



Nitro Blast

The Newsletter of the
USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23)
Association
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Assn. Membership 210

Surprising San Diego *Keep the Memories Alive*

June Gloom to Sunny San Diego

The 6th. Annual reunion for the USS Nitro Association was another resounding success. Approximately 30 former crewmembers and their guests attended this year's reunion in sunny ??? San Diego, CA. Some could only attend certain activities but the vast majority was able to stay for the entire reunion. There were 45 persons for the reunion dinner and 42 who attended the wreath laying ceremony onboard USS Stethem (DDG-63). It was particularly gratifying to see the number of western United States crewmembers who were in attendance. Below is a list of crewmembers attending the reunion, many of whom were first time attendees.

Stephen Bissonette, James Caithamer (USS Suribachi AE-21), Charles Cousins, Robert Eberlein, Brian Evans, Tom Ewing, William Lewis, Paul Licker, Joel Magallanes, Scott Maxey, Richard Menzel, George Miller, Walter Newsome, Robert Peiffer, Juan Reyes, Howard Root, John Sachs, Mark Sikes, Don Skilman, Lee Smith, Deanna Smitha, Joseph M. Snyder, William Stralo, Jim Timmons, Richard VanCise, Ronald Webb, Philip Wise, Robert Drake and Aaron Wildermuth.

Prior to the official start of the reunion, several attendees went deep-sea fishing, and believe it or not, most actually caught some fish (or at least that is what they told us ☺). Hope you are feeling better Carol!

Friday's tour included a stop in La Jolla to view the sea lions sunbathing in the "cove", a stop at the Mt. Soledad Veteran's memorial to take in the spectacular view and the monument which honors both living and deceased military veterans. The plaques on which the veteran's information is inscribed is the same black marble that was used in the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington D. C.

Prior to the dinner Friday evening, John Sachs, Association member, presented Bob Eberlein, Association president, a U. S. Navy flag and POW/MIA flag. John was on board USS Nitro (AE-2) as a passenger for less than one month, while traveling from Norfolk to San Diego in 1938. With most sincere thanks, we accept your generous donation. These flags will be displayed with pride at all future Nitro Association reunions.

We were fortunate to have the Sailor of the Year, EW1 Ronald Ross from the USS Stethem (DDG-63) and his wife as our guests at the Association dinner. Also attending this year's dinner was one of the former commanding officers of USS Nitro (AE-23) – Joseph M. "Pete" Snyder. Greetings from former AE-23 skipper and retired VADM Thomas Walker were also read.

After dinner, we had a lot of fun and raised over \$600 with our second annual reunion auction and raffle. Thanks to all of you who purchased items and to those who were able to obtain items or donated items for this year's auction. A special BRAVO ZULU goes out to our auctioneer, Paul Licker for another outstanding job.

Saturday was a day of remembrance and a glimpse at the present and future of the U. S. Navy. Our visit to the USS Stethem (DDG-63), for the Association wreath laying

ceremony, was both a solemn and special occasion for all of

(Wreath Laying Ceremony on board USS Stethem (DDG-63) our crew. The Naval Dental Center presented the colors and a bugler from the Navy Band Southwest played

“Taps”. Deanna Smitha (AE-23 chaplain in 1990) delivered the prayer and Howard Root (AE-23) and John Sachs (AE-2) released the Nitro Association’s red, white and blue flowered wreath into San Diego Bay from the fantail of the Stethem.

While paying respect for our departed crew members and for those who perished in the events of 9-11, we were given the special privilege of touring one of the Navy’s most advanced warships. The crew of the Stethem could not have been nicer or more knowledgeable about their ship, it’s systems and mission. A comment that was heard, during the tour, from a former Nitro crew member, “Were we ever that young.”

2003 – Providence/Davisville, RI

We now look forward to the 2003 gathering and are expanding the number of days we will be in reunion in Rhode Island to 4 from the usual 3 days. Because we anticipate the Providence reunion to be the largest one yet, we want to have an extra day in the schedule for those who would like to get together for a round of golf, fishing or just to swap “sea stories”. If you have ever thought about attending a reunion, this is *IT*. NOW IS THE TIME TO GET THE WORD OUT !!!

Next year’s reunion will start on Wednesday, June 18 and end on Sunday, June 22. We are in contact with the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation about the possibility of holding our wreath laying ceremony at the pier in Davisville where the USS Nitro (AE-23) was moored while homeported from 1959 to the mid 1970s. We would like to get as much publicity about the Nitro’s return to Rhode Island as possible, so please submit reunion notices to your local newspapers, radio and television stations

The hotel has not been selected yet. In addition to a day’s worth of activities surrounding the Association wreath laying, we will conduct our annual business



meeting, hold our Association dinner and have a couple of tours to other local and New England attractions. .

All suggestions will be welcome and will be

considered.

Because of the anticipated size of this reunion, we are requesting help from our New England shipmates to make this an event to remember. If you can help us in any of the following areas, it would help immensely: Securing transportation (motor coaches); locate possible military color guards and buglers; get pricing on the wreath; make phone calls to TV and radio stations; help in lining up activities; restaurants to stop at while we on a day tour.

If you can help, please contact any of the board members.

2003 Dues Premiums Chosen

The premium for next year will consist of two ship’s patches. The AE-2 work jacket patch, designed by Bob Eberlein, will be manufactured by a company that is working with the Naval Historical Society on ship patch designs for WW2 ship and other ship’s not having any patches.

As you probably realize, memorabilia for a WW2 ship, and especially an auxiliary ship, is very difficult to find so most of the items have to be made. A design of a patch to honor our AE-2 crew members is something that the Association board members have been contemplating for some time. When we received the request to provide a design, we had several in various stages of completion. We submitted four designs and this is the one that was selected. By including the patch as part of the dues premium, we will be able to get the widest distribution of a well-deserved piece of USS Nitro (AE-2) history

The other patch is a recreation of the AE-23 Desert Storm patch available during the Gulf War. Both patches are 4.5 to 5” in diameter.

As soon as we have finalized the details on obtaining these patches, there will be more information available on the Nitro Association web site.

Nitro Membership Update

USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association membership continues to grow. Our membership roll now stands at 210. The following shipmates (Nitro tour dates) have signed on as members during the month indicated:

March 2002 (contd.) – Richard Menzel (74-76); Leonard Limoge (62-64)

April 2002 Richard Dix (59-60); Keven Catlin (93-94)

May John Sachs (37); Charles E. Leonard (70-72); Peter Martinek (59-62); Raymond Brown, Jr. (83-86)

June Joel Magallanes (66-68); William Wasser (68-69);

The Crow's Nest

John Holland informed me of the passing away of Gary L. Osborn, who was on board AE-23 during its time in Vietnam and lived in the Poplar Bluff, MO area.

WO1 Ernest E. Schwartz, Gunner of the AE-23 commissioning crew, has recently passed away.

James C Burnett, Operation's Officer of the AE-23 commissioning crew, has also recently passed away.

USS Nitro (AE-23) Ship's Plaques



We have a limited number (seven) of AE-23 ship's plaque



reproductions (a couple different styles) which are made of walnut with a molded centerpiece and will have an engraved nameplate. The engraved plate will include the crew member's name, rate, division or department and tour years on board Nitro. These plaques (approx. 11" x 12 3/4"), with everything included, are an excellent value at \$43 + S/H.

Once these walnut plaques are sold, we will attempt to make additional wood grained plaques available through the ship's store. We will attempt to recreate the plaques in as close to the design available during the mid to late 1960s. Watch the Nitro Association web site for details.

The Nitro Sage

Computer Viruses

Disney virus -- Everything in the computer goes Goofy

Mike Tyson virus -- Quits after one byte



A Final Thought



The San Diego 2002 reunion was an event to remember. I believe the wreath ceremony from the USS Stethem DDG-63 was the hi-lite of our reunion. The members who attended, should feel honored to have been aboard the only

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ship named after an enlisted sailor and one who was brutality killed by terrorist.

Attending this year's reunion, was a member of the USS Suribachi and the Sailor of the Year with his wife from the USS Stethem for the Friday night dinner. Feed back from these individuals is nothing short of praise for you, the attendees and the reunion committee members. Speaking for myself, I am overjoyed to have so many good members in this Association.

We had a boatload of door and auction prizes. I don't think any one was disappointed of what was offered.

If we have the turn out that is expected for the Providence reunion, this should be one for the record books. Hope to see ya there.

Fair winds and following seas,
Bob Eberlein, President, Nitro Assn.



USS Nitro Web Site



The place for frequent updates on the Nitro reunion, association and other related activities:

**[http://ourworld.compuserve.com/
homepages/nalc820/ussnitro.htm](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/nalc820/ussnitro.htm)**

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