



Nitro Blast

Last Call, Portland !

Keep the Memories Alive

Portland Update

By Jim Timmons

As the headline notes, we are fast approaching the Portland reunion. If you have not yet made your reservations or returned your activity sheet (an additional copy is included with this newsletter and may also be found on our web site: www.ussnitro.org/reunion), now may be a good time to do so!

Within the next thirty days, we must notify the bus company of the number of buses we will need for our trip to the Naval Shipyard, and also give the hotel as well as Fosters Lobster Bake updated numbers on the dinners to be served. So, help us update our numbers as soon as possible.

From the reservations made so far, we will have a few new attendees, some members who have not attended the reunion for a number of years as well as the list of regular attendees. As of this writing, there will be at least 2 of our WW2 members attending, as well as the son and family members of an AE-2 crew member who was on board from 1934-36.

We have not had as many New Englanders sign up for the reunion as have voice interest, and it would be a shame to not have as many attend as possible. If you know of any former crew members living in NH, ME, VT, MA, RI or CT, please contact or remind them of the Portland reunion. This will be the only reunion in the New England area for some time to come.

As with all of our reunions, attendees are reminded to bring any photo books and/or memorabilia they would like to share with the attendees. We should have plenty of room in the Hospitality Room to display all items.

Reminder: The Fireside Inn & Suites is accepting reservations, and we have blocked a group of fifteen guest rooms for Wednesday, June 17 and thirty guest 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

On Saturday, 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.

We are a very informal group so there is no dress code for the dinner and raffle/auction.

Our raffle item this year 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.

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

A Special Tribute to a Father

by Corbin Walters



Veteran's Pin

membership card and Veteran Pin.

I wanted to send you a much belated Thank YOU for my



Raymond Walters, EM2c

I plan to wear the pin attached to my airline uniform on Memorial Day, Veteran's Day and 9/11 in honor of my father, EM2C Ray Walters.

Best regards,
Corbin Walters
A330 Captain, Delta
Air Lines

Editor's Note: Both Corbin and his father were able to join us for our 2009 reunion

in Seattle, Washington, where his father game some impromptu remarks about his time on the AE-2 and how he felt upon loosing a very good friend during the war action in the Pacific.

Mr. Walters passed away recently and Corbin joined the Nitro Association in memory to his father.

Minneapolis Reunion

The dates for our 2016 Midwest reunion are 23 (the Thursday after Father's Day) to 26 June, with early arrivals coming in on Wednesday, 22 June. We are in the process of gathering information on Minneapolis area hotels and activities, and are also looking for an appropriate place for our Wreath Laying Ceremony; preferably at a military installation or historical military landmark. *Any suggestions from our Minnesota members would be appreciated.*

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

Milton Jenkins, AE-23. MM3, 82-85

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.).

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

I think part of a best friend's job should be to immediately clear your computer history if you die.

I totally take back all those times I didn't want to nap when I was younger.

There is great need for a sarcasm font.

How the heck are you supposed to fold a fitted sheet?

Navy Times Article Recaps

1. Navy reserves right to bring back commercial tagline 'Global Force for Good'.
2. New version of Hospital Corpsman Combat Memorial unveiled at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton., CA.
3. A second consecutive year 1% pay increase and reduction in BAH not sitting well with service members.
4. Survey of troops on 'Was Afghan war worth it' show mixed results. With goals ranging from getting Bin Laden to helping and training Afghan military to defend their country, troops feeling that US succeeded dropped from 2007 high of 76.1% to 2014 low of 23.2%.
5. Army General says US to train Iraqi troops for at least three years.
6. With increased funding, Navy adds 1 more joint high-speed vessel and 15 EA-18G aircraft to future production.
7. Enlisted women to wear same uniform styles as their male peers.
8. CO and XO of amphib sacked for setting a channel marker adrift.
9. Because of amphib ship shortfall, Navy & USMC considering placing Marines on other large ships headed to conflict areas.
10. Overhaul planned for 'A' & 'C' schools to get sailors to the fleet sooner and specific training for their next billet.
11. VA says disability benefits backlog may continue through 2015.
12. Head shaving for Boots may be thing of the past.
13. Next Virginia-class attack sub to be name for ADM Rickover.
14. DoD rules for rape cases change to put more emphasis on the victims rights.
15. Pentagon to close a couple of European AF and Army bases and re-deploy troops to other areas of Europe
16. Surface Fleet commander focusing on improving manning, maintenance schedules and morale.
17. Recruiting, RTC, Equipment and ship maintenance centers (shore duty) are increasingly used as other paths of advancement for enlisted.
18. USCG extends tour lengths for 2000+ jobs, while fine tuning changes to rotation schedules.
19. Former carrier, USS Ranger, headed for scrap heap despite museum organization attempt to save.
20. Fleet manning gap lowered from 13 to 2.5 thousand. Lowest in years.
21. High percentage of Iraq & Afghan veterans on new House Military Oversight panel brings new perspectives and insights to deliberations.
22. An Institute of Medicine report supporting earlier Agent Orange studies has done little to move VA to cover veterans exposed to Agent Orange.
23. President signs Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Bill.
24. Top Surface Command brass see 7 month deployments as becoming standard versus more lengthy ones.
25. New LCS ships will follow naming convention of Frigate class ships, which is more suited to ship's mission.
26. Missile capability to be part of Small Surface Combatant ships, which are part of the LCS ships delivery schedule.
27. NAVEUR commander wants more amphib and other large ships rotated to 6th. Fleet because of Russian aggression in Black Sea and increased movements in the Mediterranean.
28. Former Navy Captain, Scott Kelly, to spend 1 year on board space station.
29. After 2 year study, panel on retirement pay restructuring recommends 20% reduction in retirement pay to be offset by government contributed 401K plus service member contributions. Twenty year or over retirees to still get monthly checks, but those serving less than 20 years could also leave service with some accrued savings.
30. Congressional committee proposes dropping Tricare for active duty family members and retirees under 65 in favor of plan similar to Federal Employee Health Benefits Program.
31. Draft DoD FY2016 budget calls for commissary hours to be cut.
32. Navy CPO Continuation board to separate 161 active duty and reserve chiefs by September.
33. Navy looking at Seabees to fill 150 fleet wide Master At Arms billets.
34. Desert Storm memorial approved by Congress; location to be determined.
35. Pentagon proposes a 1.3% pay increase for FY 2016.
36. Navy hopes to entice an additional 5,600 sailors to ship-over in 2016.
37. Navy says sloppy navigation led to February 2014 grounding of frigate USS Taylor in Turkey.
38. Cruisers Cowpins and Gettysburg headed for an indefinite pierside 'layup' and 'modernization' overhaul.
39. Lawmakers would like to see a 350 ship Navy but future ship building budgets do not support the plan.
40. An estimated three dozen flag officers under investigation for possible wrongdoings in 2013 Asian port services scandal.
41. USCG 2016 budget to fund six more fast-response cutters.
42. New ship-killing missile developed by Navy and USAF passed its third flight test.
43. Congressional lawmakers skeptical about proposed retirement plan changes.
44. Inspector General's final report on Afghan solid waste burn pits says DoD was unprepared to deal with the potentially harmful emission exposure to US troops.
45. As this round of sequestration ends, Military may be forced to make major cuts to across the board spending for FY2016.
46. US and Aussie military leaders still in talks about basing some ships, under certain conditions, in Australia.
47. Senators critical of White House FY2016 budget that reallocates funds from Veterans Choice program, designed to cut doctor wait times by allowing certain classes of Veterans to see doctors outside of the VA system.
48. Troops being told to use their accumulated leave or loose it, as regs allowing year to year carry-over are tightened.
49. Humanitarian Service Medal is authorized for military personnel involved relief efforts after 2013 super typhoon hit the Philippines.
50. VA looks at possible closure of underutilized, or not being used at all buildings, which could include hospitals and clinics.
51. April 2014 fire aboard cruiser, Hue City, which caused \$23 million in damages was result of bales of rags improperly stored in engineering spaces
52. VA health system listed on GAO's 'high-risk' list due to failure to fix problems, track patient's appointments, insufficient oversight and leadership.
53. The destroyer USS Barry, a display ship at the Washington Navy Yard, will be removed in order for construction of a new bridge to begin.

DoD News Channel:

By Jim Timmons

The DoD News Channel, which is operated by the Department of Defense, has switched from cable and satellite television to the web only. There is a lot of programming about each branch of service, military history, as well as Congressional and State Department hearings.

Having watched this channel before, I would highly recommend it for viewing. Check out their web site for the programming you may be interested in at: <http://dodnews.defense.gov/>

2017 West Coast Reunion

By Jim Timmons

We are still accepting votes for the 2017 West Coast reunion and will do so right up to the Portland reunion. You may vote by either **registering and logging into** the NitroCrewmember site on Yahoo Groups:

<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/NitroCrewmembers/info>

or by sending your vote to me at

navy65-69@sbcglobal.net

or Bob Peiffer at

treasurer@ussnitro.org

You may also cast your vote at the reunion prior to the Thursday night business meeting.

The top four possible reunion locations (not listed in any particular order) are: San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas and an Alaskan Cruise.

Other possible locations are Portland, OR; Phoenix, AZ; San Diego; Honolulu; Seattle, WA and Denver.

This reunion will start the Thursday after Father's Day in June unless the cruise is chosen.

Guest Columnist

A Tour of WWII

By Bill Lewis, BMG3c
Coxswain, 1942 - 44

September, 1942 – Boot Camp at Newport, RI. First ship after boot camp leave, USS Indiana (CA-35). Transferred to USS Nitro (AE-2) in February 1943.

We made at least three or four trips to Recife, Brazil, stopping at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (known as GITMO), or Puerto Rico. We would usually take a load of ammunition and supplies to Recife for south Atlantic patrols. Later the planes would fly it to Ascension Island, halfway across to Casablanca for the troops fighting in Northern Africa, Egypt and Algiers.



On our return trips, we would load up with coffee and raw sugar for

Baltimore, stopping at Venezuela, Trinidad, Puerto Rico or Cuba. From Baltimore we would head back to Norfolk, VA and load up again with ammunition.

Early in 1944, we went to the Portsmouth, Virginia Navy Yard drydock to get ready for the big trip to Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Plymouth, England. The AE-2 was a World War I vintage ship with a double hull and all riveted, with wood decks and solid guard rails. In the Navy yard, they cut large holes in the rails for the water to drain out during the trip for up in the North Atlantic. Our trip in April 1944, we were the only ship in the convoy, with 5 destroyers or DEs as escorts.

In Plymouth, England, we loaded all cruisers and three battleships: Arkansas, Nevada and Texas with projectiles for bombardment in France. Then on June 6th, the big war really got started. AE-2 was on station in the English Channel and out of sight of Normandy, waiting

for those battleships to pull along side for reloading. The Mount Baker, ammunition ship, would run to the States for a load of ammo, pull along side of us and load us up. They were much faster than us. We loaded those BBs about three times each. They were really burning the paint off their big guns.

After Normandy, we went to the Mediterranean for the Southern France invasion, which did not amount to too much for us. We stopped at Gibraltar, Oran Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Corsica, where Napoleon was born. We took some German prisoners to Algiers, Algeria.

In September 1944, I left the Nitro in Algiers, came back to the States for further assignment. I helped put the USS Grundy (APA-111) into commission at Pascagoula, Mississippi. We took trips through the Panama Canal to Hawaii and then on to most Pacific islands. In Palau, we brought some worn out Marines back to the US. On our entry into San Diego, Japan had surrendered. We were the first ship returning to San Diego with troops after the war. I then went to Seattle, Yokohama, Japan and the returned to San Francisco and was discharged.

Bill Lewis, BMG3c, Coxswain
USS Independence (CA-35)
USS Nitro (AE-2)
USS Grundy (APA-111)

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Donna Wise

Phil and I just returned from a trip to Europe. Now I know there are those who will say there's no reason to go anywhere else, because the good old USA is the best there is. I'm not going to argue that point except to say we went not to find something better, but to learn the ways we are similar and different from those in other countries.

It was a nephew's wedding in Germany that prompted our trip. Through meeting the bride's family and friends it became evident that we are all pretty much the

same. We had many challenges in communicating due to our inability to speak German and their limited ability to speak English, but their warmth and hospitality was very gracious. The children are as cute as children in the US and their parent's and grand-parent's love them just as much. One does not need much language to learn how to fold napkins the way the bride wants them or to arrange flowers "just so."

The wedding ceremony was very similar to our wedding ceremonies with the exception that there needed to be a civil ceremony prior to the religious ceremony. The reception after the ceremony lasted for over 12 hours until 6:30 am. These particular guests did not stay for the whole reception.

We spent the next several days seeing well known sites around Germany and followed that with a cruise from Amsterdam to Antwerp. Our flight from Brussels to Amsterdam to begin our trek home was delayed which, of course, threw everything else off. We spent an extra night in Amsterdam courtesy of KLM airlines.

The hotel where we stayed was primarily other people who had been stranded by weather as we had been. Amsterdam is a hub for travel all over the world, so our breakfast was like a little United Nations meeting. No one spoke the same language, yet everyone was working hard to help each other out. The coffee machines were different than others we had encountered and people were helping each other find the condiments they needed and pointing out the refuse containers. It was evident that many people had never used the waffle makers that are often present at breakfast buffets, but each person was taught by someone else using no words and each person in turn taught the person following. If there was no one there to do the teaching, someone left their breakfast to go help out.

That breakfast was a beautiful experience that may stay with me longer than many

of the other amazing things we saw. Obviously, the memorial at Dachau was evidence that people can and do treat each other horribly, but the breakfast gave me hope that most people actively choose to love their neighbor. For that I praise God. May we live out our love of God and love of neighbor in our own lives.

Grace and Peace,

Donna

A Final Thought

By Robert Eberlein,

All the snow is now gone and the grass is greening up. Teenagers are wearing shorts and tee-shirts so it must be Spring once more. You poor folks in the upper New England area of the country really had a nasty winter according to the weather reports.

It's now April and the reunion is coming up in a couple months. For all the crew members who live in the New England neck of the woods, now would be a great time to see old crew members and relive the days of your youth. If possible, look up all the old photos of your time aboard the Nitro to share and enjoy a sea story or two and maybe a good laugh?

I know I've mention that if you belong to other veterans groups or have lapsed memberships, to try to give them any type of support. As the veteran population is aging and dying off, many are in need of active members. It can be as simple as volunteering at community projects, burial squads (which seems to be the most active now) to local veteran events.

Hope to see most of our New England crew members in June. As always remember, those who are manning-the-watch.

Fair winds and following seas.

Bob Eberlein, Founder,
USS Nitro Association