



Nitro Blast

15th Anniversary in Milwaukee

Keep the Memories Alive

My How Time Flies!

By Jim Timmons

Well, we made it into our teens! It doesn't seem possible but the Nitro Association will turn fifteen years old next June. Our first organizational meeting, with 6 attendees, was held in Las Vegas in June, 1998.

We always wondered if there would be enough interest in an association for former crewmembers of the USS Nitro (AE-2 and AE-23). Bob Eberlein's vision of "a few guys being able to get together for some beers from time to time" had by the end of the year grown to 66 members, and we haven't looked back since. Thanks Bob – BRAVO ZULU!

The Association averages about 150 active members each year.

We have held reunions from coast to coast and have even taken a cruise to the Bahamas. With the visit to Earle this year, we have visited both homeports of the AE-23 as well as the birthplace of the AE-2 with our 2009 Seattle visit.

Along the way, we have introduced the POW/MIA table of honor at our reunion dinner, donated thousands of dollars to various military related charities and veterans projects, dedicated plaques (honoring both ships) at the Naval Memorial in Washington DC, sent complimentary prepaid phone cards to our active duty military and have held our wreath laying ceremony on board several ships of the US Navy.

On the ship specific side, we have (thanks to our ever-inventive webmaster, Bob Peiffer and our content contributors) one of the most complete historical naval ship sites on the web. Aside from a lot of reunion pictures and pictures that individuals have sent to us, we have been very fortunate to do a lot of research and receive some very valuable historical information on both ships named Nitro and her crews. So if you are interested in delving into our ships' rich history, www.ussnitro.org is the place to go.

At each reunion, we try to bring some of the history back to life by bringing a wide range of historical items for our attendees to view. We have an original boiler plate from the AE-2, a sound-powered headset, compartment signage and a couple of American flags from the AE-23, several books of photos and crew rosters of both ships.

Whenever possible and items original to the ships, such as ship patches and coffee mugs, can not be found, we try to have them recreated and available for sale in our ship's store. Most of the contents of the store are also items that have been dues premiums, which are included as part of a members full membership each year. Our store has to be one of the most varied of any Navy association and continues to grow each year. A complete listing and pictures of ship's store items can also be found on our web site.

The most important part of our Association is our members and their families. It never ceases to amaze how much former shipmates, who meet each other after "x" number of years, pick up almost right where they left off when they were aboard Nitro. It is and always will be the mission of the USS Nitro Association to afford the opportunity for shipmates to meet again and for family members to hear about what their sailor did during their time aboard Nitro.

Mark Your Calendar, Now!

The dates for the 2012 reunion have been set. The Nitro Association will meet from 21 – 24 June in Milwaukee Wisconsin. Our hotel headquarters and activities are in the process of being formalized.

At this time we are looking into the possibility of holding our Wreath Laying Ceremony at Great Lakes Naval Station after attending Boot Camp graduation in the morning. If this is done, we most likely will also have lunch on the base and then make a stop a one or two attractions on the way back to Milwaukee.

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October/November 2011
Volume 14, Issue 2

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

The other day of our tour days will be visits to several attractions in the Milwaukee area (Harley Davidson museum, possibly a brewery and/or museum tour and maybe a stop by Miller Park – Home of the Milwaukee Brewers). As soon as decisions are made, they will be put on our web site and in upcoming newsletters. *Come and be part of Nitro history!*

Update on Mt. Soledad legal fight!

Editor's note: Many of our members were present at the San Diego 2003 reunion, when we visited the Mt. Soledad War Memorial. Here is an update on their fight to keep the cross on top of the hill.

From Military.com's Veterans Report dated week of October 31, 2011:

A nonprofit legal firm wants to go to the U.S. Supreme Court to fight a lower court decision that found the Mt. Soledad Cross, a war memorial cross in a San Diego public park, unconstitutional. The Liberty Institute has filed a motion

seeking to appeal after the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals recently denied a request to rehear the case after ruling in favor of the American Civil Liberties Union. The U.S. Department of Justice also wants a rehearing. For more information, visit the Liberty Institute website at www.freemarket.org/ and the Mt. Soledad Memorial Association website at www.soledadmemorial.com. A picture of the Mt. Soledad Cross is available at www.wnd.com/images/soledad3.jpg.

From an earlier Veterans Report article dated October 24, 2011:

The full Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals declined to review or reverse the Ninth Circuit panel decision calling for the removal of the Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial cross. The Mt. Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego consists of six concentric walls with plaques honoring more than 2,800 veterans and a cross, which has been the target of litigation for the past 22 years because it sits upon government property.

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 333.*** 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

2011 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:

None this quarter

The Nitro Sage

Anyone can stand by you when you are right, but a Friend will stand by you even when you are wrong.

*A simple friend identifies himself when he calls.
A real friend doesn't have to.*

*A simple friend seeks to talk with you about your problems.
A real friend seeks to help you with your problems.*

Navy Times Article Recaps

1. JCS Chair, ADM Mullen retires; replaced by Army GEN Dempsey.
2. Ft. Hood shooter to face death penalty.
3. Military repeals Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy.
4. New SECNAV Mabus and incoming CNO Greenert face tough choices on budget cuts, pay and force size.
5. Changes in new GI Bill could put limits on some benefits.
6. Re-energize Chiefs training program to proceed Navy-wide, one command at a time.
7. Corpman amputee to return to combat with 1st USMC Div.
8. With pilot on board, computer program lands F/A-18 aboard Carrier Eisenhower. Program could be used in drone operations.
9. Piracy up 36% from a year ago.
10. Walgreens may stop accepting Tricare Express Scripts prescriptions.
11. USO starts construction on Wounded Warrior & Family Center at Ft. Belvoir, VA.
12. New advancement exam to emphasize in-rate knowledge and have fewer questions.
13. Corrosion problems still plague LCS program. Ship specification waivers & cost estimates questioned.
14. LCDR is 2011 Sailor of the Year.
15. Defense panel would phase out 20 year (50% of basic pay) retirement and replace with corporate-style thrift savings plan and vesting or 401(k) type accounts for everyone.
16. About 60% of sailors can expect longer sea rotations because of increased sea-duty billets and reduced shore-duty billets.
18. Navy plans to blast/sink 2 decommissioned ships a year for next 5 years in Gulf of Alaska, as part of naval air and gunnery practice on real targets.
19. President to pull Iraq troops after immunity deal could not be reached.
20. Twelve member congressional 'super-committee' seeks \$1.2 Trillion in budget cuts over next ten years. If not reached by Thanksgiving, automatic reduction triggers kick in.
21. Navy's fleet size being reviewed again in light of budget tightening. Fewer ships, planes and submarines.
22. Former destroyer Radford sunk as reef in Atlantic.
23. Chinese carrier sea trials begin.
24. Sailors tell new CNO cuts in manning levels and retention boards are at the top of their Navy stressors.
25. SPECWAR 6 loses 20 members in August Afghan helo crash.
26. Among service academies, West Point rates top in academics.
27. Only 12% of over 10,000 online survey participants liked the proposed changes to military retirement overhaul.
28. Enlisted personnel may operate Navy drone systems.
29. USMC looking at digitizing personnel records.
30. USCG retention board forces out 55 Coasties.
31. Gulf War vets see higher levels of heart disease and arthritis.
32. Senior maintenance leaders: report readiness problems (training, maintenance & manning) could keep fleet from meeting every mission. 'Time to Say No' to some requests.
33. Two new sets of cammies (desert & woodland) to have limited issue.
34. Ship-bound marines to train with Navy Seals in California.
35. Arlington's Old Guard soldiers tasked with photo IDing every grave.
36. Solemn 911 remembrances held across the country on 10 anniversary.
37. Marine receives Medal of Honor at White House September ceremony.
38. Battleship Iowa to become museum at Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro.
39. Military Times poll of 50,000+ active & retired military show marked decline in favorable rating of military life (length of wars and budget cuts to pay, health care and military housing) over past four years.
40. The destroyer, The Sullivans, CO sacked after firing on fishing boat that was inside a gunnery exercise range. It was misidentified as a towed target.
42. Extended Amphib deployments and maintaining aging fleet creating problems for USMC Expeditionary Forces.
43. Lawmakers expected to cut \$30B from 2012 defense budget.
44. Pet tarantulas among banned pets in new USAF housing policy.
45. Fifty-one year old carrier, Kennedy, to make final deployment next year.
46. Audits of DOD funding point out how difficult it is to track expenditures and inventories of the various services. Billions of dollars could be saved.
47. Older Burke class destroyers undergoing major hull and electrical work.
48. Tricare data stolen in September.
49. Administration targets changes in military benefits and retirement. Veteran's programs will not be exempt.
50. DOD again studying the possibilities of combining military commissaries and exchanges.
51. Outgoing JCS Chair, Admiral Mullen, points to Pakistani relations with Taliban for increase in recent attacks on troops in Afghanistan.
52. Adm Greenert relieves Adm. Roughhead as new CNO.
53. Navy's unmanned helos to be armed with missiles.
54. Navy undecided on choice of new sidearm to replace M9s.
55. X-47B batwinged drone moves closer to carrier landing and midair refueling.
56. Army formerly closes Fort Monroe, VA and Fort Monmouth, NJ.
57. Overseas holiday mail deadlines are Nov. 12th for parcel post and Dec. 10th for first-class or Priority mail.
58. Republicans to fight defense budget cuts.
59. Navy now says that at least one LCS will be stationed in the western Pacific.
60. Navy's 2nd Fleet merges with Fleet Forces Command .
61. Today's vets get 10 times fewer top medals compared to previous wars.
62. Eighteen COs have been sacked so far this year.
63. Lead ship in Zumwalt class destroyers is still on course, near budget and has had few construction problems (so far).
64. Marines Joint Strike Force jump-jet makes first amphib landing.
65. Florida congressional request to have Navy move carrier to Mayport in 2016 instead of 2019.
66. Iraq purchases eighteen F-16s for their air force.
67. Sub tender hits buoy in Bahrain causing \$1.6 million in damages to ship's rudder and propeller.
68. Four European ballistic-missile defense ships' homeport will be Rota, Spain.
69. As Navy draws down enlisted, budget calls for fewer recruits and recruiters.
70. Proposed budget cuts could trim Navy by 1 carrier, several older cruisers, 4 ballistic missile subs and an additional 5,000 sailors over next five to ten years.

Guest Columnists

Leo Falconio, EN2:

I reported to the Nitro in late 1980, we were getting ready for a Med cruise after a mini shipyard period in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. We loaded up with fuel and ammo and in February we left for the Med cruise. The ship steamed mostly alone except when we were to perform our job “Unreps”, other than that we were mostly on our own.

I was a member of A-gang, but we assisted M-div with their watches, as they were shorthanded. Things were pretty much routine until one night in June. I was getting ready to go on watch and had gone into the engine room to get my coffee cup. Returning to the mess decks, I was followed by thick black smoke.

Then over the IMC “Fire, Fire, Fire, This is not a drill”. The ship went to General Quarters to battle an engine room fire. The crew did a great job saving the ship, a civilian cruise ship stood by in case we needed assistance, keeping her distance of course. We were towed into Souda Bay, Crete where those of us, not on duty, received two beers each as we hit the beach. Our next stop was Skaramangus, Greece where we had a thirty day shipyard period to repair us for the trip home.

The fire had changed the Nitro’s schedule and we steamed home instead of continuing our duties at sea. Upon returning, we made readiness for another shipyard period this time Brooklyn Naval Shipyard. It was after nine months of work in the yard when the Nitro would get a new skipper. It was now early Sept. 1982 and Captain Loving’s tour on Nitro would end with a change of command ceremony - everyone in their dress whites. For me, I had my own change of command. It was the end of my tour of duty in the Navy. I said goodbye to my friends and the Nitro. Time to go home.

June 2011 and we all came home again to NWS Earle. It was a great visit and we enjoyed being with all of the association members and family.

Leo Falconio, USS Nitro (AE-23)

Chaplain's Corner

My gosh, we're already around to the time of year when holidays often overwhelm us, and the crush of activities reminds us of both the joys of the season and that we are NOT as young as we used to be.

After the festivities of October (the World Series and Halloween), we throw our interests into the month of November, when we celebrate Veterans Day and Thanksgiving.

At the end of September, Josette---a most dear friend of mine and WWII U.S. Navy veteran who served as a WAVE teaching gunnery to Naval gunners---called me to share exciting news. She and another mutual WWII woman vet named Ginny had been selected to participate in an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., to visit the recently built WWII Veterans Memorial on the Capitol Mall. Having visited this beautiful and most meaningful memorial on our own 2007 NITRO reunion trip to D.C., I knew that these two proud veterans would be in for the experience of a lifetime. I came to find out that these two friends, service veterans of “the Greatest Generation,” would be the only two women vets on this Honor Flight at the beginning of October, and that fact might be of interest in itself.

As life would have it, my two friends, Josette (the gunnery instructor) and Ginny, did indeed experience both the incredible camaraderie with others who had served their country in military service to win victory, and also experienced the opportunity to generate an educational experience for their “fellow” veterans.

Not really knowing quite what to expect, these vets went to our nation's capital to remember their service, the sacrifice of their friends and service members who served and fought beside them, and to gain an appreciation for stories which were previously untold or not widely acknowledged. These men and women visited all of the service memorials, the Tomb of the Unknown at Arlington National Cemetery, and the Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA) Memorial at the entrance to Arlington Cemetery. Each veteran participating acknowledged the sacrifices made, the price paid for keeping our nation free and the world a safer and better place, and found out that there is much more than meets the eye to understanding the breadth and depth of the service made in times of national travail. It was a challenging experience for many of these folks, both due to their “maturity” in years as well as the wear and tear on themselves throughout those same years. The trip itself was HARD WORK for many of these folks, but no complaints could be heard. Because these folks lived-out this incredible opportunity, the stories I've heard from my two friends as well as others who have participated in an Honor Flight can touch us all and rejuvenate a tremendous sense of pride we can have for the many defenders of our freedom. The stories, the pride, the memories and tears of joy and sadness will be with each of these precious patriots for the remainder of their days, a testament to their commitment and service. I am so thankful to know them and their dedication and sacrifice in service to their country.

I was a bit amused by the accounts Josette and Ginny shared about the reactions of their “fellow” veterans to their tour of the WIMSA (Women Veterans) Memorial. Many of the guys were really surprised at the extent to which women have served in almost all American military conflicts. And a moment of pride crossed my own mind, knowing that USS NITRO (in this case—

AE 23) has also been part of this broadening legacy of men AND women serving to defend our country in both peacetime and war.

So we come to the time of year in which we remember and celebrate the service of men and women in the defense of our country in our Armed Forces. I encourage you to make time in your life to find a way to participate in this celebration wherever you may find yourself, and be sure to SHARE that experience of remembrance and honoring with your family and friends. Find an opportunity to share the story, broaden someone's horizon, and teach the significance of service and sacrifice which makes and keeps us a people of freedom. Show your pride for your service, and for the service of those who came before us, and have come to serve after us, even to this day.

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

By Robert Eberlein

End of summer sales, merchandise for Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas in stores. Yah, it must be the Holiday Season already. Nothing like rushing the last three months of the year.

Hope you all remembered the US Navy's birthday this month? The US Marine members of the three lunch groups Jerry Satterfield and I are members of have let us know that the US Marines birthday is next month. Now they know how to celebrate November 10th. If you are capable of attending a Veterans Day activity, please do so, it's for all those who have served.

If you belong to other military organizations, remember to renew your memberships. Family members can do this for you as a holiday gift.

During the Holiday Season, take time to be thankful for the things that mean the most to you. Family, friends, your health if it is good, and what ever you are thankful for. Remember there's a lot of people that have less.

From me and my family, the association officers and their families, we wish you all the best for this Holiday Season.

Also, take time to remember those who man-the-watch who are far from home.

Fair winds and following seas,

Bob Eberlein, Founder,
USS Nitro Association.