



# Nitro Blast

The Newsletter of the  
USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23)  
Association  
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Editor: Jim Timmons  
Assn. Membership 269

## "Nitro Cruise - 2005"

*Keep the Memories Alive*

### Bahamas Recap



Coco Loco, Mon! Taxi, I give you good deal! Want Cuban cigar? Familiar sayings to anyone who went ashore at CocoCay or Nassau. These brief ports-of-call for the Nitro reunion cruise 2005 brought back many memories of the natives lining up outside fleet landing whenever the USS Nitro came into port.

From discussions at meals, over drinks on the ship and ashore to the theme of the Wreath Laying Ceremony, written by Deanna Smitha former Nitro command chaplain, our return to sea and remembering times past was what this cruise was all about.

No underway watches, no sea and anchor details, no metal trays with dividers, what a way to go! Imagine taking the entire crew of the Nitro ashore in one liberty launch (tender) instead of waiting till there was space. No SPs to contend with, although some could have been used in the market area in Nassau.

Remember how bright the stars were at night when there were no lights on the ship and no shore lights could be seen, the ocean breeze in your face? Remember the sounds of

waves slapping the sides of the ship, anchor being dropped and of the engine thrumming and the shuddering of the ship as she backed down? We had a chance to experience all of these sounds and sights again along with a slight roll and pitch of the ship as it proceeded to CocoCay and Nassau.

Whatever you wanted to do, from absolutely nothing to shore tours to gambling to shopping to sightseeing to swimming, sunbathing or waverunning, it was all available on this cruise and more. When we hit the beach, there were families and members headed in every direction and the weather couldn't have been better - Hot, Sun (except for a brief downpour in Nassau, but who's counting) and more heat and more sun. No steel beach BBQs and at last report I didn't hear of anyone being brought before the "old man" for over exposure to sun and damaging "government property" (if you know what I mean!).

There were differences between the ships then and now - Formal dinners, cabin attendants and wait staff, pools and hot tubs, rock climbing walls, shuffleboard, casino, liquor store, a shopping mall and food service all the time.

Because we had a lot of extended family at this year's reunion, it could have been looked at as a "dependents cruise". From what glimpses I could catch of all them running around the ship, they seemed to have a good time. Between the ship's activities and shore activities, I am sure they had more to do than they had time in which to do it. History lessons and learning about life on board ships (RCCL vs Navy) came to life for these young people as they took part in or overheard many conversations at dinner, at the wreath laying ceremony or whenever any of the Association members got together

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**American Flag presentation:** Juan and Renie Reyes presented an American flag and certificate to the Nitro Association on behalf of their daughter, HMC Karen Reyes, USN. Karen had the flag flown over the USS Mustin (DDG-89) in the Persian Gulf while she was visiting the ship earlier

## 2 NITRO BLAST

this year. Karen's unit, IBU-22, has just recently returned from the Gulf. Bob Eberlein, Bob Peiffer and Jim Timmons accepted, with gratitude, the flag and certificate on behalf of the Association.

**2005-07 Election results:** *President* - Jim Timmons, *Vice President* - Bob Eberlein; *Treasurer* - Bob Peiffer; *Secretary* - Phil Wise, *Trustees* - Juan Reyes and Paul Licker, *Master At Arms* - Oscar Santiago.

### Future Reunion cities and voting:

1. Add and/or subtract cities from Reunion regions. Cities added are Honolulu (West), Branson, MO (Midwest) and Atlantic City (Earle, NJ) (East). No cities were removed.

2 Starting with the 2006 reunion, selection of reunion site two years from current reunion will be chosen by votes taken at the current reunion and, for Association members unable to attend the reunion, votes submitted by October 1st following current reunion.

Because votes have already been cast for the 2007 reunion, the site for that reunion will be selected by a combination of those votes plus any additional votes received at this year's reunion and votes submitted by October 1st. The breakdown of votes for the top three cities is as follows: Portland, ME (9), Washington, DC (9) and a tie for third place Boston and New York City (4). If a tie remains for the top spot, the executive board of the Nitro Association will decide on the location of the 2007 reunion.

3. Also, the choice for the reunion city three years from the current reunion (example 2008 - Midwest) will be narrowed to the three top cities for that region so voting for the 2008 reunion site can be concluded by October 1st following the 2006 reunion. At this point, we have very few votes for any city - so start voting! Here is the list of city, including votes: Minneapolis, MN (2); St. Louis, MO (2); Milwaukee, WI (2); Chicago, IL (1); Indianapolis, IN; Detroit, MI; Cleveland, OH; and Branson, MO (just added).

### Requests for allocation of funds approved:

Approximately \$100/yr. has been approved for locating and moving the Association web site to a web hosting service. This will allow us to use the URL [www.ussnitro.org](http://www.ussnitro.org) and also give us more space with which to expand our web site.

**Recognition of FIVE year members:** This year we have twenty-six members who will be receiving their 5 year membership star pins: Gordon Ahner, S. Monroe Atkins, Wilbur Brown, II, David Burgess, Richard Calbo, Ralph Caldwell, Ed Cantrell, Arnold Carpenter, Jr., Billy Connors, J. Daniel Cocoran, Charles Cousins, Richard Faytak, Ed Gowan, Lyle Howard, Henry Jakubowski, John Maguire, John Maurer, Frank Motyka, Sr., Richard Palleschi, Thomas Papsodero,

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JULY 2005

Juan Reyes-Matos, Howard Root, Deanna Smitha, Bill Stralo, Sr., Garren Wellman and Haden Wiley, Jr. Those who were unable to attend this year's reunion will receive their pins by mail shortly.

**Reunion DVD:** The 2005 Reunion Cruise DVD is available for purchase from the Ship's Store. The DVD will be approximately 30-40 minutes in length and include both video and still pictures of activities and sights from this year's reunion. It is expected to be shipped in late Summer or early Fall.

If you are interested in purchasing a copy of the DVD, please send your payment to:

USS Nitro Association  
PO Box 1254  
MISHAWAKA, IN 46546-1254

## ◆◆ Las Vegas - 2006 ◆◆

*Date - 22 - 25 June 2006*

The date for the 2006 reunion in Las Vegas, Nevada has been set. It will take place from Thursday, 22 June through Sunday, 25 June. The hotel, activities and transportation are in the planning stages. Watch for further details in upcoming newsletters and on the Nitro web site

The following people come forward to work on the Las Vegas reunion: Ron and Maureen Webb will work on transportation; Paul Licker will work on the wreath laying site (possibly Nellis Air Force Base) as well as locating a possible speaker; Bobby Anderson and Jim Timmons will work on the Association dinner. If anyone else would like to help organize a portion of the reunion, please contact Jim Timmons.



## Military Phone Cards



Many thanks to all attendees of this year's reunion who provided auction items and generously bid on the raffle and auction items. We realized a profit of nearly \$600 and will be using half of the proceeds to purchase phone cards for Armed Forces personnel stationed overseas.

If you know of military personnel who would like to receive a phone card, please give any information (name, unit, address and approximate end of deployment date) about them to any of the Association officers. We would like to receive this information by the end of October, so we can start sending these cards out in November.

It was agreed upon at the business meeting to set aside 25% of the phone card funds for Nitro Association referrals.

**3 NITRO BLAST**

The balance of the phone card funds will be sent to a Naval unit deployed overseas. If anyone would like to contribute to the phone card funds, please make your check payable to the USS Nitro Association and note that it is to be used for phone cards. All donations will be cheerfully and gratefully accepted.



None to report this quarter

Here are some excerpts from past issues. *The Navy Times*:

(1) This round of military base realignments and closings (BRAC) is a factor of the military drawdown in personnel and equipment, and reflects the new worldwide challenges facing the USA.

(2) Navy to drop the "R" in USNR. This is an effort by Navy to create an "aligned and integrated" force based on all reserve units meeting standards set by the active duty units.

(3) Japan resisting a nuclear carrier replacement for diesel carrier Kitty Hawk. Kitty Hawk scheduled to be retired in 2008. Carrier John F. Kennedy to stay in fleet at least until 02/06.

(4) Widener University (PA) to offer 4 full scholarships a year to children who have lost a parent, in the military, killed in either Afghanistan or Iraq.

(5) Navy sea-based missile defense tests better than land based. Missile system could be used to intercept short or long range ICBMs.

(6) Decommissioned carrier USS America to be sunk so new defense and damage control system for future carriers can be tested. X-Oriskany rescheduled for sinking as reef in May 2006.

(7) Congress concerned with spiraling cost of shipbuilding and the fewer number of ships expected to be built over next 10-20 years. Navy 30-year planning calls for 260 to 325 ship Navy, with possible halving of amphibious ships.

(8) Despite drawdown in personnel, advancement in most enlisted ratings is still good. Physical fitness of officers and enlisted to play critical role in staying in Navy.

(9) A photo tribute to Iraq and Afghanistan fallen service men and women is on exhibit at the Women in Military Service for America memorial in Arlington, Va.

(10) Navy to take on medevac duties in Iraq and Kuwait.

(11) Navy Hospital Corpsmen earn Bronze Stars for life saving work with Marines in Iraq

(12) Budgeting may cut future DD(X) destroyer program. Ship would have crew of 118 vs. 300+ on current destroyers.

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(13) **Possible rating mergers over next 18 months.** While specialty training (schools) will still exist for ratings, sailors will have to have a basic knowledge in combined ratings area to enhance advancement possibilities or switch of ratings.

Mechanical Engineering Techs would consist of gas-turbine system tech (mechanical), surface conventional machinist's mate and engineman.

Hull Repair Techs would include (HT), Shipfitters and Damage Control techs.

Hospital Corpsman and Dental Techs would be combined.

Aviation Electronic Techs would include the (AE) and Aviation Radio Techs.

Electronic Technician and Interior Communication would be combined.

Postal Clerk, Ship's Serviceman and Storekeeper would be combined.

Cryptological Tech and Information Systems Tech would be combined.

Operations Specialists and Quartermaster would be combined.

New Yeoman rating would combine Yeoman, Legalman, Religious Programs Specialists, Cryptological Techs.

Gunner's Mate and Torpedoman would be combined.

New Mass Communications Specialist would include Photographer's Mate, Journalists, Lithographer, Illustrator and Draftsman.

Navy Counselor would combine career recruiters and fleet counselors.

New ratings from existing specialty areas: Diver, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, SEAL, Special Warfare Combatant Crewman and Helicopter Aircrew.

(14) Study underway about replacing shore-based and peacetime Navy medical staff with civilian nurses, doctors, dentists and technicians.

(15) Navy starts limited (per command) Combat Meritorious Advancement Program for E-1 through E-5s for those engaged with combatants.

(16) Military study shows dropout rates during first 12 months of service. Most recent study (2002) shows dropout rates of 18% (Army), 17 % (USMC), 14% (Navy) and 8% Air Force.

(17) New BDUs and their camouflage cap could mean an end to command ball caps!

While on the cruise, I was informed that we had a published author in our group. Her grandfather, Ed Marino, told me about the poem that Lauren Marceau had written when she was 10 years old. It was published in *Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans* 2002 edition.

America's Daughter

America's daughter is me.  
I'm so blue.

**4 NITRO BLAST**

I'm sad, don't you see.  
I'm sad and mad.  
Not happy or glad.

America's daughter is me.  
It's a sad day.  
Don't you see?  
It's that way.

America's daughter is me.  
Don't you see?  
Freedom is up to me.  
And all of you,  
And the president too.

So let the flag lead you,  
And you will see too,  
That America doesn't have one child,  
And it's not up to me.  
It's up to all of us,  
To make everyone free.  
America's daughter is me.



**Nitro 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 269.*** The following shipmates (Nitro tour dates) have signed on as members during the month indicated:

**May** - William Banning, Jr. (64-65)

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

***2005 Association Dues are \$23.95 (including S/H of Assn. Packet).*** The dues packet will include a "60 Years Service to the Fleet" patch as well as two Association license plate frames, quarterly newsletters, membership certificate (for **new** members only), crewmembers directory and a laminated membership card.

There are also Associated Membership dues available for spouses of former or deceased USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) crew members, children of former or deceased 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 crewmember directory will not be included in this classification.***) The cost of the Associate Membership will be \$14.00 (\$12.50 dues + \$1.50 S/H) per calendar year.



**The Nitro Sage**



30 Years What a Difference!

1974: Long hair  
2004: Longing for hair

1974: Growing pot  
2004: Growing pot belly



**A Final Thought**



For those of us who served aboard the AE-23 from 1959-1995, who have attended the reunions at Chicago, IL, Warwick, RI and this year's "Return to Sea" cruise, the circle is complete.

One of the most note worthy memories of this reunion was the flying of an American flag that flew over the AE-23. It was flown at the business meeting and the wreath ceremony on Saturday morning. Once more the Master Chief of the weather provided us with fair winds and following seas. Nothing like being gently rocked to sleep with the rise and the fall of the ship.

I would like to thank the membership for reelecting the officers once more. It's good to see that you are pleased with the job that we doing for the Association. As a token of the appreciation, plaques were given to Sue Timmons and Carol Eberlein for support of their husband's endeavors in the Association.

Next year's city of choice and the birthplace of the Association will be Las Vegas, NV. Hope to see you there.

***Please remember our service personnel who man-the-watch in your thoughts and prayers.***

*Fair winds and following seas,*

Bob Eberlein, Founder, USS Nitro Association.



**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>