



Nitro Blast

Portland 2015!

Keep the Memories Alive

Maine Reunion

By Jim Timmons

We are set for the 2015 Portland reunion. You will find attached to this email an activity sheet for the Friday and Saturday tours as well as the Saturday night dinner. As mentioned in the October newsletter, we have changed the date of the Association dinner to Saturday evening and will be having a Lobster Bake as our lunch as part of our Friday tour. The Friday tour price is somewhat higher than usual due to the Lobster Bake, which is a full dinner.

The Fireside Inn & Suites is ready to accept reservations, and we have blocked a group of 15 rooms for Wednesday, June 17 and 30 rooms Thursday, 18 June

through Sunday, 21 June, checkout. The room rate is \$99/night and does include a limited buffet (the only thing missing are eggs cooked to order). On arrival at the Fireside, you will receive a discount coupon that can be used for either breakfast (if not choosing the buffet) or another meal.

You may make your reservations by calling the hotel's reservation line at 207-774-5601.

When placing your reservation for the 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 and you may cancel your reservations up to 6 PM the date of your planned arrival.

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

Reservations must be received on or before the cutoff date of **5/16/2015**. On the cutoff date, all unreserved rooms will be released back to the hotel for resale. Reservations received after 5/16/2015 will be accepted on a space and rate available basis.

2015 Dinner & Raffle/Auction

Our Saturday tour should end early enough for the attendees to relax before dinner. The banquet room should be open around 5:30 or 6 PM so those who have auction items can bring them to the dining room.

For those who have not attended reunion dinners in the past, we are a very informal group so there is no dress code.

Our 2015 raffle item will be a 12" tall Lone Sailor statue. These statues usually cost \$100 or more if purchased individually.

In addition to the raffle item, we are asking attendees to bring with them some items they might want to contribute to the auction part of the evenings festivities. Most items with of a military, Navy or Nitro specific, nature usually do quite well. The items do not have to be expensive, just something that another attendee might like to own.

As part of Nitro Association tradition, we will again be donating 1/2 of the proceeds (up to \$500) to a local non governmental funded military fund or charity. This is our way of giving back to those who are now standing the watch.

IMC announcement: We would like to see as many of our New England shipmates at this year's reunion as possible, so please pass the word to those who may not receive the *Nitro Blast*.

2015 Dues Premium

A customized veteran's pin has been chosen for this year's due's premium. The pin is simply a way of showing that you were a member of the Armed Forces of The United States.

This pin has not been authorized by the



Veteran's Pin

Department of Defense and therefore can not be worn on

military uniforms.

We have ordered a number of extra pins, which will be available in the ship's store, in case you want to purchase additional pins for other veterans.

Inside this Edition

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Editor: Jim Timmons

Association Membership 345

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

1962 Cuban Blockade T-shirts

by Joel Pagano

On Oct. 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy called for a blockade of Cuba to prevent Russia from bringing more missiles to Cuba. The Nitro had just returned from England and Germany to Earl, NJ. When we arrived, we proceeded to take aboard ammo needed for the ships preparing to blockade Cuba.

When we arrived on station, it was late in the afternoon. As I looked around I thought it strange not to see other ships. This all changed the next morning. All around us for 360 degrees was the fleet. As I looked, I was thinking, are the Russians crazy. They can't go up against the US Navy - aircraft carriers, cruisers, tin cans. All that fire power just waiting.

At the time, I think most of the crew took everything in stride and went about our normal ship's routine. About our 2nd. day on station, the general quarters alarm

sounded. We had been called to GQ many times, always followed by "*this is a drill*", but this time it was followed by "*this is not a drill*".

I was in charge of a boarding party for my GQ station and had to report to the armory as I carried a .45 Thomson and .45 pistol, and was required to check them out. Every other time I checked out my weapons, no ammo was issued.



This time I was told to load the weapons, chamber a round and put weapons on safe. I then reported to the motor

whale boat. There, I climbed aboard the boat with the other members of the boarding party. The boat was swung out on its davits ready to be lowered to the water and launched. Up ahead I could see a medium sized freighter with

no flag flying to identify it's country. At the time, I kept thinking this is for real, I hope I don't screw this up.

Back at home, my wife Lana was in a state of nervousness as the news always pointed to an invasion of Cuba and war. Every where she went, people asked what was going on. They thought she had inside information because I was in the Navy and on a ship on the blockade. The truth was we knew less about the situation then they did.

We didn't know that President Kennedy had already sent a letter to Khrushchev accepting the terms of his letter of Oct. 26. A U.S. non-invasion pledge of Cuba in exchange for the removal of all Soviet nuclear missiles. He also gave private assurances to Khrushchev to remove U.S. missiles from Turkey, on a secret understanding that did not appear in public so as not to upset the public and NATO and seem like blackmail.

I'm proud to have served, along with my shipmates, on the Nitro during this historic time. The Navy has issued 2 medals for those who served during the blockade - Navy Expeditionary Medal and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. If you served on the Nitro during the blockade you can receive your medals by contacting your Congressman and following instructions they will provide.

To show recognition to members of the Nitro Association who served aboard during the blockade, I have designed a T-shirt to honor them. I plan to have them delivered at the Maine reunion. The cost is approximately \$20-25 per shirt. If you are interested in a shirt, please send me an email with size and number wanted so I can place an order. Include your name, address and email. Send to pogo42@comcast.net.

The back will have **Proud to have served** with the names of all those from AE23 who have served during the Cuban Crisis.

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:

Frank L. Motyka, Sr. , SN2c, AE-2, 1943-45

Charles James Miglionico, Jr. , AE-23

Raymond O. Walters, EM2c, AE-2, 1944-45

The Nitro Sage

THE EARTHQUAKES:

When you rearrange the letters:

THAT QUEER SHAKE

ELEVEN PLUS TWO:

When you rearrange the letters:

TWELVE PLUS ONE

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

Ernest Stander, AE-23. CSI, 79-82

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

2015 Nitro Assn. Dues Classifications

Regular Association Membership Dues are \$25.00 (including S/H). The dues packet this year will include a custom designed Veteran's Pin, quarterly newsletters, membership certificate (for **new** members only), crew members directory and a laminated membership card..

Active Duty Membership Dues - FREE

Former USS Nitro (AE-23) crew members, 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) crew members 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 crew member directory are not included in this classification***).

All Association memberships are valid for one calendar year (Jan – Dec).

Navy Times Article Recaps

1. Navy considering use of 3-D printed foods as way of providing more nutritious non-prepackaged meals for deployed troops.
2. President OKs 2015, 1% pay hike for military.
3. Botched resurfacing of ARG Bonhomme Richard's flight deck causes increased operations tempo for 5th. and 7th. Fleet ARGs.
4. Navy overhauls Command spot promotions to grades E4 through E6, with certain restrictions.
5. Command fitness leaders push to toughen Navy fitness tests.
6. Sailors & Marines on board amphib assault ship America put Ospreys through tests both above and below flight deck.
7. LCS Independence performs well during a number of RIMPAC exercises.
8. Air Force no longer requires 'so help me God' phrase as part of reenlistment oath. Other services also allow troops to drop the phrase from oath.
9. Proposed Navy uniform overhaul to include warm-up suits, parkas and lightweight and NWUs.
10. Navy announces new port visits in Asia-Pacific. Among these are Brunei, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Palau and Malaysia.
11. AP report indicates taxpayers fund USCG 'party patrols' in waters off Long Island. Congress seeks explanation from USCG as to why they were not reimburse for expenditure.
12. Navy corpsman receives Silver Star for braving Taliban fire and saving Marine's life in Afghanistan.
13. A new report says that 7 of out every 10 Americans age 17 to 24 are ineligible for military service. Three of the factors include being overweight, lacking education and having criminal records.
14. DOD approves cruise pay, for Sailors and Marines, of \$16.50 per day after 220 days of a deployment.
15. Navy to inactivate supply ship USNS Bridge due to budget cuts.
16. VADM. Scott Swift to lead PACFLT.
17. US continues to lead coalition air strikes against ISIS.
18. Navy destroyer Zumwalt to enter sea trials Spring of 2015.
19. Evansville, Indiana-based WWII historic LST-325made Fall visit to Decatur, Alabama.
20. Pentagon review of military health system reveals problems similar to those in VA; lengthy appointment times, quality of care issues.
21. Pentagon dusts off Operation Enduring Freedom medal for troops now serving in Iraq against ISIS.
22. Navy considers Small Surface Combatant (SSC) ships to fill out balance of LCS ship build..
23. Navy considers new anti-ship missile to replace Harpoon system.
24. To counter small boat attacks on larger naval targets, Navy unveils (unmanned rigid hull inflatable boat) Swarm approach to ship defense.
25. Washington DC Memorial honoring disabled veterans is dedicated.
26. Additional shipyard work for carrier Eisenhower is an example of deteriorating conditions involving ships in extended deployment and high tempo ops.
27. A scheduled 2015 transfer, from US to South Korea, of wartime troop control has been scrapped.
28. CNO, Adm. Greenert, pushes for max deployment of seven months and a more stable rotation schedule.
29. Russia to increase Black Sea naval fleet by 80 ships before 2020.
30. Sailors assaulted but unharmed in new Turkish Black Sea port of call.
31. Vice President Biden's son discharged from Navy because of positive drug test.
32. CFL(Command Fitness Leader) to become a new Navy enlisted classification.
33. As part of fleet pivot to Asia, three destroyers will change CONUS home ports to Japan over the next three years.
34. USCG surveys Coasties for input before overhauling enlisted training programs.
35. Gulf area Arab countries still unwilling to provide ground troops in war against ISIS.
36. Head of Naval intel unable to view classified information because security clearance is still in suspension after a 2013 investigation.

37. E-6, with eight years of recognized expert service in specialty ratings, can apply for a four week enlisted to LDO or Warrant Officer program.
38. DOD proposes consolidating Tricare's three regions into two (East and West).
39. F-35C makes first arrested landing on carrier.
40. USAF Pacific commander to discuss air safety with Chinese in an attempt to avoid future dangerous encounters in the air.
41. Frigate Ingraham, which hosted our Seattle wreath laying ceremony, was decommissioned in November.
42. Attack sub Jefferson City, after being stranded in Guam for five months due to water leak in propulsion plant, now underway to Pearl Harbor.
43. Adm. Harry Harris to relieve Adm. Samuel Locklear PACOM. Harris says: China to have 350 ship fleet by 2020.
44. HMC Wilson to receive Navy Cross for valor when treating wounded Marines in Afghanistan after he was wounded by makeshift bomb.
45. 2016 budget cuts threaten push for shorter cruises.
46. Refitted 25-year-old cruiser Normandy schedule to make nine-month around the world cruise this Spring after INSURV.
47. Unmanned Fire Scout and Sea-hawk helos deploy together on LCS Fort Worth.
48. President Obama accepts SecDef Chuck Hagel resignation. Will remain in office until new SecDef appointed.
49. Navy nominates VADM Elizabeth Train to replace Navy intel chief.
50. Russian military target Navy ships in Black Sea and NATO Baltic forces.
51. VFW to update image in hopes of attracting women veterans as well as younger veterans.
52. Ash Carter to be nominated for next SecDef.
53. Military Times survey of 2,300 active duty troops shows sharp decline in morale over past five years primarily due to prolonged wars, troop burnout, being underpaid and lacking a sense of mission.
61. Amphib command staffs must adjust to crises ranging from humanitarian and disaster relief to integrated fire support.

Guest Columnist

Lee Smith, GMG2, AE-2

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is Part 2 of Lee's article)

We were excited to commence steaming westward. Traveling West did not mean heading to a US main port... we landed in the Eastern Caribbean and eventually St. Thomas island. The AE 2 dropped anchor at the edge of the harbor in early October. This port city was beautiful with lush green vegetation growing on steep hillsides and aqua green crystal clear water. St. Thomas is known for its rum and spirits.

The Nitro continued West and approached the Panama Canal Zone after four days. After being escorted through the minefield, we entered the first lock and rose up to view the jungle on both sides of our ship. This was quite a change from the desolate climate we had experienced in North Africa. It rained on and off as we transferred through the multiple locks. This was my first time seeing parrots, cockatiels, and small monkeys. Our liberty was cut short in Panama City, which was located on the western end of the canal. Later, we found out our orders were to steam to Pearl Harbor. Fortunately, our route permitted us to proceed up the western Pacific coast of Costa Rica, Mexico, and ultimately into the Californian port of Long Beach.

My mother had moved from Oklahoma to the LA town of Culver City. Culver City is near to what is now the location of Universal Studios. My aunt Leona had married a man, who worked as a sound producer for Warner Brothers Studios. They lived next to actress Doris Day.

Once liberty was over, we steamed to Pearl Harbor. It took two weeks to make this voyage. The harbor was still strewn with blackened and riddled hulls of the US fleet that had been attacked on Dec. 7th, 1941. There were oil

patches near the sunken ships from leaking fuel tanks. While in port on November 11th, a terrible incident occurred at another port in Seeadler Harbor on Manus Island in New Guinea. One of our fellow ammunition ships exploded. The Mount Hood AE11 blew up and the entire crew was killed. The massive explosion severely damaged 22 smaller craft nearby.

We left Pearl Harbor and steamed to Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The atoll was very small and not a place for any liberty. Our next destination was Ultithi. Ultithi was one of the central Pacific's Mackenzi Islands. It was made up of four primary islands and it had a very deep (80 to 100 feet) huge harbor. This was an excellent location to refit ships for upcoming western invasions. Our ship was in this port for nearly six months. One island had been designated for liberty--Mog Mog. It was strewn with thousands of empty cans. Ultithi was considered top secret and it was used to repair the US fleet.

Near the end of March 11, 1945, the fleet in the harbor expanded to 15 battleships, 29 carriers, 23 cruisers, 106 destroyers, many landing crafts, and hundreds of supply and repair ships. One article for Ultithi that I viewed, while writing this history of AE-2, stated that the cargo and ammo ships like ours had distributed 1500 freight cars of ammunition... some of which we delivered ourselves.

One major event that occurred on March 11th, 1945, was the sudden appearance of the kamikaze plane that interrupted our evening movie just as the sun was setting. The plane flew over the AE2 at a high rate of speed and crashed into the USS Randolph CV-15 carrier. A major fire broke out on the front flight deck and it had a massive hole that penetrated to the hanger deck below. It ultimately killed 19 servicemen. We moved our ship further away from the Randolph, and our ship was was on general quarters for days scanning the skies for more Japs.

In May, 1945, orders came from Naval Command to move the armada to Leyte, Philippines. This turned out to be a three day October 23-26th battle for the Leyte, the San Bernardino Strait, and Samar. The Nitro supplied multiple subs with torpedoes and small arms from our ship. When quiet fell on the area after October 26th, Captain Foy Trimble ordered a number of the crew to perform some “trading with the natives” near Leyte. We loaded the Nitro skiff with surplus paint and shoring timbers from one of the holds. We traded for silk shirts and jackets with the Filipinos. They had secured the silk from dyed parachute silk. One other item I will never forget was their living conditions. They lived in suspended huts on stilts. By building their homes high, they could protect them from small hurricanes. The town folk were so happy to see us after years of brutal rule by the Jap’s.

We also armed ships in the Iwo Jima and Okinawa invasions, but we were kept in the rear attachment during the actual invasion days. By now our holds were near empty and we received orders to rearm. We sailed east via Eniwetok, which later became the Pacific Proving Grounds for 43 atomic bomb experiments between the years of 1948 thru 1958. Our next stop was Majuro to refuel and unload our remaining munitions to Pearl Harbor. Eventually we headed towards Bremerton, WA. A few days out of Bremerton, we received a report that some top secret bombs had been dropped on Japan on August 6th and 9th.

When we arrived in the port of Bremerton on August 15th, the naval base and city of Seattle were just calming down after days of celebrating. We completed some ship repairs, and the Nitro sailed down the coast and up the Columbia River to the port of Portland, Oregon. The ship’s crew had plenty of leave built up, and the vast majority of us were given thirty days leave. I took my thirty day leave with my close friend, John Meissner. We took trains to the southeastern Ohio town of New Philadelphia. While on leave, I received orders that my enlistment had been fulfilled. I was to travel to North Chicago to be discharged. John’s

enlistment had not been fulfilled, but he traveled with me up to Chicago via the train. Two years later, I re-enlisted with John. Both of us served in the Fleet Reserve full time until we retired. He ended his career in Lakehurst, N.J. as a Chief Master Sargent. I was mustered out of the Navy at the US Naval Air Base in Minneapolis, MN after serving as the captain of the fire department.

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Donna Wise

It’s a New Year! As we begin 2015 it is a good time for us to take stock of how we are using the time given to us. Many of us start a new year by making resolutions about things we want to change in our lives in the coming year. Usually those are things like bad habits we want to break or commitments to exercise more or eat more healthy foods. The problem with those resolutions is that if we really – REALLY – wanted to make those changes we would do it without waiting for the turn of the calendar. Resolutions are usually things that we think we should do, but don’t really want to.

One of the things I did this year that I have long wanted to do was take classes to become a Master Gardener. What that means is that I have been exposed to a whole lot of gardening information that didn’t stick, but maybe I will be able to recall some of it when it’s needed. One of the topics that was covered in my gardening classes was Composting. Gardener’s know that if they take their vegetable scraps from their kitchen and garden – the disgusting refuse that seems good for nothing – and pile it up so that microscopic organisms can feed on it and transform it, it becomes a wonderful addition to the soil so that the crops will grow stronger, healthier and better in every way.

To get back to the resolution idea, what if we took the parts of our lives that are not serving us well – the anger, grief,

sorrow, self-pity, bitterness, resentment and jealousy – and put those away in a pile along with the habits we want to stop, perhaps we would find room in our lives for new joy and anticipation. What if I took the negative aspects of my life and offered them up to our Creator to transform? What would God be able to do with me and my spirit? I’m going to give it a try. I’m going to leave you with a prayer from the Codeblack Faith facebook site.

Dear God,

Enlighten what’s dark in me,
Strengthen what’s weak in me,
Mend what’s broken in me,
Bind what’s bruised in me,
Heal what’s sick in me, and lastly,
Revive whatever peace and love have died in me. AMEN.

Grace & Peace,

Donna

A Final Thought

By Robert Eberlein,

Hope everyone had a good Holiday Season and is having a great 2015.

This is going to be the 18th annual reunion this year, boy time sure is marching on. It seems like these reunions just started, checking the TAPS page has brought me back to reality. I see names that were at some of the first reunions are now listed there.

All the activities are in place and the count down until we meet in Portland, Maine. For all our New England members, I’m hoping to see you there. This reunion is in your back yard and so please try to make it and renew some friendships that took place aboard the two Nitros.

As I understand, be sure to bring some warm clothing for the evenings and for the harbor cruise. Since we will be on and near the water, be like the good old Boys Scouts and be prepared.

With the assistance of Christian "Lucky" Luciani, I am going to submit a post mark to commemorate the 20th. anniversary of the decommissioning of the USS Nitro (AE-23) and the 70th. anniversary of the USS Nitro (AE-2).

For all those who were in the Navy during the Vietnam Conflict, March 30th is the designated day to recognize your service to the Country. If there are any activities in your local area, attend them if possible.

Our days of military service are long over, there are young men and women who have now replaced us, so please take a moment to remember them in your thoughts and prayers.

Fair winds and following seas.

Bob Eberlein, Founder,
USS Nitro Association.



Decommissioned 70 years ago

Vital Statistics

Pyro Class Ammunition Ship:

Displacement:	10,600 tons (full load)
Length:	484'
Beam:	61'
Draft:	25'
Speed:	13 knots
Armament:	2 5"/51; 4 3"/50 DP; 2x2 40mm; 8 20mm
Complement:	267
Cargo:	3,600 DWT
Geared turbine engines, twin screws	5-6,000 hp

Built at Puget Sound Navy Yard – keel laid 19 March 1919, was launched 16 December 1919 and commissioned 1 Apr 1921



Decommissioned 20 years ago

Vital Statistics

Nitro Class Ammunition Ship:

Displacement	17,000 tons
Length	512'
Beam	76'
Draft	26'
Speed	20 Knots
Armament	Four three-inch/50-caliber guns
Complement	275/325 Officers and crew
Max Cargo Load	3,000 tons
Maximum Power	16,000 horsepower

Built at Bethlehem-Sparrows Point Shipyard, Inc., Sparrows Point, Maryland - keel laid 20 May 1957 and commissioned 1 May 1959