



# Nitro Blast

## Norfolk Port of Call in sight!

Keep the Memories Alive

### Hotel Name Change & Update!

By Jim Timmons

*Fresh baked Chocolate Chip Cookies anyone?* The Norfolk Airport Hilton's name has been changed to the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Norfolk Airport effective April 1. We have known about the name change since our October visit, and it is part of the hotel's multi-million dollar remodeling project, which is well on its way to completion.

Although our group block of guestrooms is filling up, we still have several available for the reunion in June. We have blocked 20 guestrooms for

Wednesday, 18 June (for early arrivals) and 35 guestrooms for each night - Thursday, Friday and Saturday (19 - 21 June). A reminder - Our guestroom rate is \$104.00/night, and the rate is available for up to 3 days prior to and after the reunion. This rate is good for 2 adults and children 18 years old or younger. Included with the room rate is a full hot breakfast buffet, including a made to order omelet station.

Each person will be responsible for making his or her reservations. Individuals may call the hotel's toll free reservations number at 1-800-HILTON or directly at 1-757-466-8000. The hotel has given us a NEW web page where you will be able to make reservation:

<http://doubletree.hilton.com/en/dt/groups/personalized/O/ORFNADT-UNO-20140615/index.jhtml>

When placing your reservation for the 2014 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.

*(NOTE: If you need to cancel your reservations, you must do so 72 hours ahead of arrival in order to avoid being charged for the first night. This does not apply to reservation cancellations caused by medical or family emergencies, or travel restrictions due to weather conditions.)*

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

The reservation deadline is fast approaching and all reservations must be received on or before the cutoff date of **5/18/2014**. 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.

The hotel provides complementary airport transportation. After you collect your baggage, see if the Hilton shuttle is waiting at courtesy vehicle area #1. If it is not there, you may call the hotel on the courtesy phone at the baggage claim, the hotel will then dispatch the shuttle to pick you up at courtesy area #1.

When returning home on Sunday, the hotel runs shuttles to the airport on the half-hour until 10AM. If you are leaving after 10 AM, you must tell the front desk, ahead of time, when you want to go to the airport for your departing flight.

### Photo ID needed

All attendees going to the Naval Station Norfolk will need a photo ID (driver's license, etc.). I will also need the attendees' names as it appears on the license, license number and state of issue as well as date of birth, so I can forward to the security department.

### Fishing Trip Opportunity

Commander Craig Huber, former CO of the USS Nitro (AE-23), has offered to host 2 or 3 half-day saltwater fishing trips while we are in Norfolk. The best time for these trips would be Saturday afternoon (as an alternative to the MacArthur Mall/Memorial), or Sunday

### Inside this Edition

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Volume 16, Issue 4

Editor: Jim Timmons  
Association Membership 344

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

22 June, either morning or afternoon, for those departing on Monday.

It would be best to contact Craig directly by either email at nitro23@gmail.com or by phone at 757-828-6393 for details and to make arrangements. Craig has said a comfortable limit for his boat is 4 fisherman plus him as coxswain, so first come first serve.

## USS De Wert (FFG-45)

### Decommissioned

*From: News4Jacksonville*

After more than 30 years of service -- most of that time at stationed at Mayport Naval Station -- guided-missile frigate USS De Wert (FFG 45) was decommissioned Friday morning, April 4. The ship will be towed to Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Office Philadelphia and is slated to be offered for foreign military sale.

*Editor's note: The USS De Wert was the ship which hosted our wreath laying ceremony in June of 2010.*

## France Preps for D-Day 70th Anniversary

*From: Military.com web site*

Stars and Stripes reports that France is preparing to mark the 70th anniversary of the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. An official ceremony marking the anniversary will bring together heads of state from the major combatant nations on June 6 at Sword Beach.

### Message from MM3 Carl 'Swede' Nilson, 1970-73

The wife of Chief Norman Cummings (MMC), who was my second father while aboard the USS Nitro (70-73), recently passed away. He helped me attend my grandmother's funeral and told me about my uncle's death on the fantail and comforted me as I cried my eyes out.

Chief Cummings is one of the greatest men I know! His wife Sandy, who greeted everyone with a big smile, a warm heart and a cold beer, passed away this past November. PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO ALL THE AE-23 sailors who served under him.

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

**April - Carlos L. Rentas, SH2, 1979-82**

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

### 2014 Nitro Assn. Dues Classifications

***Regular Association Membership Dues are \$25.00 (including S/H).*** The dues packet this year will include a 2014 pocket calendar, a lighted key chain with bottle opener, quarterly newsletters, membership certificate (for **new** members only), crewmembers directory and a laminated membership card.

### ***Active Duty Membership Dues - FREE***

Former USS Nitro (AE-23) crewmembers, 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 photocopy of their military ID (to show active status) as well as a photocopy 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 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:

**Eugene Rich, AE-2, WW2**  
**Albert Holstius, AE-2, WW2**  
**MM1c Francis Murphy, WW2**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The Nitro Sage**

***"PHILOSOPHIES TO GET YOU THROUGH THE DAY"***

*For every action, there is an equal and opposite criticism.*

*He who hesitates is probably right.*

*Never do card tricks for the group you play poker with.*

## Guest Columnist

Robert Fluder, QM2, 1959 - 62

### *Memories of a Plank Owner*

Plank Owner: In the days of sails and wooden ships, the crew that commissioned a new ship was known as Plank Owners. Each sailor of that ship theoretically owned a plank of that wooden vessel. The Navy is deep into tradition and the Plank Ownership of the new steel and engine propulsion ships is carried on, even to this very day.

When Jim T asked me to write an article for this newsletter, of course, the subject matter was left up to me. It seemed that passed articles related to personal experiences regarding the Nitro and I'm no different. I would like to summarize my memories and personal experiences of the Nitro's first three years of existence, this is something I can relate too and now I will share with you.

I am a plank owner of the USS Nitro (AE23). This is something I and the other plank owners are extremely proud of. Just think, how many sailors have the experience of commissioning a brand new ship? The pomp and ceremony with all the news coverage is, in itself, exciting. You almost forget about all the work and preparation everyone of this brand new crew performed to put life, character and soul into this big hunk of steel. Then, on May 1, 1959, we all stood proudly and watched the ensign unfold, declaring that this ship, the USS Nitro, was now ready for sea.

You have to stop and think, that after May 1<sup>st</sup> this brand new crew had to drill at every station throughout the ship to bring life and discipline to form it's character. As a plank owner, you are the first with everything regarding this ship. First to pipe dignitaries aboard, first to fire up the boilers, first to serve meals, first, first, etc. Every one of the 340 officers and sailors worked at the task of being the best ship in the fleet, Atlantic

or Pacific. Ask any plank owner and it's always your ship, which is the very best.

How did all of these officers and sailors gather together to form this new crew? In my case, it started at quartermaster school. Upon graduation, I was assigned to the USS Shasta (AE6), out of Norfolk. The Shasta was an old merchant type of ship. I was issued my mattress and ended up putting it five bunks up. I swear there was no more the 1" between my nose and the overhead duct above me. My locker was located at the other end of the compartment. I made one short cruise and the next thing I knew I received orders to report to some barracks, at Norfolk, where this new crew was being assembled. I imagine that each of us had similar stories from the new sailor to the old salt. You can picture the wide variety of skills and personality types that the Navy had to gather together and out of all of this came the first crew of the Nitro.

There were three brand new ammunition ships built and put into service around 1959. Obviously, the Nitro went to the Atlantic Fleet and the other two to the Pacific Fleet. This decision by the Navy meant a rather heavy workload for the Nitro. It was around this time that cruisers and various other warships were being converted to missile platforms; their rear turrets were being replaced with missile launchers.

Our job was to qualify ships, regarding the handling of these missiles and the standard ammunition that we passed over to them while at sea. You have to visualize the first missiles. They were large, long, and clumsy to handle and the deck crew had the task of handling these new weapons. This is similar to our shipmates aboard the AE2 handling 16" shells during WW2 except that the Nitro comes equipped with counter weights. Those big ugly stanchions housing the counter weights were a blessing for the deck crew. The counter weights made a very difficult job just a little bit easier and a lot safer.

Before all of this qualifying really got underway, there was Gitmo! Our first trip to this Caribbean island was uneventful. While there we spent a number of days going through all the bells and whistles necessary to qualify the ship. I remember these drills without fond memories. My most pleasant memory of Gitmo where the bum boats. These small, local boats hauled vegetables and fruit to the base dock. From these boats I remember that for 25 cents I got a whole pineapple, with the outside skin removed using the guy's machete. Gosh those pineapples were sweet, juicy and very delicious in the Caribbean heat. During this time we talked up our new ship and became the envy of our sister ships that were there. Why? Air conditioning!

Guys, this is 1959, who had AC? Let alone AC on a US Navy ship. I don't believe there was another ship with AC other than our two sister ships in the Pacific at this time. It didn't take long to spoil us and we went and sailed the Caribbean shortly after we completed the Gitmo experience. The AC was a blessing. We cruised various islands and we were able to enjoy the sun and heat and come night time, the AC allowed us to enjoy a good night's sleep. Sometimes, I wondered how those that were transferred off the Nitro to other ships survived?! When you're spoiled, you remain spoiled!

After Gitmo, our sailing took us up and down the East Coast, qualifying ship after ship. After some months of this, we were ready for our first Med cruise. This first Med cruise was basically showing off a new US Navy ship. Local dignitaries, school children and others were all welcomed aboard to look around and enjoy the ship's hospitality. I won't get into the ports of call because we all have most likely been to them and some more than once.

After the Med cruise, and various other sailings the Nitro was due for it's first dry dock overhaul. I remember it as

being in the Boston Navel Shipyard, while some of my other plank owner shipmates say it was New York. Regardless where, this was another first and it was, for me, a very good experience. Looking at our ship with no water under its bow was a memory that will always stay with me. I was able to take some pictures from the bottom up. You can see these in the video that Jim has in his stash.

Then there was the shake down cruise after we completed our overhaul. I remember having a queasy feeling in my stomach, after being ashore for to long of a time. Throughout the ship, departments were signing off on various repairs and improvements that had been performed while in dry dock. Once we signed off on the repairs we were ready to again react to the next directives from the Navy

Sometime after my second Med cruise I was discharged. For the life of me I can't remember which port I left the ship! I just couldn't imagine that four years went by so fast. This means I will have to dig through our ship's logs to resolve this for my own satisfaction.

After that thought, I sat back and thought about my experiences aboard the Nitro. I came on as a QMSN and departed as a QM2. My rate made me responsible for the ship's bridge and it's navigational requirements. Therefore I associated with QMSNs, Signalmen, Radar men, Radiomen and those of the deck crew, while we were underway. I am very proud of this association with these sailors. I am also very proud of my association with the ship's navigators that I was able to assist throughout my service aboard the Nitro.

Each and every plank owner left his mark on our new ship. This mark was our best combined efforts, therefore to us, it is a very high standard. As I become familiar with my new shipmates, I am extremely proud of their professional and naval abilities. They

have not lowered our plank owners' standards, in most cases they have raised them! The Nitro was a great ship because of the officers and sailors who served aboard her from 1959 to 1995.

May I say that I am very proud to be part of the USS Nitro Association. It brings all of us together, officers and sailors, along with our wives, and our families to share the Nitro memories and our naval experiences of a past era. We travel, we share and we remember. What else can you ask from a great Association?

To my plank owner shipmates and to our new found shipmates who followed us -- Fair Winds and Following Seas !!!

Bob Fluder,

USS Nitro Association Master-at-Arms

#### Plank Owners

**Commanding Officer Warren C. Hall, CAPT, USN  
Executive Officer, Taylor Gray, CDR, USN**

#### OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

LT James C. Burnett, USN    LTJG Jan V. Huyck, USNR  
Dwyer, G. P., RMC    Kelby, A. J., RDC  
Thulin, R. E., ETC    Daniels, O. L., SM1  
Hunter, J. E., YN1    Taylor, H. L., RM2  
Whinnery, L. L., PN2    Davis, J. L., RM3  
Dix, R. F., RM3    Favreau, K., RD3  
Gatnee, W. O., RD3    Heller, M. J., ETR3  
Moshier, O. W., SM3    Tillis, J. H., TE(YN)3  
Welsandt, L. R., YN3    Wildermuth, RD., PN3  
ENS Edward A. Green, USNR    Attean, G. M., RMSN  
Boyd, A. D., SN    Chambers, D. R., SN  
Dorschell, J. E., SN    Drivers, C. H., SN  
Evans, M. V., SN    Fish, D. C., SN  
Grab, J. A., Jr., SN    Harris, J. R., SN  
Hogan, C. M., SN    Jackman, R. C., SN  
Kennedy, J. K., RDSN    Slade, O. C., SN  
Williams, W. E., SN    Moore, A. B., SA  
Sokolowisd, G. J., SA

#### NAVIGATION DEPARTMENT

ENS Richard A. Van Cise, USNR    Brown, D. R., QMC  
Nunez, A., QM3    Brownfield, C. R. J., SN  
Fluder, F. A., QMSN    Hakey, D. M., QMSN  
Keiler, Q. G., SN    Payton, S. O., SN

#### DECK DEPARTMENT

LT Charles L. Smith, USN    LTJG Johnnie E. Glayzer, USNR  
SURORDTECH Ernest E. Schwartz, USN  
BOSN Aaron H. R. Wildermuth, USN  
Buchmeier, L. W., GMC    Emelita, L. J., BMC  
Cupp, Q. O., BMI    Davies, A. "L", FTI  
Martinek, P. P., GMI    Walsh, M. P., BMI  
Whitlock, C. L., BMI    Beals, G. S., FT2  
Bross, M. R., GM2    Goff, R. D., Jr., GM2  
LeBlanc, A. J., Jr., BM2    Provaznik, M. R., BM2  
Tucker, W. V., BM2    White, M. B., BM2  
Ham, R., BM3    Hartman, R. J., BM3  
Leiper, T. J., BM3    McCarthy, J. C., GM3  
Miller, D. R., GM3    Nichols, D. R., BM3  
Robinson, W. K., FT3    Schiewe, L. A., GM3  
Allman, R. G., SN    Amado, G., SN  
Backman, B. E., SN    Baker, T. J., SN  
Bates, R. L., SN    Beach, W. H., SN  
Bean, R. L., SN    Bennett, J. D., SN  
Bradish, S. N., SN    Brown, W. J., SN  
Brown, L. R., SN    Buttington, R. F., SN  
Burke, G. A., SN    Caldwell, J. P., SN  
Collins, B. L., SN    Cook, R. R., SN  
Cowser, D. M., SN    Cravotta, S., SN  
Cross, A., SN    Crowder, F. L., SN  
Davis, J. J., SN    Deboard, J. E., SN  
Delp, G. M., SN    Dudley, R. E., SN  
Dulski, M. J., SN    Edwards, H. L., SN  
Ehlert, G. G., SN    Emmons, S. W., SN  
Fear, P. W., SN    Glalls, B. L., SN

GQlaschevsky, J. P., SN    Green, C. E., SN  
Gruszka, R., SN    Haines, G. C., SN  
Hallock, A. S., SN    Hanson, J. M., SN  
Hilty, R. K., SN    Howard, J. P., SN  
Kinkel, M. E., SN    Koob, R. J., SN  
Kukrall, R. A., SN    Marsac, G. D., SN  
Mason, C. M., SN    McIntyre, D. P., SN  
Mill, J. A., SN    Miller, T. J., SN  
Patelunas, W., SN    Peterson, R. W., SN  
Rose, R. A., SN    Satterfield, L. E., SN  
Schlaegel, J. H., SN    Shippis, D. E., SN  
Smith, J. J., SN    Stasko, J. E., SN  
Stefanik, R. J., SN    Stralo, W. E., SN  
Tinsley, L. S., SN    Vulte, J. K., SN  
Whitaker, J. D., SN    Willison, K. S., SN  
Frossel, G. B., SA    Johnson, D., SA  
Mullins, W. M., SA    Quail, M. P., SA  
Stenberg, A. J., SA    Stricker, R. H., SA  
Sullivan, R. J., SA    Wells, D. T., SA

#### ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

LT William O'Connell, USN  
Engineering and Damage Control Officer  
ENS Larry R. Young, USNR    MACH Wallace D. Carey, USN  
Bates, N. F., EMC    Cagle, L., BTC  
Hawkins, O., SFC    Miller, D. S., MMC  
Thornton, J. H., MMC    Fortson, J. R., MMI  
Lukasluk, J. J., DCI    Mayer, H. L., BTI  
Odette, H. J., EMI    Robison, E. A., MMI  
Stewart, J. R., MMI    Gaines, W. D., MM2  
Garland, J. B., MM2    Fitzgerald, J., BT2  
Johnson, E., BT2    Lewellyn, D. E., EN2  
Palmer, R. E., EM2    Rehder, H. R., BT2  
Rizer, J. E., SFM2    Sokolowski, R. E., MM2  
Beer, D. C., EM3    Berger, C. T., EM3  
Esposito, V., BT3    Gray, D. E., DC3  
Hetherington, F. J. BT3    Holsopple, M. M., MM3  
Hotchkin, L. L., EN3    Jamison, R. R., MM3  
Little, L. L., EM3    Longtin, P. L., MM3  
Lucas, J. E., SFP3    Morrel, W., MM3  
Moxely, M. D., BT3    Onisick, J. F., MM3  
Pike, G. L., SFM3    Queen, T. E., IC3  
Sniadowski, R. C., MM3    Adams, C. E., MMFN  
Antellas, G., Jr., FN    Barrett, F. E., FN  
Barry, E. V., FN    Bradberry, V. L., BTFN  
Byerly, D. E., FN    Carroll, N., MMFN  
Dobbs, C., FN    Draper, C. E., FN  
Dunn, W., FN    Edwards, L. N., FN  
Fairbanks, H., FN    Faith, C. B., FN  
Kent, R. R., FA    Stapleton, H. B., FA  
Fleetwood, D. A., MMFN    Fferming, H. J., FN  
Frary, F. G., FN    Gardner, A. L., FN  
Gorze, L., FN    Gregory, V. H., FN  
Hall, H., FN    Hamlin, D. F., FN  
Hess, S. R., FN    Hitchings, F. J., FN  
Hochstuhl, R. E., FN    Houck, G. R., FN  
Jeffress, W. A., FN    Johnson, C. E., FN  
Johnson, G. G., Jr., FN    Kaiser, R. G., FN  
Laraway, R. A., FN    Lucas, T. W., FN  
Mahler, J. G., FN    Mixon, C. S., FN  
Mitchell, C., FN    Paramore, A. A., FN  
Paxton, W. F., FN    Posey, R. E., FN  
Richards, O. E., FN    Rodeen, R. E., Jr., MMFN  
Rogers, J. P., FN    Schuler, J. F., FN  
Stephens, D. W., FN    Terpening, A. O., FN  
Ushkevick, J. R., FN    Bloom, E. E., Jr. FA  
Dreistadt, P. L., FA    Dunleavy, J. C., FA  
Fontayne, M. J., FA    Peterson, W. E., Jr., FA

#### SUPPLY DEPARTMENT

LTJG E. Fred Currie (SC), USNR  
SUPCLK Donald H. Symanek, USN  
Dunn, F. W., HMC    Flowers, A. T., CSC  
Proto, A. N., SKC    COX, J. J., CSI  
Gresh, L., SHI    Salas, SDI  
Estes, C. E., SH2    Gonnoud, C. J., HM2  
McCabe, R. F., CS2    Valdez, J. S., SK2  
Walker, W. A., SD2    Wallace, B. E., DK2  
Luke, D. L., SK3    Rosado, G., SH3  
Stewart, J. D., CS3    Teeter, L. E., SK3  
Trudell, E. A., CS3    Wanner, F. J., SK3  
Wood, J. H., SH3    Woods, S., SD3  
Alley, J. H., SN    Valdez, A. B., TN  
Reeves, D. B., TN    Rogge, D. G., SN  
Vili, T. L., SN    Greene, J. H., SKSN  
Miniex, C. R., SA    Pridokas, J. J., Jr., SA  
Kessler, R. G., SA    Crenshaw, J. E., Jr. SN  
Diekson, R. L., SN    Hogan, G. E., TN  
Humphries, H. C., SN    McAvey, H. L., TN  
Nichols, A. E., SN    Perdue, C. R., SN  
Peterson, M. W., SN    Proctor, B., SN

### Navy Times Article Recaps

1 Certain Navy skill sets could earn active duty sailors up to \$20K in Navy Reserve.

2. USCG sends icebreaker Polar Star to resupply research station in Antarctica..

3. Sailors of dry-docked ships Do-It-Yourself on sandblasting, priming and painting internal parts of ship instead of shipyard workers to save money.

4. VADM Michelle Howard will become the first African-American woman Vice CNO.

5. Pacific joint ops could see more Army helos on board Navy ships.

6. Tricare Prime to make a gradual return for approximately 170,000 retirees who were facing switch to Tricare Standard.

7. For active duty troops, commissaries are still a valued benefit.

8. Senators still pushing for new Iranian sanctions.

10. Pakistani protestors may cause US to move war cargo out of Afghanistan by air rather than overland routes.

11. Naval survey shows many O-1 and O-2's more likely to leave active duty than make Navy a career.

12. E2C, early warning aircraft, expands mission to managing airspace for units needing close-air support.

13. Vets blast pay commission for fear of 'broken promises'.

14. DOD studying changes to Basic Allowances for Housing to a 'locality allowances', which depends on where service personnel are stationed.

15. As USS Freedom concludes 10 month deployment, next LCS deployment could be for sixteen months, with more crew turnover.

16. New NCIS boss to reassess 'forced transfers' vs. impact on agents.

17. Fifty years after the Japanese sunk the WW2 destroyer Mahan, sailors from the current DDG Mahan held ceremony with one of the WW2 destroyer survivors.

18. Maine Senators searching for vets exposed to Agent Orange who served at Canadian military base.

19. After Tricare offices close this month, help with billing claims by phone or Internet only.

20. Recruitment, in future years, to be a challenge as US economy recovers.

21. Three carriers to swap homeports in 2015, but most of their crews to remain at current homeports.

22. Navy starts rollout of new flame-resistant coveralls..

23. Blue Angels have 21 enlisted billets available for airmen and 'black shoe' sailors.

24. Sea pay hikes and new cruise pay are incentives for sea duty volunteers. CPOs are the most needed group.

25. Pentagon relaxes rules for troops to wear beards, turbans or religious items as long as they do not interfere with military readiness.

26. Army to field-test prototype MRE pizza.

27. Congressional bill would allow enlistments of immigrants living in the US with a valid visa for two years.

28. FY2015 budget cuts could include one carrier and a carrier air wing.

29. Retired Storekeeper Chief, now missionary, cares for South Sudan orphans.

30. Navy starting to install new computer network on board 200 warships.

31. Army soldier suggests a retirement medal for 20 years or more of service.

32. Naval History & Heritage Command looking for naval art post Desert Storm era.

33. SecDef Hagel calls for review of military medals and awards as well as their rankings.

34. Enlisted women to join crews of 2 submarines in 2016.

35. Navy sub test three 8-hour watch standings over 24 hours vs. four 6-hour watch standings. Good reviews so far.

36. Enlisted to Chief of Naval Personnel: More weight for performance evals and less weight on tests for advancement in rank.

37. USCG helo mission in Caribbean yields cocaine bust worth \$37 million.

38. Plans are underway for a national Medal of Honor Museum in Mt. Pleasant, SC.

39. With military pivot to the Pacific, Navy sends 3 additional ships to Japan.

40. Navy's version of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter to make first carrier trap in October.

41. MCPON makes mandatory Senior Enlisted Academy studies for all E-8.

42. Army sends 33 Bradley Fighting Vehicles to Germany in support of activities and backup for NATO.

43. Air Force and now the Navy are reviewing charges of test cheating among officers and enlisted in charge of the missiles and nuclear weapons inventory.

44. House passes bill for in-state tuition for all post 9/11 veterans.

45. Army funded medical research develops small injectable sponges to stop bleed-outs on the battlefields.

46. Afghan farmers are paid to grow vegetables for US troops.

47. Retiree COLA cap has been repealed..

48. A study of Iraqi soil dust may be cause of Iraq vets illnesses.

49. Navy says as many as 16,000 officers and enlisted may be dodging sea duty because of "medical conditions".

50. First ship (USS Donald Cook) in Europe BMD shield arrives in Rota, Spain; three more to follow.

51. Navy develops world's smallest guided missile; 25" in length and 5 lbs.

52. Navy prepares to deploy shore based Aegis system to US base in Romania.

53. House sub-committee has ship overhauls and crew training as top priority.

54. Congress did not raise objections so Navy will add sixteen women to riverine boats in March.

55. Delayed Entry Program, for military recruits, yields fewer washouts.

56. Army to replace aging mechanized landing craft that began service in 1967.

57. Two Army soldiers receive Silver Star for fending off a complex attack at forward operating base in Afghanistan.

58. Record ice on the Great Lakes this winter keeps USCG cutter busy clearing shipping lanes.

59. South Carolina archaeologists uncover Civil War prisoner of war camp in Columbia, SC.

60. Navy to continue to rotate ships into Black Sea from the 6<sup>th</sup>. Fleet.

61. DOD proposed 2015 budget will affect pay, housing allowance, increase health care co-pay and commissary prices.

62. Pentagon FY 2015 budget would also consolidate Tricare plans and base fees on where the service is delivered.

63. Proposed changes to military retirement pay might slightly lower lifetime payouts but also allow for earlier cash 'milestones'.

64. Lockheed Martin is marketing the LCS design internationally.

65. To ease manning levels and to free up budget money, DOD may dock half of cruiser force and three LSDs.

66. VA to issue new health care ID cards that have better security coding.

## Chaplain's Corner

By Deanna Smitha, Nitro Association  
Chaplain

### TURBULENT TIMES AND SEAS

Recent events in the southern region of Ukraine have once again reminded us of the fragile nature of peace and détente that exists today, even after over twenty years since the cessation of what we called the post WWII "Cold War." As the unrest has continued in the eastern region of that same former Soviet state, and the war of words has heated up, we have seen turbulent seas and provocations mount to a serious and almost alarming level. Saber-rattling and brinkmanship after the recent Olympic Winter Games have whipped the region into a frenzy, and the world—especially Russian and American leadership—into a confrontation which is beginning to rival past wars of words between the two nations. But not only words have been flying; we have seen naval vessels buzzed by opposing aircraft, and the tensions have heightened for our service members on station in the region and around the world.

The threats of today are not unlike what has happened in the past, times which many of our Nitro family can remember all-too-well. Whether it might be WWII, the scares of Russian missiles in Cuba, crisis deployments to Southeast Asia or the Middle East, we were there. Even with the NITRO having sailed into history and memory, the Nitro family, and its descendents continue to be there and serve.

None of us know what directions the current difficulties will lead our nation and the world. It is our deepest hope and prayers that cool heads might prevail, and that leaders will use insight and wisdom to lead us in positive directions and better times, where our children and

grandchildren might not be called upon to repeat the evolutions which so many of us have seen in our own experience.

Challenges facing our nation will continue to exist. We are hopeful that those who serve—as leader and as members of our military--- will be of highest vigilance and great insight as they navigate these most turbulent times and seas. We too need to be both most circumspect and tremendously supportive of the efforts made on behalf of peace and safety of all peoples, recognizing the wrongs and making those wrongs right.

May God give inspiration and wisdom to remove the roadblocks which separate peace from the days we anticipate ahead.

Grace and peace always to you and yours, with fair winds and following seas in all of your endeavors, continuing to serve the fleet and the world...“making the critical difference.”

Chaps...

## A Final Thought

By Robert Eberlein

The winter of 2013-14 was a doozy! Guess most of the country took a beating this year. Now all we have to do is dodge all the pot holes in our streets and roads until summer. ☺

If you haven't made your reservations for the June reunion, now would be a good time to decide to make them. The final numbers have to be in by mid-May, so take time to check your social calendar to see if you can make the reunion?

A question for you first timers - when was the last time you were on a good old Navy base or a ship? The uniforms might be a real surprise to

you, as they seem to change with every new year. For all who will attend, be sure you have some sort of photo identification as we may need it to get passage onto the base.

Please don't use the two recent incidents at NAVSTA Norfolk or Fort Hood, Texas as a reason not to make the June reunion. If you believe in prayer, say one for the victims and their families, and all those who serve through out the world.

Carol and I look forward to seeing many of you in Norfolk in a few weeks; especially since we were unable to make the last reunion in Denver.

Fair winds and following seas,

Bob Eberlein, Founder,  
USS Nitro Association