



# Nitro Blast

## NWS, Earle, Homecoming 2011!

Keep the Memories Alive

### Newark Hilton Update

By Jim Timmons

Less than two months till the 2011 reunion at the Newark Airport Hilton hotel. As has been mentioned in the January newsletter and in emails, our guestroom block is almost sold out. We have requested that the block of rooms be increased to accommodate additional attendees.

In order to secure your guestroom for the reunion, you must make your reservation by May 25<sup>th</sup>. There is a possibility, because the rooms are going fast, you might be told that the hotel is sold out of

rooms in our group block and/or that you will have to pay more for a room. If this should happen, please contact me and I will phone the hotel and attempt to straighten out the situation. As of this newsletter, I have had no indication from the hotel that we can not expand our rooms or take additional reservations.



If you care to do so, please bring an item for our after dinner auction. Items at past auctions have ranged from Nitro related items to paintings to military themed T-shirts and homemade items. These items need not be expensive and all are appreciated.

We were able to obtain a couple of special items that will be raffled as a set. The set is very useful as well as being unique and we think will be very much fun for the eventual winner of the auction.

Fifty percent of the funds collected from our raffle/auction, up to \$500, will be donated to an assistance fund for naval personnel at NWS, Earle.

#### Room Reservation Reminders:

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).

Make your 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](http://www.hilton.com)). 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**

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April 2011  
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Association Membership 331

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

#### Nitro Annual Dinner finalized:

The choices for Friday night's association dinner have been finalized.

**Chicken:** Grilled Chicken with Artichokes served with couscous and spring vegetable.

**Beef:** Marinated Grilled Flank Steak with a Mushroom Reduction, Whipped Mashed Potatoes and spring vegetables.

**Vegetarian:** Penne Pasta tossed with Fresh Vegetables in a Creamy Pesto Garlic Sauce.

As an attachment to your email, you will find the finalized activity sheet. If you have already sent in the preliminary activity sheet with your choice already made, you need not do anything unless you want to make a change in your dinner selection. You may choose the chicken, beef or vegetarian dinner.

#### After dinner raffle/auction items

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.

### Friday & Saturday Activities

#### Friday:

AM – Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island trip  
Lunch – Atlantic Highlands (on own)  
Afternoon – Wreath Laying ceremony, NWS, Earle  
Evening – Association Dinner and raffle/auction

#### Saturday: (We'll do many as possible)

- Visit the Empire State Building
- Time Square for picture taking
- Drive along, 5<sup>th</sup>. Avenue
- Lunch, shopping (on own) at South Street Seaport (pictures of the Brooklyn Bridge)
- A drive through or by Central Park
- A visit to Ground Zero.

Saturday's schedule is ambitious and we will try to do as many things on this list as possible. The Empire State Building visit is scheduled. A drive by or stop at Ground Zero, lunch and Time Square for pictures are high priorities.

#### 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/](http://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.

## 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:

#### None this quarter

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:

Thomas Smith, GM2c, AE-2, 1942-44; Brian Lenihan, SN, AE-23, 1971-73; Andrew R. "Andy" Soltes, AE-2, WW2; Thomas Ewing, AE-23, 1969-70; Richard Hale, BM2, AE-23, 1965-66; Harold Odette, EMC, AE-23, 1959-61; Albert Festa, SN, AE-2, 1937; Frank Keys, HT3, AE-23, 1973-76;

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#### The Nitro Sage

*Always remember you're unique. Just like everyone else.*

*Never test the depth of the water with both feet.*

*If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.*

### Navy Times Article Recaps

1. Desert Storm vets push for war memorial.
2. Two Korean War GIs to receive posthumous MoH next month.
3. USS Ronald Reagan will shift home ports to Bremerton, WA for year long maintenance period next year.
4. Portland, ME city council votes down carrier JFK as museum ship site.
5. House panel studying force-cuts calls SecDef Gates plan premature.
6. VA notes huge jump in Agent Orange claims.
7. Navy Chaplain faces 18 counts of fraternization and violent threats.
8. Carrier, USS Enterprise, set for one more deployment prior to 1012 decom.
9. Navy to extend Ensigns sea tours by three months.
10. Naval Academy CFO resigns amid 'slush fund' investigation.
11. Navy considering scrapping anti-mine cannons for LCS ships.
12. Navy to cancel contract for new Marine Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle.
13. Navy ups test scores needed to qualify for nuke sub duty.
14. Proposed military budget cuts could be in for a long fight on the hill.
15. Pentagon allowing 3 months for 'don't ask don't tell' training.
16. Somali pirates adapt to Navy tactics.
18. Northrop Gruman Shipbuilding to be spun off as a separate company.
19. NCIS investigates destroyer squadron Commodore's death.
20. Pentagon targets changes in Tricare. Looking for 13% hike in fees.
21. 2200 enlisted billets, over next two years, to relieve manning pressure on cruisers, destroyers and amphib.
22. More testing of E-6 and below crackerjack uniforms.
23. Attack sub Los Angeles decommissioned after 34 years of service.
24. Unemployment rate for veterans in all age categories higher than non-vets.
25. Administration seeks 1.6% military pay raise for 2012.
26. Vets with prosthetics to get more clothing allowance.
27. Special USAF officer retention boards could cut as many as 10,500 in grades LT to COL.
28. Army testing silk skivvies.
29. Navy looking into ban chewing tobacco.

### Navy Times Article Recaps

30. Navy test pilot has praise for F-35, Joint Strike Force fighter.
31. Navy manning strength 319,000 by 2015. This is a reduction of 9,000.
32. Navy looks to add destroyer, LCS and more F/A 18s in 2012 budget.
33. Top of destroyer's mast breaks off during cruise off Florida coast.
34. Navy Yard museum site on hold.
35. Cruise ship SS United States to be put into museum status.
36. Sailors want changes to PRT.
37. Boeing wins USAF tanker contract.
38. Wells Fargo to refund VA loan fees to 60,000.
39. JCS vice chair cleared of fraternization charges.
40. Army to take over medical units assigned to war zones in 2012.
41. Navy to have two carriers in rotation for 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet (Middle East).
42. Marines involved in war air traffic control and close combat entitled to wear Naval Aviation observer wings.
43. Army Staff Sgt. wins Grammy.
44. Supreme Court okay funeral protesters.
45. Cruiser Monterey to head ballistic-missile defense shield for Europe.
46. Sailor charged with espionage for trying to sell classified information.
47. DOD leaders receive harsh reception at budget hearings.
48. House votes to keep selective service registration.
49. Last US WW1 veteran dies at 110.
50. CO, CMC and 8 others aboard USS Stout removed for unprofessional behavior.
51. Admiral fired as result of former USS Enterprise XO's video scandal.
52. Marine Master Gunnery Sgt. honored for run across US to raise money for wounded Marines.
53. Navy has several amphib ships off Libya as conflict increased.
54. Navy responds to Japanese earthquake and tsunami.
55. Retiring USMC Colonel allowed to bring home his mule from Iraq.
56. USNA expels 11 for using or selling synthetic marijuana (Spice).
57. Spanish-American War era steel cruiser, Olympia to be scrapped unless saved as museum ship.
58. Commission recommends end to ban on women in combat.
59. Corpsman and marine corporal receive Silver Star.

### Navy Times Article Recaps

60. High fuel costs could severely curtail fleet training.
61. International Spy Museum in Washington creates new traveling exhibit on acts of domestic terrorism.
62. Navy considers awarding Purple Hearts in cases of traumatic brain injuries.
63. Wreckage of sunken German sub from WW1 found by Dutch Navy.
64. House panel tells VA to cut spending and increase benefits.
65. Gen. Petraeus will only consider 'conditions-based' troop withdrawal from Afghanistan this summer.
66. Sexual assault in military dropped by 2% last year, report says.
67. As Navy begins another draw-down, sailors questionable about being retained on active duty can apply for early out and enter reserves.
68. New Navy work uniform Gore-tex foul weather pants to be lent to sailors by commands. They are not for sale.
69. SecDef Gates considers cutting 1,000 contractor positions in next budget. Military exchange leadership and some school system posts will also be cut.
70. Budget memo calls for Navy to downgrade 11 flag-officer billets.
71. Possible JAG billet shortfall by 2015 due to budget cuts.
72. USS San Antonio, amphib ship plagued with structural and systems issues, to have lengthy sea trials towards end of April.
73. Pentagon finalizing plan to add more active duty time for reservists.
74. As a safety precaution, U S European Command will ban wearing of uniforms off base.
75. Department of Homeland Security to deploy military radar along US-Canada border to deter drug smuggling.
76. American Legion tells DOD to leave Tricare alone and look elsewhere for budget savings.
77. Sixteen sailors removed from USS Bataan for smoking banned drug "Spice".
78. Libyan ops produce 2 first in naval combat: First guided-missile sub to launch operational Tomahawk cruise missile and EA-18G Growlers flew first combat mission.
79. LCS hull crack halts sea trials for USS Freedom.

## Guest Columnist

*Ed Gibbons, Jr., CS3, USN*

I was one of the Nitro's night bakers. I received orders from the USS Shasta AE 6 to the Nitro in July of 1967. I reported to Maryland Shipbuilding and Dry-dock Co., Baltimore Maryland. Where the Nitro will be Recommissioned.

In August of 1967, the Commanding Officer was LCDR George Martin

Hatcher. LCDR Hatcher was relieved by CAPT. Joseph Snyder

We were to be stationed at Davisville, Rhode Island. We had gone to the Caribbean (Guantanamo Bay, Cuba) (GTMO) for ship's training. Then returned to Davisville, Rhode Island. We had been to Yorktown, Virginia and Earle, New Jersey.

With the Nitro loaded with ammunition and top off with supplies, it's off to the Mediterranean Sea.

As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow has written, Ships that pass in the night.

*"Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing, only a signal shown, and a distant voice in the darkness; So on the ocean of life, we pass and speak one another, only a look and a voice, then darkness again and silence."*

Mid Watch (sometimes call the Graveyard Watch) As the night baker it was my job was to make a Midnight meal for the oncoming watch, along with the baking of bread and breakfast pastry (cinnamon rolls), pies and cakes for lunch and dinner. I must make about 55 pies for the crew. I also need to make a few more for the one's 2<sup>nd</sup> diversion and engineering take.

The Midwatch is not only the bridge watch, it also has a watch in engineering, the laundry, the gyrocompass. But let's get back to the Galley; I have the night watch and you never know who will



show up looking for something to eat. Would you believe that sometimes Captain Snyder comes to the Galley and would like a sliced of bread just out of the oven, that and a cup of coffee. There is always someone from engineering looking for a sandwich. Sometimes the man working in the laundry has miss the midnight meal, he also work's all night long. The work in the Galley must be done by 0400, so the on coming watch can start breakfast. There is a lot of work to be done on a Navy ship. Each and every man has a job that has to be done and the job has to be done right.

We are all ships that pass in the night.

On one watch here comes Robert Eberlein, he was thinking that maybe after we all got out of the Navy we could have a beer together. I did not think this was a good idea, but he asked me if it happen would I come, I said yes. Would someone please tell Bob that I don't drink beer. This reunion will be number six for me. I must admit I do miss some of my old shipmates, and like to see them again. I bet you don't know that when Ed Marino got transferred from deck to operation it was on my watch that he came to tell me. You see that there is a lot of thing that happen and (M D I) MESS DECKS INTELLIGENCE almost knows it all. There are not too many secrets on a ship. Someone has to tell someone. And M D I is the place to tell all.

My time in the Navy, I've made two trips around the world and put time in the Seabees, (NCB 74). I have no regrets at all. You do what you have to do. You know griping sailor is a happy sailor, boy was I a happy sailor. I guess at one time or another I met everyone on board the NITRO, some were very good friends and I may never see them again. So as you can see, it nice to see some of my old shipmates again and some new ones.

As an Old New Yorker, I now live in Louisiana and we say down South I hope to you-all at the next REUNION.

Ed Gibbons, Jr.  
CS3, Supply Division  
USS Nitro 1967-1969

## Chaplain's Corner

*Chaps is taking some personal time off this quarter. Will return next quarter.*

## A Final Thought

By Robert Eberlein

April already? Next thing we know, we will be meeting at the 2011 Newark NJ reunion. Some fun actives have been planned and I hope everyone who attends has a great time. Hopefully the Master Chief-of-the-Weather will smile upon us once more.

I see we have some new names listed to the association rolls and some returning members. For those new members, if you have any items you would like to share with the reunion attendees, please bring it along. Also, be sure to feel free to share the sea stories, we can never have too many of them.

For those of you who served on active during the Vietnam Conflict, I sent a letter requesting the mayor and city council where Bob Peiffer and I grew up in, to mark March the 30<sup>th</sup> as "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day." To my surprise a proclamation and a resolution was passed to make that date a permanent day to be observed. The day the proclamation was issued, the city council chambers were over-flowing with Vietnam era veterans.

I ask that each of the Nitro Association members who was on active duty, during Vietnam, to ask your local city/town officials to please issue a proclamation and or pass a resolution for your area. *Thank you.*

Remember those who man the watch.

Fair winds and following seas,

Bob Eberlein, Founder,  
USS Nitro Association.