



Nitro Blast

Thank You, Portland!

Keep the Memories Alive

Nitro Association's 2nd. Largest Reunion

By Jim Timmons

attendees at our annual dinner, places the 2015 Portland, Maine reunion in second place as the USS Nitro Association's best attended reunion. The 2003 Providence, Rhode Island reunion, with almost 100 attendees, is in first place.

We had a number of new attendees and several who had not been to a reunion in some time, as well as our regular group of great reunion attendees. We did miss several of our regulars, who were not in attendance because of injuries or illness. We wish them well in their recoveries.

Some of our members brought extended family, which always makes these reunions more enjoyable. The hospitality room and bar area were always jumping, with lively conversations and viewing of the large selection of histories, archive and memorabilia.

The number of attendees who choose to arrive early for the reunion continues to grow. This additional time allows them time to visit sites in Portland and surrounding areas that are not on our official itinerary as well as sample the local cuisine with family or friends.



Portland and Maine in general has truly become a vacation destination. With its scenic views, quaint towns, history, seafood and friendly residents, it is easy to see why so many people flock to Maine in the Summer. *Oh, did I mention the seafood!*

2015 Reunion recap

After crew member check in during Thursday AM & PM and the setting up of the hospitality room, we held our annual business meeting. The following Association members were elected as officers of the Association for the 2016-17 terms.

- Jim Timmons, President
- Robert Eberlein, Vice President and Founder
- Robert Peiffer, Treasurer
- Paul Licker, Secretary
- Juan Reyes-Matos, Trustee
- Ed Gibbons, Trustee
- Leo Falconio, Master-At-Arms

Friday saw us loading of the buses for a trip to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine. The Navy provided us with a color guard, chaplain and a bugler, who was augmented with a bugler from the New Hampshire state Marine Corp League. Since we had two buglers, they played *Echo Taps* at the wreath laying ceremony.

In addition to the members of the Nitro Association wreath party, we were joined by LT Ian Underhile, PSNY Chaplain; Captain William Carroll, PNSY Operations Officer; Mr. Joseph Gluckert, PNSY Historian; Ann Warburton of New Hampshire US Senator Kelly Ayotte's office and Julie Weymouth of Homeland Heros Foundation (this year's recipient of the Nitro Association \$500 donation).

The day started a bit on the wet side but by the time the buses arrived at the shipyard, the sun was shining on the beautiful point of land overlooking the bay. Once the ceremony ended, we had a short tour of the base and then left for our lobster bake luncheon at Fosters.

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July, 2015
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Editor: Jim Timmons
Association Membership 347

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

Fosters Downeast Lobster Bake was an experience (complete with one-man band) as well as a bountiful meal (clam chowder, mussels & steamers, lobster, potatoes, corn on the cob, drinks and dessert).

After lunch, we stopped at St. Anthony's Monastery to pick up our tour guides (non-monks) for a tour of Kennebunkport and the surrounding area. Our travels did take us past the George H. W. Bush presidential compound.

Upon completion of the tour, we headed back to our hotel to rest and recuperate.

On Saturday, we spent the morning on a trolley tour of the City of Portland, looking at all of the seaside homes of former seafaring captains and captains of industry, viewing monuments to the USS Maine and USS Portland and to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. We learned much about the history, industry and distinct sections of the city prior to lunch and the afternoon cruise on Casco Bay.

Saturday evening was filled with the annual reunion dinner and raffle/auction, during which a special presentation of an Association woven throw blanket was made to Bob Eberlein and of a USAF knife to Bob Peiffer in honor of Bob E's founding of the Association and Bob P's tireless work as Treasurer and Webmaster.

Minneapolis Reunion

The tentative dates for our 2016 Midwest reunion are 23 to 26 June. We are currently looking at Minneapolis area hotels and activities (potentially having our Wreath Laying Ceremony at historic Ft. Snelling)

Any recommendations for activities or ceremony locations are always gratefully accepted.

Also, remember to invite any of the former crew members you served with to join us in Minneapolis. Let's make this reunion large!

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

James Clem, Associate Dues

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".

Associate 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:

Dominick Berardi, EM2c, AE-2, 1943-45

The Nitro Sage

Map Quest really needs to start their directions on # 5. I'm pretty sure I know how to get out of my neighborhood.

Bad decisions make good stories.

You never know when it will strike, but there comes a moment at work when you know that you just aren't going to do anything productive for the rest of the day.

Navy Times Article Recaps

1. CNO: Shorter carrier cruises of 7 months are a year away
2. Surface Force commander orders all underway ships to conduct live-fire exercises every day.
3. Army retired Sgt. Maj. loses retirement pay because he was declared dead. Problem is, he's still alive!
4. Navy investigating fire on board Amphib ship Gunston Hall.
5. Former carrier, USS Ranger, on way to Texas for scrapping. Too big for Panama Canal, ship will travel around S. America.
6. DOD requesting details on proposed retirement overhaul.
7. VA Choice Card program not working for many vets living 40 miles or more from VA facility.
8. COs now have more authority to authorize up to 4 days special liberty for compassionate reasons.
9. While transitioning to F-35C fighter, some FA-18s will stay in service through at least the mid 2020s.
10. Chief of Naval Personnel reviewing Body Composition Assessment requirements for sailors.
11. As China continues to pursue its agenda in S. China Sea, US steps up surveillance and exercises with neighboring allied nations.
12. Navy Chaplain faces discharge because of 'diversity intolerance' towards some of those he counseled.
13. DOD request for another BRAC round has Senators looking at alternatives for reducing infrastructure excesses.
14. Delbert Black, the first MCPON of the Navy, to have DDG names after him.
15. Navy to revert to previous ways of counting ships, under 2015 Defense Authorization Act.
16. Navy's use of 3D printers to make metal parts on board carriers saves valuable time and money.
17. Continuing budget cuts could force major changes to US defense strategies and readiness of critical military facilities for the foreseeable future, experts warn.
18. Report shows Great Lakes Boot Camp RDCs encouraged cheating in order to pass fitness tests. Cheating now showing up in fleet tests.
19. Command investigation sites 'unacceptable security failures' for March 2014 NAVSTA Norfolk-USS Mahan shootings. Six people including Mahan CO disciplined.
20. Career military personnel might be able to transfer educational benefits, under post-9/11 GI Bill, to dependents.
21. Five Navy divers receive POW medal for their sacrifice during 1985 Beirut airliner hijacking.
22. Navy eyes rotational deployment of Amphib Readiness Groups to Australia
23. As economy improves, SECDEF Carter concerned with enlistments in the military and retention of high-quality members.
24. In an effort to save commissaries and exchanges from budget cuts, DOD floating idea of price increases as well as some consolidations of stores.
25. The Navy's *Seaman to Admiral* program, for selected career-minded sailors, offers a possible fully paid way to a college degree with Ensign bars upon graduation.
26. House panel press Navy to buy an icebreaker. Currently, only USCG has them in their fleet.
27. As a counter to rising pressures, US encouraging Japanese navy to take on a more active roll in Pacific.
28. Pentagon asks for 1.3% pay raise for FY2016. Congress eyes 2.3%.
29. VCNO Howard wants to see more women in the ranks and higher cyber vigilance.
30. Mandatory retirement board for E-7 through E-9 to convene in August.
31. Navy's X-47B concept plane for use as a carrier drone completes first of four tanker refuelings.
32. New Denver VA hospital is \$1 billion over budget. IG reports Philadelphia VA benefits office under investigation for mismanagement of funds.
33. Remains of unidentified sailors and Marines killed on board USS Oklahoma, at Pearl Harbor, to be exhumed and identified over next five years.
34. CNO wants virtual reality training for surface ship crews.
35. While some female service dress white 'Cracker Jack' uniforms and 'Dixie cup' covers are out now, improved dress blues for both sexes are not expected until mid 2016.
36. The first, Flight III, Arleigh Burke-class destroyers to be funded in 2016.
37. Veterans wait times (from Sept 1 to Feb 28) longest in northern Florida, central Alabama, Georgia, eastern North Carolina, Hampton Roads, Tennessee and Kentucky regions.
38. Eligible sea duty command COs can 'spot promote' to E4, E5 & E6 qualified sailors from July – September. May be expanded to shore commands.
39. The design for a \$98 million Medal of Honor museum, to be built in Mt. Pleasant (Charleston), SC., has been released.
40. House committee rejects BRAC request and commissary cuts.
41. Selective Reenlistment Bonuses (SRB) could mean tens of thousands for those in certain critical ratings.
42. Civilian *Heros to Healthcare* program helps military medics get jobs in civilian health care fields.
43. DOD wants to reinvent military personnel system for advancement to bring it into the 21st. century.
44. Purdue University study to focus on use of service dogs with PTSD patients.
45. Civilian volunteers, representing a cross section of minority religious faiths, barred from conducting services at Great Lakes RTC.
46. Carrier homeport changes underway as carrier Ronald Reagan moves to Yokosuko, Japan; George Washington heads to Newport News (complete overhaul) and Theodore Roosevelt will move to San Diego.
47. DOD finally sends Congress its preferences for the retirement pay overhaul. As with both the Senate and House versions, it contains a 401K-style personal and government contributions, but also looks at milestone (years of service) continuation pay.
48. ADM John Richardson nominated to be next Chief of Naval Operations.
49. F-35B passes first operational testing at sea.
50. USCG Redeployment Assistance Inspection Detachment ends 12 years of deployment to Afghanistan.
51. High-tempo ops for forward deployed ships showing high levels of wear and tear, without significant yard time to fix major deficiencies.
52. According to Navy, Puget Sound Naval Shipyard may have civilian competition for nuclear ship recycling.

Thank You from the Berardi Family

DEAR Jim:
YOUR PRESENCE AND THE USS NITRO ASSOC. PRESENTATION OF FLOWERS TO DOM WAS A GREAT HONOR TO MY FAMILY. DOM WAS VERY PROUD TO BE A SAILOR, AND TO HAVE SERVED ON THE NITRO. THANK YOU THE BERARDI FAMILY

2017 West Coast Reunion

By Jim Timmons

After a lengthy discussion at this year's business meeting, about whether to take an Alaskan cruise or choose another West Region city for the 2017 West Region reunion, it was decided to visit the City of San Francisco.

Ultimately the decision on the 2017 site was made after talking about the substantial costs involved a seven-day cruise and the fact that it would just be a 'glorified cruise' with no annual dinner, meeting, ship's store or archive items.

Some people were still interested in an Alaskan cruise, so I have contacted the company that put together the Bahamas cruise for us and asked them to let me know when the 2017 prices become available. If you are interested in cruising to Alaska, let me know and I will pass your name along.

Guest Columnist

Thanks for your Service

By: John Mahler, EM3, 1959-60

When I'm wearing my Nitro hat people say "Thanks for your service." If I have

time and they have time, I tell them my story.

As a high school student, I had some problems. First and foremost I did not want to be there! That's a big problem. My father died when I was 15 years old, I was in 10th grade. I quit school when I was 16 to join the Navy. I went to boot camp in Bainbridge, Md., 12 days after my 17th birthday.

The first ship that I was assigned to was the USS Vigil (AGR-12), a radar picket ship. After about 18 months of service on the Vigil, the Navy decided to do away with the picket ships. They were looking for volunteers for the soon to be commissioned USS Nitro AE23. I volunteered. I was an FN at that time.

I was asked what division I would like to be in on the Nitro. I requested E-division.

I went through the pre-com (pre commissioning) in Norfolk, Va. After the ship was commissioned, I went to E-division. My duties aboard the ship were:

1. Standing watch on the electrical switchboard
2. Showing movies on the ship, sometimes topside in good weather and other times in the crews mess.
3. Taking care of the ships batteries, also.



I very much enjoyed the Navy and the Nitro. I'm glad I found the Nitro Association.

I've made so many new friends and was so moved when I found some old friends, such as my old chief Harold Odette also Larry Little and new friends like Tony Garbutt. I'm also amazed how our wives have such a good time with a bunch of old salts.

I was discharged from the Navy just before my 21st birthday. I had a few jobs, but longed to be in control of my own destiny. With my electrical experience in the Navy (my apprenticeship program) I started an appliance repair business when I was 23. I had several people working for me and ran the business for 38 years. I was able to put our 3 kid through college. Our 2 sons did not want any part of the business. Instead, our daughter and her husband took over the business about 17 years ago. It's so nice to see that 2 of our 5 grandchildren are being provided for by what I started.

Thanks to the U.S. Navy for my start in life.

To the Association board, KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK and thanks to the U.S. Navy for letting me serve.

John Mahler

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Donna Wise

Well, another reunion has come and gone. Phil and I had a wonderful time in Portland becoming familiar with a new place, but mostly having the chance to visit with old friends and make new ones. Many of the spouses of association members will tell you that after you have been to a few reunions it becomes your reunion, too. We wouldn't want to miss it. In fact, we had a member who wasn't able to come this year, but his wife and granddaughter were there to experience it and were prepared to tell him all about it. Bob Fluder, we missed you and look forward to seeing you next time.

As I pondered the experiences of the most recent reunion I couldn't help but think of the word family. Many people I know have gone to family reunions this summer and one of the interesting things about family reunions is that whenever you go, you meet some people you didn't know previously. You are related to them in ways that you can trace on a family tree, but you have never met.

All scriptures of which I am aware place a very great value on family. Family as

referenced in Scripture is, of course, those people to whom one is related by blood, but it is also extended. It goes on past parents and siblings and children to include cousins and all of their relatives to such an extent that the relationship lineage can no longer be traced. In scripture, the family becomes a tribe and then a people.

That is how the Nitro Association and reunions feel to me. When you or someone you love has served on one of the ships named Nitro, you are family. Those who have joined the USS Nitro Association have claimed that relationship as something that is meaningful. Most members did not know each other while serving, but that does not matter now.

If you are reading this, you already are considered part of the Nitro family. We may not have met, but we would like to meet you. I hope that you will consider attending the next reunion or the one after that. We cannot all make it to all reunions, but we cherish our time when we can. Someone at the last reunion suggested that there are some who think that they will not be welcomed if they come. That broke my heart. If you believe that you would not be welcomed, I think you will be surprised if you give us a chance. Whether you are young or old, single or partnered, gay or straight, or whatever other distinction there might be - you are family. Please get to know us and let us get to know you. The reunions are not about where we are, but who we are with.

Grace and Peace,

Donna

A Final Thought

By Robert Eberlein,

If you love seafood, Portland Maine was the time to fulfill your every wish. The lobster bake at Foster's was an event within an event. Comedy, music and lively servers made Friday another day to remember.

Sometimes there may be a glitch in some of the arrangements, which turn out to be better than the original ones. We ended up with two buglers for the wreath laying ceremony. If you have never heard of echoing bugles, it's something to

experience. Having the wreath ceremony on the bluff over the base water front plus great weather, what more could we ask for?

Having time to visit and catching up on what has happen to our Nitro family members is always a great time. A few laughs and seeing some long not seen faces is always good. It's too bad we can't get more ex-crew members to attend. That is why the officers of the Association have it so everyone regardless of where they live can make an occasional reunion.

As mentioned earlier in the newsletter, long time attendee, Dominick Berardi (USS Nitro AE-2) passed away shortly after this year's reunion. I know all those who attended the reunions he was a pleasure to have been present. He now is with his heavenly crew. Fair winds and following seas to you.

Have a safe rest of the summer and as always, please take time to remember our men and women who man-the-watch. Even here at home they are not without dangers being of who they are and represent.

Fair winds and following seas.

Bob Eberlein, Founder
USS Nitro Association