteran's Gravesite Medallions

From the VA web site, submitted by Barry Smith

The Department of Veterans Affairs is offering bronze medallions to attach to existing, privately purchased headstones or markers, signifying a deceased's status as a veteran. The new item can be furnished instead of a traditional government headstone or marker for veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. Next of kin will receive the medallion along with a kit. For more information on VA-furnished headstones, markers and medallions, visit the [VA website](http://www.va.gov). Instructions on how to apply for a medallion are on the VA website at www.cem.va.gov/hm_hm.asp. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the VA website at www.cem.va.gov or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

Final voting for 2012 Reunion

From Jim Timmons

The deadline for casting your vote on the location of our 2012 Midwest reunion is October 1st. The finalist cities are

Milwaukee, followed by St. Louis and Chicago. If you have not yet voted, you may do so by sending an email or note to Jim Timmons or Robert Eberlein. You may also vote online at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NitroCrewmembers/>.

Should the reunion be held in either Milwaukee or Chicago, we will look into the possibility of visiting NAVSTA Great Lakes for boot camp graduation ceremony and our wreath laying. Neither Milwaukee nor St. Louis have hosted our reunion.

Guest Columnist

Dennis Johnston, BM3, 1962-64

Editor's Note: Dennie read the poem, *Almost*, to us at dinner. He had written this poem while on board the AE-23 in 1963. It was from a series of poems; three of which follow.



~ Twilight ~

*All alone on 512' of steel at twilight.
It's too beautiful, too beautiful to be real.*

*The water is blue, the sky a light gray,
and the stars and the moon are a
background for a play.*

*I have often been here for a reason or
two, but nothing could make me happier
than being with you.*

*When I work so hard, and work is true,
Then I think of my darling, - Oh how I
miss you.*

*At six in the morn I am awake and bright,
to start a new day, for I will be closer to
you the coming at night.*

*I don't know if I'll ever be home again,
Or be able to hold you tight
but I will be with you, my darling, on this
coming twilight.*

~ Almost ~

*The day is so close, yet so far.
It's been four years of waiting,
four years so far.*

*Long and lonely, at times they seemed,
and if to end, it would only be a dream.*

*Now that my day is coming near,
I feel thankful to God I could be here.*

*I have learned a lot, and seen even more
than most men twice my age have ever
before.*

*I am very young, with a lot more to see,
but as far as another four years - God,
never let it be.*

*I served my country in time of distress,
while it was at it's very best.*

*I sailed most every ocean,
And saw most every sea,
But now to go home to the
loved ones waiting for me.*

~ Leader ~

*It is a man who is strong and young
To take this world and bear down to
none.*

*To be a leader he must be strong,
Not only in body, but in mind more than
all.*

*He has to have high morals, and show no
fear -
For him to perish would be most severe.*

*For him to be a father he must be gentle
and kind
For his children know nothing of an evil
mind.*

*He at times will be at his best,
But to show no doubt to his children,
Where there is unrest.*

Sincerely,
Dennis Johnston, BM 3
USS NITRO (AE-23) 1962-1964

Navy Times Article Recaps

1. Army Lt General gets reprimand over anti 'don't ask, don't tell' remarks.
2. Military Times poll shows troops less confident about Afghan success.
3. USO building 2 Wounded Warrior facilities in Washington DC area.
4. CPOs authorized to wear cutlass with full dress uniforms in 2011.
5. Nuclear sub fleet could shrink to 12 because of Administration nuke policy.
6. Lawsuit requires MARAD to recycle all but 12 ships in Suisan Bay Ghost Fleet by 2017.
7. USS Enterprise, first nuke carrier, scheduled to be decommissioned in 2013, after 51 years of service.
8. Ship bridges of the future may look more like those found in Star Trek.
9. USMC Sgt. Maj blasts Navy over mess traditions involving separate officer-enlisted dining areas.
10. Sailors fed up with all the uniform changes and out of pocket costs.
11. Carrier move to Mayport delayed until 2019.
12. Walter Reed Medical Center to close next year. National Naval Medical Center will take patients.
13. Naval Aviation sees increase in UAV and helo ops. vs. strike force ops in future.
14. Patrolling for pirates is a high cost to ships and manpower.
15. Navy reassessing physical training requirements.
16. Pakistani navy buys US frigate McInerney. Training done at Mayport.
17. LPD to be named for the late Congressman Murtha draws criticism.
18. Adm. Papp to replace retiring Adm. Allen as USCG Commandant
19. DOD says FY 2011 pay increase is better spent on re-up bonuses.
20. Re-up and retention requirements are still forcing many out of Navy.
21. Carrier strike group ships face longer deployments due to longer than expected carrier overhauls.
22. Mediterranean ports are being considered to homeport European ballistic missile defense (BMD) ships.
23. First women to be selected for sub duty in July.
24. USCG in charge of Gulf oil spill clean up efforts.
25. Navy winds up multi-nation northern Pacific 'RimPac' exercise off of Korea.

Navy Times Article Recaps

26. Rhode Island and Maine campaigning to bring carrier JFK to either state as museum ship.
27. SecDef Gates tells Pentagon to slash overhead and cut expenses in light of recessionary pressures and increased costs of personnel and equipment.
28. Vet groups ask VA to look at more ways to improve post 9/11 GI Bill.
29. Ratio of generals and flag rank officers to enlisted is now 1 to 1,489 vs 1967 level of 1 to 2,615 enlisted.
30. Bill allowing medical malpractice against military in House voting stage.
31. Floods at Naval Personnel Center in Middleton, TN effect selection boards.
32. Navy researching unmanned underwater vehicles (UUV) to carry on certain submarine tasks in future.
33. All three Seals acquitted of abuse in Iraq.
34. Tougher rules for mandatory warfare qualifications start July 1.
35. Navy asks Congress to consider a cut (through attrition) in number of carriers to 11 to serve for next 30 years.
36. House proposes 1.9% pay increase for FY 2011; Senate offers 1.4%.
37. Newer version of Burke class DDs will have the most modern weapons, radar and automated technology.
38. Forced-retirement board may effect up to 9,000 CPOs.
39. Navy prohibits visits to 7 Mexican states except for official business.
40. Donations made to the US Navy Veterans Association are under investigation in VA, MO, NM and FL.
41. Too many prescriptions and too little counseling for returning wounded are resulting in alarming rise in deaths.
42. DD skipper sacked when ship hits buoy in Persian Gulf.
43. Wiring problems for new Gerald R. Ford carrier may delay delivery to fleet.
44. Gulf of Mexico oil spill drains USCG resources.
45. CBO says Navy 30-year ship building plan \$93B over budget.
46. New USMC cammies fall far short in wear testing.
47. Green Bay hosts a 'Welcome Home' celebration for Vietnam veterans.
48. Women comprise 1/6 of fleet with over 8,000 officers and 44,000 sailors.
49. Navy laser weapons system passes first sea trial. Long way to go before it becomes operational.

Navy Times Article Recaps

50. Force structure and weapons are targeted for DOD cuts over next five years. Cuts as much as \$102 Billion.
51. Troops being surveyed about 'don't ask, don't tell' policy.
52. Extending life of ships being considered for decommissioning may save Machinist Mate (MM) rate from disappearing.
53. Petty officer advancement lowest in 20 years. Only 14,000 of 88,000+ advanced. Key to next advancement - rate change.
54. Carrier version of Joint Strike Force F-35 makes first test flight.
55. New inpatient PTSD program focuses on group therapy.
56. Investigations continue into mishandled burials at Arlington National Cemetery. Arlington officials called to Capitol Hill.
57. All branches of service experiencing shortages in medical personnel for CONUS and billets abroad.
58. CNO encourages 2nd and 3rd Class POs to form associations, similar to CPO messes, for mentoring and camaraderie.
59. Hi-tempo operations seen as reason for lowering of courts-martial cases in Navy.
60. Navy plans \$600 million savings on DDG 1000 series ships by radar reduction. Ships may also then be used for BMD.
61. US Cyber Command Chief says military still behind hackers in real-time situation awareness.
62. Military judge delays Ft. Hood shooting trial. Article 32 hearings to start in October.
63. Decommissioned carrier Forrestal towed from Newport to Philadelphia. Ship may be sunk or scrapped.
64. LCS-3 (Ft. Worth) halfway completed in Marinette, WI shipyard.
65. Congress looks at \$1.1 Trillion reduction in defense spending over next 10 years. Personnel programs being targeted for over 1/2 of savings.
66. General Petraeus replaces General McChrystal in Afghanistan.
67. US destroyer joins UK carrier strike group in trans Atlantic exercise.
68. Independent report says pursuit of efficiencies over past decade led to fleetwide failures in ships' sea worthiness and undermanning of ships.

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

April: Robert McGee (1979)

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.).

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Deanna Smitha

Another great NITRO reunion has come and gone. Despite some challenges that the Association officers faced in securing planned activities at Mayport, the reunion once again brought crew members, families and friends together for an enjoyable and memorable gathering. Although work demands precluded our attendance this year, I heard nothing but good reports and we so appreciate both the participation of all who attended AND the work of the Association staff in another maximum effort. Bravo Zulu!

Many of us in the NITRO family know what it means to have a high "ops tempo." AEs were always ships that were on the go, underway, and not prone to give the crew a whole lot of downtime or rest. The Gray Ghost of the Jersey Coast (AE-23) lived up to that reputation and homeport was often only a touchstone, rather than a place to "hang one's hat."

As we contemplate next year's reunion and anticipate a visit to AE-23's homeport at NWS Earle, I suspect that the "ops-tempo" of our reunion will be at a likewise high level. So, let's start training NOW! Be in the best of shape you can manage, and bring with you the best of spirits that can be mustered. And be ready for fun and great memories that are hallmarks of the USS NITRO Association.

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...

Final Thoughts

By Bob Eberlein

Hot and humid was the weather for this year's reunion, but the rain did hold off until we finished our planned activities every day. Not much we can do about the weather but to complain or enjoy it.

Next year's reunion will be held in the New York City area as we hope to go to Weapons Station Earle, NJ. For the members who were stationed aboard the USS Nitro (AE-23) from 1975-1995, this will be your "home coming" reunion. So, make plans to attend and mark your calendars now.

The Association was notified about the passing of one of our long time members, John Meissner, YN2c, (USS Nitro AE-2, 1943-45) in July. With a passing of each member, another page in history is closed forever. The stories and the memories gone. A brother and brother-in-law gone. For all us members, we really should take time to pass on the stories, the photos, and memorabilia. I think the National Archives and many other repositories are requesting stories from veterans to be part of the history of the country. Take time to submit a story or two.

With this in mind, if you belong to the different military organizations, renew your memberships. There are many organizations in dire need of members, and recruit so they do not fall by the way side. The younger generations seem like they don't need to keep the camaraderie after leaving the military. I have heard our local "All Navy Lunch Bunch" in South Bend now has about 140 "members" who meet to have lunch and relive the good old Navy days.

Fair winds and following seas,

Bob Eberlein, Founder,
USS Nitro Association.