



Nitro Blast

Set the Earle Special Sea & Anchor Detail!

Keep the Memories Alive

NWS, Earle Reunion Update

We have a preliminary confirmation from Naval Weapons Station, Earle that our visit to the base for our annual wreath laying ceremony, Friday afternoon, 17 June has been approved. Plans are in the works to have a color guard and bugler on hand for the ceremony. It is also possible that the Commanding Officer may be in attendance.

A World War II destroyer escort (formerly based at Earle) association will be holding their annual ceremony on the base on Saturday AM of the same weekend we will be there, and this

necessitated changing days for our ceremony. At this time it is unknown if our group will have access to the piers, and our visit is subject to change due to loading schedules at the base.

The naval station does not have adequate facilities on base for us to have lunch, so we will be stopping in nearby Atlantic Highlands for lunch. Friday morning we are planning to take an early ferry trip to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island from the terminal at Liberty State Park.

We should be back at the hotel in the early evening in time for our association dinner and raffle/auction.

Saturday Activities

As of this newsletter, a trip to New York City is planned for Saturday, 18 June. Among the places of interest we hope to visit on the tour are the following:

- Visit and go to the top of the Empire State Building
- A stop in Time Square for pictures
- Drive along, 5th. Avenue
- Lunch and shopping at South Street Seaport (pictures of the Brooklyn Bridge)
- A drive through or by Central Park
- A visit to Ground Zero.

As soon as the activities (including the annual dinner) and pricing are finalized, activity sheets will be emailed, posted on our web site and mailed to those who have indicated they would like to receive hard copies. Once you have the activity sheets, please fill them out and return the

bottom portion along with a check to the address indicated

Small Group activities

Broadway Shows, Baseball Games and other activities – As mentioned in the last newsletter, we do have some free time, on Wednesday for early arrivals and Saturday evening for those might want to do some small group activities. As of now, we have not had any volunteers step forward to set any small group activities up, so we are not planning for any additional ‘free time’ activities.

If there are any people who would like to volunteer to set up a show, baseball game, fishing or any other event, please let me know. Once we have the small group activity volunteers lined up; I will put their names, email and/or phone numbers in the next issue of the newsletter. Attendees interested in that activity can then contact the volunteer.

Volunteers will be responsible for contacting the specific event, finding out what dates are available, how many are needed for a group price, what the cost of the activity will be (including transportation to and from). Collection of money for the activity will be separate from monies collected for official reunion related activities, and will be collected by the leader of the group.

A reminder - although we are staying at the Newark Hilton Airport Hotel, there are some very inexpensive transportation modes for those wishing to go into Manhattan. Hotel transportation can be taken back to the airport to connect with either bus or trains to NYC.

Below is a brief summary of the hotel reservation specifics. Guestrooms for

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Editor: Jim Timmons

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

this homecoming will be going fast so make sure you get your reservations in as soon possible. Information about the hotel, and activities will be updated in the newsletter and on our web site: www.ussnitro.org/reunion.htm.

Reunion Hotel Info

As a reminder from the email and notices sent out last month, the Nitro Association has blocked a group of guestrooms for our 2011 reunion at the Hilton Newark Airport hotel. The block consists of 25 guestrooms for Wednesday night, June 15 and 35 guestrooms for each night Thursday, June 16; Friday, June 17 and Saturday, June 18. Our guestroom rate is \$109 per night and the rate is also good for 2 nights before or after the reunion (depending on availability).

Attendees may make reservations either by calling 1-800-HILTONS and asking for the **USS Nitro Association block**, or by entering group/convention code "UNA" at the Hilton.com web site (www.hilton.com). When placing your reservation for the 2011 reunion, let the reservation clerk know you want to reserve a room for "x" number of nights.

Your credit card will not be charged until you check out and you may cancel your reservations up to 24 hours before your date of arrival. **Anyone requiring special assistance should inform the hotel when making reservations.** The Hilton Newark Airport is a non-smoking property.

Reservations must be received on or before the cutoff date of **5/25/2011**. On the cutoff date, all unreserved rooms 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.

2013 USS Nitro Association Reunion

By Jim Timmons

Voting for the West Region reunion continues. Cities under consideration are San Francisco, Portland, Salt Lake City, Denver/Boulder, Phoenix, San Diego and an Alaskan cruise. If you haven't voted yet, please do so online at:

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

Or you may mail in you vote to Bob

Eberlein or Jim Timmons.

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

December – Gary Cottrell (91-95); Wayne Hapgood (69-70), William Keiler (59-60); Richard Shick (74-75)

January – Joseph Onisick (59-60)

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 a USS Nitro Association automatic opening umbrella (with the Association crest silk-screened on it) to be mailed in March, 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.).

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:

Martin Polstein, CS3, AE-23, 1962-64; Donald Courteau, F2/c, AE-2, 1942-43

The Nitro Sage

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

They refuse you as a blood donor because of the high salt content.

Both your e-mail address and license plate begin with "IM4NAVY".

Your wife introduces you as her shipmate.

Navy Times Article Recaps

1. Respiratory issues, cardiovascular disease, pregnancy complications and neurological conditions for Gulf War troops up an average of 30%+, in study of troops deployed from 2001-09.
2. Pentagon warns of risks of "Spice" synthetic marijuana usage.
3. Seabee simulators for welding and driving save money and wear and tear on equipment.
4. Navy exceeds 2010 recruiting goals.
5. New congressional bill would change USGC purchasing policies.
6. Nonprofit site www.witness-to-war.org collecting vets stories.
7. Navy Cash program, smart card technology, to eliminate need for cash purchases by sailors aboard most medium and large ships.
8. Navy restricting tuition assistance.
9. Navy's Sea Fighter is a high-tech floating laboratory capable of testing new systems and equipment prior to usage by services.
10. Navy looks at Los Angeles as possible museum site for x-USS Iowa battleship.
11. USS New York's Command Master Chief fired for fraternization.
12. New Afghan military clinic setup to diagnose traumatic brain injuries quickly.
13. Women to serve on board four subs by December 2011.
14. Stolen Valor Act (2005) legality could go to Supreme Court.
15. Navy considers shorter underway watchstanding hours.
16. New UK carrier class may use electromagnetic launcher instead of ski-jumps and catapults.
18. Bedbug problems hit Navy.
19. Britain and France agree to joint troop deployments, sharing of carriers and nuclear program collaboration.
20. Congress approves Navy request to continue building two versions of the LCS instead of a single version. Could save almost \$3 Billion.
21. Navy may take command of as many as 121 Army watercraft.
22. USS San Antonio's former XO cleared of negligence charges in the shipboard accidental death of sailor.
23. Navy celebrates a century of flight.
24. USAF testing backpack sized unmanned bomber, which could be used by forward-based troops.

Navy Times Article Recaps

25. Army looks at pilotless option for CH-47 and UH-60 helicopters.
26. Presidential Deficit Reduction Committee eyes cuts to military benefits. Key lawmakers oppose cuts.
27. US troops to stay in Afghanistan until at least 2014.
28. Civilians to join amphibious ship crews.
29. Navy to disestablish 2 force protection squadrons.
30. MCPON gets tough on the leadership of senior chiefs of the Navy.
31. Food stamp usage at commissaries rise almost 40% in 2010.
32. Military bonuses decline in favor of non-monetary incentives.
33. Joint Strike Force F-35 target of budget cuts.
34. USCG boots out 377 coasties. Navy continuation board bounces 336 chiefs.
35. New 'cut suits', worn by volunteers, help train hospital personnel with injury and wound identification.
36. Navy tests electromagnetic railgun; sets world record for most powerful shot.
37. Congress passes fixes to Post-911 GI Bill.
38. Prescription meds increase for military kids whose parents have repeated deployments.
39. Cruiser, frigate earn unsatisfactory grades on INSRUV.
40. Navy Times looks back 20 years at Desert Storm.
41. Ticonderoga-class cruisers still experiencing cracks in superstructures.
42. Study shows 1 in 4 can't pass military entrance exam.
43. Sub force gets new enlisted IT rating.
44. Navy manning levels expected to stay level for 2011 at 322,000.
45. Ammunition ships Flint, Kiska and Shasta will be dismantled in 2011.
46. SecDef Gates to retire in 2011.
47. US & UK sailors and marines continue to train Iraqi Navy.
48. New electromagnetic catapult launches F/A18 from Lakehurst, NJ.
49. USCG appoints first female Academy superintendent.
50. Retiring USMC Colonel wants to bring his mule home with him from Iraq.
51. China continues test of 'carrier killer' Dong Feng 22D missile.

Navy Times Article Recaps

52. Uptick in military's usage of vague mental health discharges concerns Congress.
53. Gen. Patraeus to increase Afghan/Pakistan border operations.
54. Federal benefits for vets and other to go to electronic payments by 2013.
55. Four soldiers, including one from Civil War, nominated for MOH.
56. New burn center for Brooke Army Hospital increases capacity.
57. USAF seeks volunteers for officer drawdown. Over manning by 2,000.
58. Ghost Fleet sub sunk as reef.
59. Troop cut of 47,000 to happen in 2015 according to SecDef Gates.
60. New fitness rules target body fat.
61. Elimination of staff billets could put more sailors back on ships.
62. Former Enterprise XO's videos put four admirals in hot water. One RADM's retirement put on hold.
63. Army SPC awarded Silver Star for stopping suicide bomber.
64. President signs bare-bones 2011 Defense Authorization Bill.
65. SecDef Gates to accelerate repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell policy.
66. Navy officer review boards may force retirement of 200 officers.
67. USCG facing extended duties and aging fleet challenges.

A 2011 Reunion Suggestion:

For Ellis Island – It is advisable for those wishing to find names of relatives, who migrated to the US, to do some homework first. Go to www.ellisland.org/ and search for the names prior to coming to reunion. After you have the names and are at Ellis Island, you might be able to find if their names on the Wall of Honor, which is behind the main building.

Because of the limited time we will have here, you may want to do any additional name searches first then go outside and locate the names, if any, on the Wall of Honor. Once you have done that, you can come back inside and tour the remainder of the building.

Guest Columnist

Then: Ken Kmiec, LT, SC, USN

(NITROs SUPPO) Dec 1981-Feb 1984



It was 1972, I was in high school and Vietnam was in the news. Mom and Dad wanted me to go to college (and so did I) and I wanted to go into the Navy. We lived in Baltimore and the Naval Academy was just 45 minutes away. We didn't know any congressmen or senators. Dad had a co-worker who knew a retired admiral but I didn't get in. Mom said we had a cousin at The Citadel that offered Navy ROTC. We visited, I applied, was accepted, got better than average grades and ended up with a Navy ROTC scholarship and a subsequent commission. I was being 'groomed' for the nuclear power program. Interviewed with several Navy Captains and Mr. Nuclear Power himself – Admiral Rickover. I didn't get accepted.

A classmate told me about the "Supply Corps" – the Navy's 'business function' - financial management, inventory control, merchandising, transportation, procurement, data processing, and personnel services. I applied. In 1976, I graduated and was commissioned an Ensign in the Supply Corps. I completed my Supply Corps training, got married and received orders to my first ship ... a frigate out of Charleston.

I ran the Ship's Store, barbershop and laundry, paid the crew and ships bills. We were underway 285 days that first year – I got to see the Caribbean, GTMO, Haiti, the Mediterranean, the Middle

East, the North Atlantic and South America – all by sea. Yep .. "underway ...the only way". We were just in port long enough to get inspected and win the Blue Supply "E"..... It was a long three years on that frigate and as a reward I was reassigned to Kingsville Texas. I learned double entry accounting, dealing with civilian employees, had our first daughter, learned how to rebuild a car engine, do a brake job, ride a motorcycle and enhanced my home improvement skills. What a break from the rigorous sea duty assignment. So I decided to return to sea and make this thing called the Navy – a career.

I received orders to USS NITRO AE23 – homeport – Earle, New Jersey. A week later"Navy ship NITRO adrift at sea as a result of a main space fire and is being towed to Greece (and later to New York) for repairs". I arrived in New Jersey for housing – Ft Monmouth – a small place about 1/3 the size that we had in Texas - paint peeling, cold weather, jug handle turning lanes, and did I say ... small quarters? NITRO was in Coastal Drydock ... formerly the Brooklyn Navy Shipyard ... a 90 minute drive, shipyard environment, off-ship feeding and berthing, empty storerooms and cargo holds, sandblasting grit everywhere, messdeck renovations, temporary lighting everywhere, storeroom parts inventory and overhaul occurring in New London, cumshaving, Command Duty Officer duties, a payroll theft, a new disbursing officer and an order by the commanding officer to acquire some 'nice' ship's plaques (my success here made life more bearable than for my predecessor), a salvaged buoy repainted in "Irish Colors" delivered to the 1st LT's front yard, and portholes turned into farewell plaques. A completed repair and overhaul in 9 months, a new CO (with initials A.E.), a great relationship with the CO, XO, CHENG, 1ST LT, OPS, Gunner, and RAS officers.....

Ahhhhh ... underway again the Atlantic, the Caribbean, the Atlantic, the North Atlantic, Germany, the

Mediterranean, Bermuda, the Bahamas and did I mention the Atlantic? Uploads, downloads, Helo Ops, an H46 "splashes" into the Atlantic, UNREPS, Hostages in Beirut, the NITRO EXPRESSO shuttling supplies from Augusta Bay to the Eastern Med the paperwork..... a 10ft x 20ft x 1in sheet steel by highline, 3000 gallons of ice cream and gallons and gallons and gallons of fresh milk, a dozen Pizza Hut pizzas, 16 inch rounds for the battleship, 50 cal for the marines ashore, missiles for the destroyers, CASREP parts, canned soda and fresh fruits and vegetables for the frigates, pallets and pallets of beans, bombs and bacon ..."NITRO - we deliver with a bang".... AND I was the "SUPPO" .

Ken Kmiec
CDR, SC, USN (Retired)
1976-1996

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Deanna Smitha

Extreme Makeover-NAVY Edition

It was just a few years ago that our NITRO AE-23 received a supremely extreme makeover at Brownsville, TX, a number of years after she was decommissioned at NWS Earle, her homeport from 1974-1995. Like NITRO, many of us likewise have gone through some very extreme makeovers—whether it be when we retired/separated from the service, made changes in our civilian careers or families, or retired from one daily endeavor to take respite or move onto another activity. Each of these makeovers—or changes in our lives—demand different directions/strengths/tools to move from one place in our journeys to another.

After having retired from the Navy in '91, from the Air Force and active ministry in '96, and now being eligible to do so from county service this May, I once again stand at that point of extreme makeover—what am I going to do when I grow up and where are we going? Our

children are grown and on their own, and although not 20 years old anymore, I don't figure that I'm quite ready to fold up shop and die.

Mindful of "the rules" which govern public employees, I have applied for another position near to where we want to retire on the opposite end of California, and I will be traveling 700-plus miles to interview with the police chief there in a week and a half. A large move like this seems daunting in one sense, and great potential for a breath of fresh air on another. I know I'm ready to make a change, but that is a bit scary as a senior citizen who needs to have an elevated income stream in this time of recession and unemployment. Each dynamic we face has its potential for renewal and its potential for dread. Just like when our ships are decommissioned they are "reinvented" to new uses, so then must we take a "leap of faith" to move our own journeys likewise onward.

Do I know what will happen? I can assure you—not yet. Do I want to take a new step? Indeed, I believe I'm ready to "reinvent" myself to new horizons in a new venue. Do we sometimes "crash and burn?" Indeed we do, but it's not for the lack of trying.

If you have heard the story of the new USS NEW YORK, an LPD class ship...you will remember that in the bow of that huge ship contains a statement of great renewal and redemption. Like NITRO was recycled into things anew, the bow of USS NEW YORK has recycled steel from the result of the bombing of the World Trade Center on 9-11-01. Tragedy is always sad. Redeeming tragedy into new life can renew our spirits and give us hope. We can hope renewal for NITRO, and likewise, we can do our best to be agents of renewal in our own lives and journeys.

This is my hope and prayer for each of you in your journey as well.

Grace and peace and wishes for fair winds and following seas. May we keep strong the tradition of the USS NITRO

Association in its continuing and growing service to the fleet and our troops.

Chaps...

A Final Thought

By Robert Eberlein,

So beings the page of history that will be know as 2011. What events will take place that judged as good, bad or not worthy to be remembered? Only December 31 will tell.

To all our "new" members, I say *Welcome* to the Association and hope to see ya at the June reunion. For our "returned" members, good to see you again. The annual membership drive is in full swing and the numbers continue to rise. With this in mind, take some time to recheck the "members page" to see other members of your particular crew and try to get them to join us in June for the annual reunion.

As Jim has mentioned, this will be the "home port" reunion for the 1974-1995 crews. The officers of the Association are hoping this event will be one of the largest, as it's in the Mid-Atlantic area. As always, a day trip in the surrounding area, New York City is planned and Saturday will be our trip to Weapons Station Earle, NJ. to hold our annual wreath ceremony to honor our deceased crew members. I submitted a first day issue postmark design to the US Postal Service to commemorate this event. A postmark was also issued for the "home port" reunion when it was held in Warwick, RI. for the 1959-1974 reunion.

The third week of June will be here before we know, so plan to be part of this event and make your reservations in a timely matter.

During your day, take time to remember those who serve in our military and for their safe return home.

Fair winds and following seas,

Bob Eberlein, Founder,
USS Nitro Association.

