



Nitro Blast

The Twin Cities Reunion!

Keep the Memories Alive

Reunion Update

By Jim Timmons

In just over two months, the USS Nitro Association will meet in reunion in Bloomington, Minnesota. We are receiving a very good response for reservations at the Crowne Plaza Bloomington, as well as for the activities.

As a reminder, we have blocked a group of 12 guestrooms for Wednesday, 22 June and 25 to 30 guestrooms for Thursday, 23 June through Sunday, 26 June, checkout. These rooms are going fast, so if you have not made your reservations, please don't wait till the last minute.

The room rate is \$112/night (plus taxes) and does include a full buffet or breakfast for 2 people per room. This rate is also available 3 days prior to the reunion and/or 3 days after the reunion.

You may make your reservations by calling the Hotel directly at 952-831-8000 or toll free at 866-851-7242. When placing your reservation for the reunion, let the reservation clerk know you want to reserve a guestroom for the **USS Nitro 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. If you do not cancel your reservation by 6 PM the date of arrival, you may be charged for the first night's guestroom charge of \$112 plus applicable taxes.

The guestrooms at the Crowne Plaza Bloomington have 2 different bathroom configurations and you must let them know if you prefer a room with just a shower or a shower/tub combination.

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

Reservations must be received on or before the cutoff date of **Wednesday, 1 June 2016**. On the cutoff date, all unreserved rooms will be released back to the hotel for resale. Reservations received after 6/1/2016 will be accepted on a space and rate available basis.

In addition to our annual Thursday evening business meeting and Friday evening Association dinner/raffle/auction, we will be doing the following:

Friday- Wreath laying at historic Fort Snelling, visit and lunch at the 934th.

USAF Air Wing Reserve component followed by a visit to the Minnesota Vikings new home stadium.

Saturday- A day long combination Minneapolis city tour, lunch and riverboat cruise.

If you receive the newsletters by email, a copy of the activity sheet for this year's reunion will be attached, and we'll mail the activity sheet to those who do not. Activity sheets will also be available on the reunion page of the Association website

<http://www.ussnitro.org/reunion.htm>

USS Nitro Association Scholarship Fund

By Jim Timmons

Bob Fluder, former Association MAA and long-time member passed away recently and I had a chance to talk with members of the Fluder and Walz families at the lunch following the service and internment. Bob's daughter introduced me to her father-in-law, who gave me a check for \$100 as a donation to the Association in memory of Bob.

I told Mr. Walz we would set the donation aside until a project could be agreed upon for the use of the funds. I have since had discussions with Barb Fluder about using the donation as 'seed money' to be used to start a USS Nitro Association Scholarship Fund. This project is just now starting to be formulated and we hope to have detailed information to present at our Minneapolis reunion.

It is our hope to be able to gift multiple scholarship awards within the next

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Newsletter of the
USS Nitro Association
PO Box 1254

MISHAWAKA IN 46546-1254

couple of years, and we are looking into the possibility of having these gifts be 'tax deductible'

Stars for Troops Project

By Leo Falconio

While at a motorcycle ride to benefit Toys For Tots, I ran into someone whom I thought was trying to sell me something. This lady dressed in red white and blue was looking for veterans! A friend told her I was one and she told me she wasn't trying to sell anything and introduced me to **Stars for our Troops**. It was a star from a flag in a small packet with a note inside also. It reads: "**I am part of our American flag that has flown over the USA. I can no longer fly. The sun and winds caused me to become torn. Please carry me as reminder that You are not forgotten.**"

After seeing what she had to offer, I asked for some extra stars to bring back to fellow vets at the American Legion. She gladly gave me a packet of 50. She asked for

nothing in return although I gave her a donation.

Susan Wells has been sending and distributing stars to vet organizations, veterans and active duty for several years now. She holds star parties, where the stars are cut from flags and packaged for distribution. I will be having a star party soon at my Legion post.

If you were at a recent reunion for the Nitro Association, I'm sure you received a star.

The flags used should be 4' x 6' or smaller with embroidered stars only. If you have any questions, let me know.

If you would like to send flags to be re-purposed, please send them to me. I will forward them to Susan. If you would like to send a donation, I will give you the info here.

Susan E. Wells
PO Box 301
Troy, NY 12182-0301
www.starsforourtroops.org

Leo J. Falconio
26 Emerick Lane
Loudonville, New York 12211
LeoJ@nycap.rr.com

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

None this quarter

Anyone desiring to become a member of the USS NITRO Association may do so by sending a **check made payable to:**

USS NITRO Association
% Mr. Robert Peiffer
PO Box 1254
Mishawaka, Indiana 46546-1254

2015 Nitro Assn. Dues Classifications

Regular Association Membership Dues are \$25.00 (including S/H). The dues packet this year will include an Association 70 page 6" x 7" notebook and pen, 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:

Robert Fluder, QM2, AE-23, 1959-62

Robert Erskine, AE-23, 1960s

The Nitro Sage

Here are a few Armed Forces Service Rules:

USMC: Have a back-up plan, because the first one probably won't work.

Do not attend a gunfight with a handgun whose caliber does not start with a '4.'

US Navy: Go to Sea, Drink Coffee, Deploy Marines

US Army: Do not listen to 2nd LTs.; it can get you killed.

Make sure there is extra ammo and extra coffee.

USAF: Make sure the base is as far as possible from the conflict but close enough to have tax exemption.

Hurry to make 13:45 tee-time.

Navy Times Article Recaps

1. The VA has announced it has amended its enrollment regulations to allow Veterans to complete applications for enrollment in VA health care by telephone without the need for a signed paper application. The change is effective immediately for Combat Veterans and will be effective July 5, 2016, for all Veterans.
2. Navy's Director of Surface Warfare looks at placing electro-magnetic railgun system on Zumwalt class destroyer.
3. Navy to poll fleet sailors about dropping 'man' from the endings of many Navy ratings.
4. Navy Medicine has released Zika virus infection guidelines and protection measures.
5. Navy lowers ship biofuel mixture from a 50/50 blend to 90% petroleum and 10% biofuel.
6. US legal experts say Iran broke international law when it boarded and seized 2 Navy riverine boats in January.
7. SECDEF decides against retro-active grade reduction in General Petraeus case, which Army and members of Congress opposed.
8. USMC Gen. Kelly says legalizing Pot undermines the nation's war on drugs.
9. Twenty-five years ago US launched 'Operation Desert Storm', an assault on Iraqi troops in Kuwait.
10. Navy Seal Senior Chief receives Metal of Honor for rescuing hostages in Afghanistan in 2012.
11. Navy looks at possibility of extending use of unmanned aircraft to include carrier-based refueling tankers.
12. Cyber consulting and health care are two of the top industries for veteran job opportunities.
13. Centennial Commission chooses design for WWI Memorial to be located in Washington DC.
14. Two hundred Nineteen Navy chiefs will be forced to retire this year.
15. Congress begins debate on requiring women to register for draft and of discontinuing draft altogether.
16. USCG opens Academy cheating investigation.
17. The 2017 budget could see Navy manning levels reduced by 6,300; reduction in LCS purchases; docking of ½ of the cruisers to extend their life span and cutting one carrier air wing.
18. Navy still experiencing high rate of in-flight oxygen deprivation among F/A 18 fighter pilots.
19. Sailors body shape changes over the past two decade results in review of uniform sizing.
20. Navy corpsman, who was credited for stopping an Afghan commando's 2014 insider attack at base, receives Silver Star.
21. The senior adviser to SECDEF to hold services-wide commanders conference at USAF Academy on professionalism and its differences among the services.
22. Recently passed House bill would require any DOD employees to report cases of child abuse.
23. Army research and nutrition division finding more ways to make MREs appetizing.
24. USO begins 75th. year of service.
25. MCPON wants to revamp fitness test to increase sailors abilities to complete various tasks and emergencies aboard ship and shore commands.
26. As of 2016, female graduates at Naval Academy will wear same attire as their male counterparts; no more skirts.
27. With passage of 2017 budget, experts want Navy to rethink fleet acquisitions such as smaller carriers, more unmanned aircraft, multiple task air wings and other ships filling in when carriers are not available.
28. Navy considers a P8 Orion, sub hunter, aircraft station in Iceland.
29. Norfolk based Cruiser Normandy completes a 5-month, 11 port, 70,000 mile around the world cruise.
30. Defective weld joint in sub's nuclear-powered engine, which showed signs of tampering, has kept USS Minnesota in overhaul for 2 years.
31. SECNAV awards inaugural Innovation Award winners with prizes ranging from choice orders to \$5,000.
32. The Navy's Blue Angels celebrated its 70th Anniversary in March.
33. Army General John Nicholson takes command of forces in Afghanistan.
34. Pentagon discusses sending up to 5,000 additional brigade combat troops to eastern Europe.
35. Pentagon reviewing 1,090 combat valor awards for possible upgrade to the Medal of Honor.
36. Army National Guard looking for enlisted leaving active duty who might want to apply for Warrant Officer program. Bonuses paid could be up to \$20,000.
37. USAF opens 6 combat specialty codes for women this year.
38. USAF offering incentives to qualified Airmen who want to re-up and apply for Remotely Piloted Aircraft (drone) program.
39. Navy's first combined (men and women) SEAL prep school training could take place in September.
40. Navy under fire for plans to close twenty Navy College offices, not only from sailors but from colleges.
41. US Department of Agriculture and US Chamber of Commerce partner to help veterans looking for jobs in agriculture industry.
42. Post 9/11 GI Bill can help pay for on-the-job union or training for certification.
43. Many veterans have found jobs in the craft brewery industry either as start-up owners or employees.
44. Pentagon's up-or-out reform to the 1980 Defense Officer Personal Management Act is still being reviewed. Among issues being discussed is officer promotion because of talent versus traditional 'time in grade'.
45. Top three companies listed, in Military Times survey, as best for hiring veterans are Verizon, Union Pacific Railroad and USAA.
46. Wreckage of Navy tugboat, lost for a century, found off of the San Francisco coast.
47. US and Philippine government reach agreement for permanent US military presence at five Philippine bases. Bases to support rotational deployments to contested South China Seas
48. MCPON Stevens to retire from Navy after serving as Navy's top sailor for four years.
49. Submarine, USS Albany's top enlisted leader removed from his post for alleged drug use.
50. M&Ms celebrate 75 years of history with Military and will donate \$750,000 worth of product to Operation Gratitude for use in military care packages.

Guest Columnist

By Tom Papsodero, MM3, AE-23

Tom Papsodero & the U.S. Navy

One of the proudest accomplishments of my life was earning the title of "Senior Chief Machinist Mate". It all started in October of 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crises. My older brother came to me and said "everyone in our family answered the call during World War II, all of our uncles including our father, we should do the same". We were on the brink of a possible war. With a lifelong passion for the sea, we decided to join the Navy that November. A short time later it was off to boot camp at Great Lakes.



When we got off the train in Illinois, we were greeted by your friendly DI a First Class Boatswains

Mate named Murtage whose language and bark sounded like a Great Dane dog. He was a tough southern sailor from WW II whose ship the Northampton, was sunk during battle in the Pacific. As a new recruit, he was determined that this kid from Brooklyn wasn't going to get away with anything with him.

It was one of the coldest winters I ever experienced; the Great Lakes were still frozen in April, and I was assigned some of the stupidest night watches.....like guarding the garbage dumpster outside the barracks. When I made the mistake of saying to the DI who would ever steal garbage in the middle of the night he said "ok my star seadog you now have the "cloths line watch" tonight, and make sure none of the cloths stops (a piece of rope in lieu of a cloths pin) come loose or you'll be washing everyone's dirty underwear by hand in the morning". It was another cold and windy night also a moonless night. I found a location and placed my back against the barracks wall. At around 0300, I heard a noise coming

from the right of me. I yelled an order to "Halt! Who goes there"? I pulled the night stick from my watch belt prepared to protect the company's underwear. At once a voice came back and said it's me Murtage just checking on you. From that point on he used me as his example of a navy sailor. I feel my success in completing boot camp was from then on was in keeping my mouth shut. By the way my email is now "starseadog" thanks to my DI who set me on the right path. His departing words to me were "Remember kid in the Navy be tough, but not ruthless".

Next I was assigned to a World War II Fletcher Class destroyer the USS Remy. We did cruises to the Caribbean, Atlantic patrols and lots of gunnery practice at the Island of Culebra. Strange as it was my GQ station was in the handling room of mount 51, a 5"38 forward gun turret, learned a lot about munitions handling machinery.

In the spring of 1964 as a MMFN I was given choice duty as I was told.....Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. I was sent to Norfolk Naval Station to wait for a flight to Cuba. During my TAD at Norfolk, I as a junior enlisted I was assigned to the galley. I thought wow plenty of food.....not so, but sent to the scullery where I had to empty 15,000 trays, dishes and cups a day. My work day was from 0500 setup to 2000 final trash removal. Here I learned a lot about dish washing equipment.....the Navy always training.

Finally, after two weeks in the scullery my flight day arrived. We were told it was a first class flight to Cuba. At 0700 in the morning about 100 of us were put on buses, handed a box lunch (brown edge baloney sandwich, pear, apple juice, two chiclets gum and a piece of toilet tissue used in that order). We were then taken to the Naval Air Station where we were loaded on an old C54 MATS transport plane with canvas seats, six across, and all facing backwards....if this was the Navy's first class flying, I

wondered what coach would be like. Glad I'm a snipe!

Landing in Cuba in the late afternoon at the Leeward Point Air Station was like landing on a carrier, big plane, and short runway....and how about some nice turbulence then we land. Now I knew why the seats faced backward. From the air strip we were ferried across the bay to the Naval Base under the Command of Admiral J.D. Bulkeley (PT Boat Captain who took General MacArthur from Corregidor to Australia in WW II). The Naval Station was under my Commanding Officer, Captain R.S. Redmayne, who was the Engineering Officer who survived the sinking of the USS Indianapolis. At the time, there was very strict water conservation in effect since the Admiral had cut the water line. Castro had accused the U.S. of stealing his water. So showers were every other day or dip in the ocean. My assignment was the special boat locker, engine and vehicle maintenance. My collateral duty was Echo Company, ground defense forces.



1964 Me & My Betty

The second week after arrival I was sent over to the Marine Base for indoctrination to infantry type training in case Fidel Castro decided to take the base by force.

There a Marine Gunny Sergeant asked a group of us if any of us ran on the track team in high school. I raised my hand, he said "great you will be the BAR man with your girlfriend Betty Boop, you and her will be engaged for the next year". Being naïve, I said I don't know anything about mixing drinks. With his face reddened and at the top of his lungs he yelled "look @%&hole this is a BAR..... a Browning Automatic Rifle, and in this company we nicknamed her Betty Boop" as he tossed this 16 lb machine gun to me. If that wasn't enough he said, "After firing Betty for awhile you'd better keep

running your butt off to a new position or your both will be history. Betty was older than me she was born M1918.....we lived together peacefully for the next year, she was never too far from me. Although at times I would ask myself, what happened for my love of the sea, and to stay away from digging foxholes?

One time while working at the boat locker, an officer had missed the ferry to Leeward Point Air Station. In order to catch his plane on time he took a 15 ft motor boat across the bay and left it tied at the landing. At 1630 our Chief told the Second Class Engineman and me, now a Third Class Machinist Mate to go over by ferry, and bring the boat back before dark 2000. At about 1900 while we were half way back across the bay, when a tropical thunder storm closed upon us rapidly. It got so dark we could hardly see, the wind and sea picked up with torrential rain and lightning. In order to stay afloat, and not capsize we had to steer to the upper bay toward Castro's Cuba while constantly bailing water with my white hat and praying that the engine doesn't quit. Fortunately, the wind had blown us to a little cay island in the upper bay area where we took shelter until the storm passed. Late that night we made it back to the boat locker.....no one had missed us.

In the early spring of 1965 my detailer said, "since you spent a year on the "Cactus Rock" what is your wish list"? I said, "A big ship with a small crew". Well, I got not exactly what I was thinking of. However, I was assigned the USS Nitro AE23 at Davisville, RI. So I packed my bags headed up I-95 from being on leave in New York to Davisville. There on the far end of the Quonset Point Naval Air Station, I found her. She was a beautiful ship in my eyes, only seven years old, guns forward and aft, big with a small crew. I was assigned to "M" Division by Lt. Kreiger the Engineering Officer. MM1 Larks was the Leading PO, and MM2 Rich Pinder was my section #2 leading PO. Larks had me

working with who we all know as the "Runt". I must say Runt knew his engineering systems like nobody else I know. I learned a lot from him. It wasn't before long I knew the main propulsion plant well enough to light-off and secure the plant. His teaching paid off one weekend, late at night there was a large brush fire on the base. We were ordered to get underway immediately by the base fire department. Our section along with R. Pinder, Ray Smith, J. Corcoran, Tom Wibbles, and Bob Knoll and the guys in "B" Division under BT3 Newsome got the turbines rolling and the ship underway in less than 20 minutes. We steamed down Narragansett Bay and anchored until the next day.

In the late summer we made a cruise to the Caribbean visited Curacao had a good time, drank a few beers and returned to Davisville. In October we were told we were going to the Med. We steamed to Earle, NJ and Yorktown, VA, and loaded up with so much ammunition that it all wouldn't fit in the holds. Finally, we had to store the 500 lb bombs on the open weather decks. You had to walk across the bombs to get to sound the fresh water tanks.....what a way to cross the Atlantic to Rota, Spain. Columbus I have returned not with gold, but bombs!

One night in the Med, I was on the throttles, we were steaming at standard speed, when suddenly at 0200 hours the engine order telegraph went to back emergency. Seconds later it rang to stop and over the headphone was told to lock the shaft. Shortly, over the IMC the Captain came on, and said we were going over a large area of fishing nets, and had to do this procedure with the engines to coast over the next five sets of nets. It was a hell of a night, especially for the boiler room crew lighting, and pulling burners. At Quarters the next morning, for the first time I heard Lt. Kreiger say he was very proud of his "M" & "B" Divisions on handling the situation that night.

At the end of our Med cruise in 1966 we were told the ship was going into the

yards for overhaul and modernization. We had orders to take one of each piece of machinery in the engine room apart to take clearance readings for the upcoming overhaul. This was some experience.

Finally, my active duty time was coming to an end; I was now an MM2 and was asked to extend for the yard period. But I felt the Nitro was in good hands with Phil Wise, Corcoran, Smith and the rest of our section. So I bid the Nitro farewell in May 1966.

Later that year, the Vietnam War was heating up and I decided to join the active Naval Reserves in case I was called up. For the next 25 years, I served in the reserves on all types of naval ships; Carriers like Lexington, Franklin Roosevelt, Saratoga, and Battleship Iowa, to the Yard Repair Vessels 26 & 64. The peak of my Naval Career came in 1982 when I was selected as a Senior Chief Machinist Mate by the Washington Selection Board. I retired from the Navy after 30 Years in 1992, meeting some of the greatest sailors in my life, from WW II Veterans, to my lifelong Nitro Family Shipmates along the way.....What a voyage!

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain Donna Wise

Happy spring! As I write this article Phil and I are packing our bags in preparation for a month long trip out of the country. We have been asked repeatedly, "with the political upheaval going on all around the world aren't you afraid to travel?" My answer is always "no" for several reasons.

In Christian scripture, the phrase "be not afraid" appears 365 times. Frequently the phrase is used by a heavenly being to comfort someone who is terrified of being in the presence of said heavenly being. Encountering the holy is always a source of awe that brings mere humans to their knees. But I think "be not afraid" applies to less spiritual encounters as

well. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "God didn't give us a spirit that is timid but one that is powerful, loving, and self-controlled."

Of what should we be afraid? We are all going to die one day. Death is definitely something that frequently instills fear for many of us. As a person who believes that our lives do not end in the death of the body and who anticipates spending eternity with my creator, I do not fear death. I do not relish the process leading to death, but death itself holds much promise.

I understand and appreciate the apprehension and concern that our friends hold about traveling, because it means being in situations that are unfamiliar and where we might be vulnerable to anyone who wishes to do harm. The truth is we don't have to travel to encounter dangerous situations. Most days we get into our car and drive somewhere. We could get into a car wreck. We live in Kansas. We could get hit by a tornado, or a prairie fire or earthquake. We are getting older. We could have a heart attack or stroke.

No those are not the reasons we travel – to get away from all the dangers of home. We travel to see new places and have new experiences. We travel to see more of this wonderful world God has created and to have a more complete perspective. Sometimes it's exhausting and frustrating, but it has not yet been scary.

My point is that we could stay home and feel safe, but we really would not be any safer. We might be more comfortable at home, but we will eventually die whether we travel or stay home. For me the fear is that I will die without having fully lived and I don't think that would please my creator.

Another reason we are not afraid of travel is that we are not going to an area considered dangerous. We will be going to New Zealand and Australia. If all goes as planned we will be back to tell you all about it at the reunion in Minneapolis. If our plane falls out of the sky we will be

on the ultimate journey in heaven. Either way it will be a great trip.

Grace and Peace,

Donna

A Final Thought

By Robert Eberlein,

There were no "era" veterans for World War Two or Korea, then came Vietnam. For some unknown reason, if you were not "in country or area of action", you were considered a "era veteran". In the Vietnam Veterans of America, (VVA) March/April issue, the Public Affairs Committee made Motion 7 to remove the term "Vietnam Era Veteran" from all of the organization's publications. We are ALL now Vietnam Veterans where ever we served during that time. Checking with the national office of the American Legion, they too said anyone not in combat action during that time frame is considered a "Vietnam Veteran" as does your Veterans Administration benefits.

Since no one received a "Welcome Home" activity, *Welcome Home* to all those who served during the Vietnam War. VVA eligibility dates for 'in country' is Feb. 28, 1961 - May 7, 1975 and through out the world, Aug. 5, 1964., The American Legion eligibility start date is also Feb. 28, 1961.

Another two and a half months and we will be meeting in Minnesota. By the time this article is read, I will have made and paid for the June's activities. If you haven't gotten around to making up your mind, please do, so that a final head count can be done for all the activities. This is your time to see old friends and to re live the good times aboard the Nitro's.

It is always sad to hear of the passing of one our crew members. At least Jim Timmons was near enough to represent the Nitro family for Robert "Bob" Fluder services. I know we all send our deepest condolences to the Fluder Family.

Please keep the Fluder Family in your thoughts and those who man-the-watch through out the world.

Fair winds and following seas.

Bob Eberlein, Founder,
USS Nitro Association