



Nitro Blast

The Newsletter of the
USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23)
Association
Volume 8, Issue 3
January 2006
Editor: Jim Timmons
Assn. Membership 275

"Las Vegas Update" *Keep the Memories Alive*

2006 Reunion Update



Details of the reunion activities are almost complete. You will find attached an Activity Form. Please fill out your choices and send the form plus payment in as soon as possible.

We have made arrangements for a Grey Line Tour of the Hoover Dam and a cruise on Lake Mead. The price for the tour including transportation to and from The Orleans Hotel & Casino, entrance to Hoover Dam, 2-hour cruise on Lake Mead and a box lunch is \$65.00/person.

Also offered is a van trip to The Eldorado Canyon Goldmine. We will be taking a 12 passenger, air-conditioned, van(s) from the hotel to the mine for approximately 2-hour tour. Price for this trip will be \$35/adult and \$30/child 12 and under.

There is another van trip available to tour Sheri's Ranch (brothel). If you are interested in this tour, please send me an email for details (navy65-69@sbcglobal.net). Cost for the

transportation, tour and lunch is approximately \$35.00 per person.

Details about our requested visit to Nellis Air Force Base, for our annual wreath laying ceremony and base tour, on Friday, 23 June is now under review by the Air Force

The Orleans Hotel & Casino UPDATE: So far about a dozen crewmembers have reserved rooms for the 2006 reunion. Our cutoff date for reserving rooms at the hotel is May 21, 2006, so book your room now and avoid the rush of waiting until the last minute. Crewmembers, spouses, children, other guests and friends are all welcome to join us for this memorable occasion.

As previously mentioned, we have reserved a block of rooms (called "petite suites") - 30 for Thursday night and 50 for Friday & Saturday night of the reunion. The special guestroom rates for the reunion are as follows: \$60/night for Thursday night and \$110/night for Friday and Saturday nights. Additional room nights, before or after the reunion, may be made at our reunion weekday rate on an "as available" basis.

A **CORRECTION** from the previous Nitro Blast: Your credit card will be charged for the first night's room; however, you have up to 72 hours prior to 4 PM (Las Vegas) time on the date of arrival to cancel your reservations.

Both smoking and non smoking rooms rooms are available as well as handicap rooms. ***Anyone requiring special assistance should inform the hotel when making reservations.*** Each person will be responsible for making their reservations and may do so by calling The Orleans Hotel and Casino national reservation center at 800-675-3267. When placing your reservation for the 2006 reunion, let the reservation clerk know you want to reserve a room for the **USS Nitro Association** reunion for "x" number of nights.

Again, as part of their resort fee, the hotel will provide complementary transportation to and from Coast Casino's other Las Vegas properties, so while we will be staying at an

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"off the strip" property you will be able to take reach the strip from their Barbary Coast location.

The tentative itinerary for our visit to Las Vegas:

Thursday 6/22 - Afternoon crewmember check-in. 7-10 PM Association business meeting.

Saturday 6/24 - Daytime tour day. A choice of tours to Lake Mead/Hoover Dam (8:15 AM - 5:30 PM), the Eldorado Canyon Gold Mine and Sheri's Ranch (adult oriented). Or you may opt to have a "free day" to see what's new on "The Strip", but remember you have to be back at the hotel in time to get ready for the Association annual dinner.

Saturday night 7 - 11 PM, Association Annual Dinner/ raffle and auction.

◆◆ Low Income Veterans & Spouses ◆◆

***NOTE:** Instead of this quarter's article listings from the Navy Times, I wanted to reprint in its entirety an article of importance, which appeared on the Military.com web site. The original source is the Charlotte Observer. Areas underlined are done so by the Nitro Blast editor.*

Veterans, Survivors Miss Out on Pensions

Charlotte Observer | December 23, 2005 Nearly 2 million poor veterans or their impoverished widows are likely missing out on as much as \$22 billion a year in pensions from the U.S. government, but the Department of Veterans Affairs has had only limited success in finding them.

Widows are hardest hit. According to a VA estimate, only one in seven of the survivors of the nation's deceased Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines who likely could qualify for the pension actually get the monthly checks.

What's more, participation in the program is falling, according to a Knight Ridder analysis of VA records. The reason for the lax participation, a VA study said, is that poor veterans generally "are completely unaware that the program exists."

"Veterans simply don't know about it," said Despina Hatton, who runs a senior law program for residents of Washoe County, Nev., that seeks to help veterans or their widows receive the benefit.

They're people such as Rose Davidson, a 72-year-old widow of a World War II sailor who lives in Sparks, Nev., on \$9,732 a year in Social Security benefits. Frail, legally blind, suffering from dementia and in need of regular assistance at home, she could be eligible for \$1,608 more a year under the VA's formulas. That would boost her income by about 17 percent.

But her daughter said that neither she nor her mother had

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ever heard of the VA pension until recently. She's working to apply. The VA knows that many veterans and widows are missing out on the benefit.

"We obviously are here for any veteran or survivor who qualifies," said Tom Pamperin, a VA pension official. "But so many of these people -- we don't know who they are, where they are."

Indeed, a VA report from late 2004 recommended that the agency "improve its outreach efforts" with public service announcements and other pilot programs.

While it made limited efforts to reach veterans or their widows through existing channels, it is "difficult to determine" whether such efforts have been successful, Pamperin said.

The numbers don't suggest they have been. In fiscal 2005, there were fewer veterans and widows added to the pension rolls than there were in 2004, according to the Knight Ridder analysis of VA data.

World War II and Korean War veterans are dying and rapidly falling off the rolls. At the same time, the department said it's been "reasonably successful" in signing up new Vietnam vets.

Nonetheless, one VA estimate of the program shows the potential pool of poor veterans and widows without the pensions has remained unchanged the past four years. The total number of pension cases fell to 541,000 in fiscal 2005, the sixth straight year of declines.

The VA actuary's office predicts that pension participation is likely to drop further, losing between 7,000 and 8,000 enrollees a year and falling below 500,000 participants by 2012, according to a VA actuary report obtained by Knight Ridder.

At the same time, the separate 2004 report estimated that an additional 853,000 veterans and 1.1 million survivors -- generally widows -- could get the pension but don't. Of all those likely eligible, only 27 percent of veterans and 14 percent of widows receive the money.

The VA's pension program is targeted at veterans who served their country during wartime but have fallen into poverty. It's also there for the widows of veterans who have fallen on hard times.

The program provides a monthly check to bring incomes up to a certain level. A veteran can make up to \$10,579 a year and qualify for the VA pension, while veterans' widows can make up to \$7,094 a year. Those who are homebound or in need of extra assistance can receive more.

In Reno, the reason why so many veterans are missing out on the program seems obvious to Hatton, who runs the senior

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law program. VA literature lists the program among the dozens it provides. But the program's name confuses many veterans: It's called a "disability pension," but a person doesn't have to be disabled to receive it. Further, a "Summary of VA Benefits" on the department's Web site doesn't spell out a central criterion of the program: that veterans can qualify based on their age. (The age requirement is listed in other parts of the VA Web site, and the VA said it will correct the error.)

Basically, a poor veteran who's 65 or older and served during a war, in combat or not, is eligible for the program.

Hatton's team, however, discovered that a majority of the poor elderly veterans in Reno had never heard of the program. Working with researchers from the Sanford Center for Aging at the University of Nevada, Reno, Hatton set out to measure how many veterans were missing out and to help them sign up.

Using a county meal-service list, researchers fanned out across the city, asking senior citizens about their involvement with the VA.

One elderly World War II vet, Merrill Robinson, invited the researchers into his small apartment, where he was getting around in a motorized wheelchair as he made breakfast.

Researcher Teresa Sacks asked Robinson if he wanted to read the consent form.

"You can probably read it to me, because I can't see," he said.

Then, after explaining that she came with no guarantees of additional benefits, Sacks led Robinson through the interview, asking when he joined the military and his familiarity with VA benefits. He was "somewhat" familiar with VA benefits and did rely on the VA health system.

But Robinson, who lived in subsidized housing and had a nurse come to help with some of his activities, wasn't familiar with the pension program.

As she walked out of the house, Sacks said, "He's almost a slam-dunk" -- meaning that he certainly should qualify for some benefits. (Robinson is now eligible for a pension benefit of \$58 a month, or \$696 a year.)

The project proceeded, door to door. So far, the researchers have helped 11 veterans or widows get their benefits, in amounts ranging from \$144 a year to \$5,748 a year.

For Gordon Croft, being awarded the largest benefit means his income will jump from \$6,816 a year to \$12,564. Croft, a veteran of the Korean War who suffers from arthritis, emphysema, osteoporosis and other conditions, had no idea that he could qualify.

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And while he does get medical care through the VA, the pension side of the VA didn't know about him. "That's something I always find kind of peculiar," said Heather Traverso, one of the researchers. "Why don't the two sides of the agency communicate?"

How to Get Help:

Veterans and their widows or other dependents might be eligible for the Department of Veterans Affairs pension if they meet certain requirements.

** Veterans must have served during a time of war, even if not in combat, and they must be either permanently disabled or 65 or older.

** Their incomes must fall under a certain level.

** Widows of veterans can also apply, although their incomes must be even lower.

If you think you may qualify for the benefit, go to:
www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Milsvc/Docs/Pensoneg.doc

If you are a widow of a veteran, go here:
www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Milsvc/Docs/Dpeneg.doc

The VA also has a toll-free number for more information:
(800) 827-1000.



Prepaid Military Phone Cards



The USS Nitro Association has delivered the first 2 (two) prepaid military phone cards, and has heard that at least one of them was received prior to Christmas. We currently have 8 prepaid "land-based" and 10 "ship to shore" military phone cards. When you request a card be sent to a relative or neighbor, please specify if they are either land or sea based, and make sure the APO or FPO addresses are correct.

◆ The Crow's Nest ◆

Bob and Carol Eberlein are proud to announce the birth of their granddaughter, Ella Rose Eberlein. She was born on 16 November 2005 to the proud parents, John and Trudy Eberlein



****TAPS****



The listing(s) are of former USS Nitro (AE-2) or (AE-23) crew members, which we have received since our last posting:

Claude Eaton Jr., SA, (AE-2) passed away April 25, 2005
Joseph Sheppard, S1c, (AE-2) passed away Oct. 6, 1983

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Claire Hevener (ship unknown) passed away Nov. 30, 2004



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

December - Carroll Denison (61-63)

January - George Antellas, Jr (59); Leo Falconoio (80-82); William Baer (68-72);

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 \$24.15 (including S/H of Assn. Packet). The dues packet will include a high quality Nitro Association cloisonné lapel pin, 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 \$14.20 (\$12.50 dues + \$1.70 S/H) per calendar year.



The Nitro Sage



Why does Superman stop bullets with his chest, but ducks when you throw a revolver at him?

Why doesn't glue stick to the bottle?

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A Final Thought



This will be the second of three "home coming" reunions. When the Association goes to Earl, NJ, then all the "home comings" will be complete. Las Vegas is where the Association was formed, so this is why I have it as a "home port."

Have you checked out the new web site? Bob Peiffer is doing an outstanding job of getting it up and running. The photo section of the AE-2 and AE-23 is growing by leaps and bounds. If you have a photo you wish to post there, let Bob know and maybe it will be placed on the web site.

A "Bravo Zulu" to Rod Seeland for forwarding scans of deck logs of the Nitro AE-2 and a scan of his father's "Nitro Police" badge. The deck logs are some interesting reading if you are into the history of the AE-2.

Every week, members (who have signed up for the Yahoo Nitro Crewmembers group) should be receiving an alert about the Wednesday evening online "chat" for the members to participate in. So far I have noticed there are about six or seven members on the "chat".

If you have a microphone and your computer is capable of sending voice messages, you can talk to one another, or you can simply type in your message. Please take advantage of this time to stay in contact with the other members of the Association. Especially if you are planning to attend the June reunion and you want to get together with members of your particular crew.

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://www.ussnitro.org>