



# Nitro Blast

The Newsletter of the  
USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23)  
Association  
Volume 9, Issue 1  
July/Aug 2006  
Editor: Jim Timmons  
Assn. Membership 280

## "It's A Dry Heat, Right!!!" *Keep the Memories Alive*



### Las Vegas Reunion Recap



If you like Hot, Hot, Hot, you would have loved Las Vegas in June! Fifty-nine attendees were at this year's reunion, including a former member of the AE-1 and his wife (that's right - USS Pyro (AE-1)). Everyone appeared to bear up well with the sweltering conditions, and from all accounts the activities were a tremendous success

But it's a dry heat, right! The "Black Gang" members among us must have felt right at home. Temperatures during our stay in Las Vegas were anywhere from 105 – 115 deg. F. Hot enough to melt the plastic on your name tag, if you left it inside your locked up car.

I would like to thank Marty Hope for allowing us to ship reunion items to his Las Vegas home, delivering them to the hotel and taking them back to UPS for return shipments. BRAVO ZULU, Marty - everything appears to have made it back safely.

This newsletter contains two pages of color photos of the reunion activities as well as a couple pictures of the 2007 dues premiums (USS Nitro Challenge Coins). Thanks to my wife Sue, Jim Caithamer and Juan Reyes for providing the photos.

**Nellis AFB Trip** – On Friday morning, fifty of our attendees boarded our chartered motor coach for a trip to Nellis Air Force Base. While at Nellis, we held our annual wreath laying ceremony, took a brief tour of the base, had lunch at the Officer's Club and then toured the Threat Training Facility and the Home of the Thunderbirds air demonstration team.

In addition to our wreath bearers George Argy (AE-23) and Kenneth Marvin (AE-2), our Association chaplain Deanna Smitha, we were joined by a very sharp looking Honor Guard (4 members and a bugler) from the Air Force Base along with one of the base Chaplains for the service. With jet takeoffs providing enough noise to drown out their

own Chaplain's remarks, the setting for the wreath laying was appropriately named Freedom Park.

**Saturday's tour** of Hoover Dam/Lake Mead was attended by thirty-six of our members and guests. This air conditioned, narrated bus trip of the sites on the way to and from the dam and lake was very enjoyable and informative. The attendees were returned to the hotel in time to relax prior to the evening's Association dinner.

Several people decided to stay at the hotel so they could go sightseeing along the "Las Vegas Strip", Fremont Street or visit relatives and friends. I guess braved the heat, would be a better description of what they did. Several others decided to stay in the air-conditioned comfort of the hotel and play games of chance.

**Dinner raffle/auction** - This year's annual association dinner featured a POW/MIA table (see reunion pictures), in recognition of those who are still missing. Thanks to Jeff Marlow for providing the "covers", Marty Hope for providing the "single red rose" and Chaplain Deanna Smitha for the outstanding reading of the POW/MIA remembrance script.

Christine Spurling was recognized as the youngest member at the reunion, Bob Kelly of the (AE-1) was recognized as the oldest and Kevin Clavin from Coventry, RI traveled the furthest (sorry Walter and Mahler's your meandering vacation route doesn't qualify) to reach the reunion. The raffle items for this year's reunion were two 4' x 6' Navy throw blankets. The raffle/auction raised over \$1,000 and a check for \$500 was sent to the Nellis AFB Chaplain's fund. Fifty-nine people from sixteen states attended this year's dinner.



### Washington, DC in 2007



The 2007 USS Nitro Reunion will be held in our nation's capitol the week 17 June. Since there is so much to see in Washington, DC, we are considering adding an additional day

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(Wednesday) for tours prior to the official beginning of the reunion on Thursday, 21 June.

Below is a preliminary schedule for our reunion activities:

**Wednesday, 20 June** (optional day for tour)

**Thursday, 21 June** - Hospitality suite open afternoon and evening for crew member check-in. Business meeting in the evening.

**Friday, 22 June** - Dinner (preferred - depending on availability of banquet facilities) or 23 June after Navy Memorial ceremony if necessary.

Tours could be on Friday, 22 June (Arlington National Cemetery - wreath laying at Tomb of the Unknown Soldier; with visits to Iwo Jima Memorial; Memorials on the Washington Mall - Vietnam, Korea, WW2, etc.).

**Saturday, 23, June** - Navy Memorial wreath laying & plaque dedication (**see article below**). Depending on when ceremony would be held, we could continue with a tour of Washington Navy Yard (Destroyer Escort is there), pictures on Capitol Hill (possible Smithsonian Institute visit or some other place) Smithsonian should probably be a day long tour. We could switch Friday & Saturday tours if needed.

Any other suggestions from association members would be greatly appreciated!

### ◆◆ **USS Nitro plaque at the Navy Memorial** ◆◆

We are pleased to announce that a decision was made at the Las Vegas reunion to purchase a plaque to be dedicated, in honor of both the AE-2, AE-23 and the crews who served on board these ships, at our 2007 reunion in Washington, DC. The cost of the plaque is \$2,500 and the majority of the funds to purchase it to be provided by association members and/or former crewmember of the USS Nitro who wish to contribute to the fund. Several members at the 2006 reunion have already pledged a substantial amount of funds for the project.

After we receive and approve an artist rendition of what the USS Nitro Association plaque will look like., all former Nitro crew members, listed on our association database with valid mailing addresses, will be sent a letter about the project

If you would like to view several preliminary designs for the plaque, please visit the Nitro Yahoo Group web site at: (<http://ph.groups.yahoo.com/group/NitroCrewmembers/photos>) A design from this group will be chosen and submitted to the Navy Memorial plaque designer for a rendering. It will then be sent back to the Association for final approval, and then the funding letter will be sent out to the membership.

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If you wish to contribute to the fund ahead of time, please send your contributions to:

**Nitro Memorial Plaque Fund**  
**USS Nitro Association**  
**c/o Robert Peiffer, Treasurer**  
**PO BOX 1254**  
**MISHAWAKA IN 46546-1254 USA**

### ⚓ **2007 Nitro Association Dues Premium** ⚓

The 2007 dues premiums, AE-2 and AE-23 challenge coins, were also previewed in Las Vegas. You may view pictures of the 1.750" diam. coins in the attached picture section along with pictures from the Las Vegas reunion.

Members will have their choice of either the AE-23 or the AE-2 coin as their dues premium and then may purchase the other coin for \$9.00. The face of the coin is a full color representation of each ship's work jacket patch and the back of the coin has a 3D representation of the ship, with one of the ship's mottos, commissioning and decommissioning dates. These coins will also be available for viewing on our web site.

### ⚓ **Nitro, WV museum Update** ⚓

Nitro Association members, attending this year's reunion, approved a motion for the City of Nitro, West Virginia's museum to become the permanent repository of the USS Nitro Association's archives, upon successful completion of the museum extension to the library being funded and built. The museum is endeavoring to seek funding from the federal government, state of West Virginia and other sources.

A museum committee and members of the city planning board are also hopeful of receiving backing from its West Virginia Congressional delegation, the governor of WV, state legislature for site designation, state-wide museum advertisement and procurement of artifacts.

At the appropriate time, members of the Nitro Association and the Nitro, WV museum board will be contacting the Navy Department in hopes of securing historical items from both ships christened USS Nitro (bells, wheels, builder's plaques). These items, along with others collected, will be made available for display at museum.

If possible and Congress is in session during our time in Washington, we should plan on having a joint Nitro Assn./Nitro, WV delegation visit with WV congressional delegation, Armed Forces committees to see about grants and items for Navy exhibit in Nitro, WV museum.

**Regional Date Change**

A "special" request about switching regional location dates for 2009 (South) and 2010 (West) reunion was brought before the membership at this year's reunion. The special request was made to allow our AE-2 members to pay their respects to the memory of their generation with a wreath laying ceremony on board Arizona Memorial. After significant discussion, the request was approved.

The 2009 region will now be held in the West, with emphasis on Honolulu being the site. During the discussion, it was mentioned that because of the distance and expense attendees might want to extend their stay beyond the usual Thursday through Sunday reunion period. We realize that not everyone will be able to make this reunion because of either the expense or distance. Each person, regardless of where the reunion is held, has to judge whether or not they can afford to attend the reunion in a particular region and this holds true for a reunion to be held in Hawaii.

Just because Honolulu has been singled out as a preferred site for the 2009 reunion, it is not the only city in the West on the list of possible reunion sites. **If the intention, as evidenced by the "special" request at this year's reunion, is for the 09 reunion to be held in Honolulu, it will have to receive the most votes of any city in that region.** If Honolulu does not receive the most votes, the reunion will not be held there.

To see and/or vote on sites in specific regions, please visit the Nitro Yahoo Group web site:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NitroCrewmembers/>

and go to the Poll section of the web site. You will have to register in order to have access to the site. If you do not have access to a computer and would like to vote, please send Robert Eberlein a signed note indicating your choice for the 09 reunion site.

**The Crows Nest**

***USS Nitro Items on eBay*** - Bob Eberlein is attempting to find and purchase as many Nitro related items from eBay as possible for the Association archives. If you happen to see an item of interest, please contact Bob to see if he is bidding on it. We want to avoid bidding against each other, as it will only drive the price up. His eBay ID is **tintenfisch32**  
**Thanks!**

***Hospitalized*** - A former shipmate of ours, Ron Darling GMG2, 3<sup>rd</sup> Div. (AE-23 from 1966-69) is in the VA hospital in Syracuse, NY. His wife sent us an email to notify us of

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Ron's serious condition. If any of his former shipmates, or association members would like to send Ron and his wife a card or note, I am sure they would greatly appreciate it. His address is:

Mr. Ronald Darling  
VA Medical Center 7th floor  
800 IRVING AVE  
SYRACUSE, NY 13210

**Navy Times Article Recap**

- 1) X-USS Oriskany sunk as reef off Pensacola. Navy plans on more sinking of ghost fleet ships. Belleau Wood (LHA3) joins Pearl Harbor ghost fleet.
- 2) National Guard troops to beef up US/Mexico border security.
- 3) F-14 Tomcat makes last carrier trap.
- 4) More Navy leadership courses being taught over internet, less in classroom training.
- 5) Navy faces \$4.6 billion shortfall in unfunded requirements for '06. Most cuts in areas of operational readiness and training. \$3.7B added to '07 DOD budget. House bill to boost '07 base pay by 2.2 to 2.7% depending on years of service.
- 6) Anticipated reduction of Navy strength from current 357,500 to 320,000 by 2011. CNO says he will not support a force below 336,000.
- 7) New Navy service (Marine style) and work (blue digital cammies) uniforms approved by CNO. WW2 Officer & Chief dress khaki may make a come back.
- 8) Navy presence in Iraq could grow from current 4,000 to 7,000 over next two years (ground security and medical areas). More sailors headed to Afghanistan in combat support roles.
- 9) New Traumatic Injury Insurance helps ease financial burden of injured troops returning from war zones.
- 10) Air Force deep-sixes the Good Conduct Medal.
- 11) Combat Action Ribbon to be extended to Marines and the Sailors serving with them.
- 12) USNA quarterback accused of rape. USCG cadet to face charges also.
- 13) Naval Hospital Jacksonville, FL under investigation because of numerous malpractice suits.
- 14) Wounded vets now clear to receive gifts from non-profit organizations.
- 15) US port security still in hands of USCG.
- 16) Iraqi insurgent attacks up and tactics able to change quickly.
- 17) VFW actively recruiting members with ads in Navy Times.
- 18) LCS (Littoral Combat Ships) price tag rises from \$220 mil to \$316 mil/ea. by 2008, effecting Navy budget plans. Most enlisted billets (40 in crew) for LCS duty will be E-5 and above with cross-training in other ratings a plus.
- 19) SECDEF recognizes lack of minorities in senior officer positions.
- 20) Marines test cultural skills at Norfolk Naval Station Iraqi village mock-up.
- 21) Temporary Navy aircraft grounded due to fatal flights.
- 22) CINCPAC visits Indonesia for briefing on piracy.
- 23) '06 enlisted advancement is a mixed bag depending on which rating are looked at.

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- 24) US Northern Command to review federal and state government interaction, which involve National Guard callups during natural disasters.
- 25) Newly commissioned USS San Antonio (LDP 17) is crew friendly with more spacious racks, wider passageways, better fitness rooms and mess deck access.
- 26) Army mariners involved in transporting equipment around Kuwait ports.
- 27) Marines prepare for small boat operations in Iraq.
- 28) Navy recruiting more boot camp prospects for Seal training.
- 29) Pentagon calls US union manufacturers of military uniform on the carpet for safety and healthcare issues.
- 30) Soviet-era aircraft carrier Minsk sold to Chinese company for \$16 million.
- 31) Naval Special Warfare Command to double support staff with specialists in linguistics, cryptologists, intel specialists.
- 32) USS Cape St. George and USS Gonzalez put a hurtin' on Somali pirates.
- 33) MCPON pushes for introduction of Chief's ceremonial cutlass. New MCPON is CMC Joe Campa, HMCM.
- 34) Navy goal of 313 ship fleet considered too costly by Congressional Budget Office. Reducing capabilities of additions to fleet may prove necessary.
- 35) By April 2007, the Navy will have its first "Brown Water" ravine squadron deployed to Iraq. Ravine force calling upon Vietnam era vets for knowledge.
- 36) Navy offers x-USS Wisconsin to city of Norfolk. Navy will still keep recall rights.
- 37) USS George Washington carrier strike group exercises in Caribbean to focus on threats such as drug and human trafficking.
- 38) Hawaiian Islands "Rimpac" ASW exercises draws notice because of adverse whale and other marine life reactions to use of sonar. Navy has marine mammal protection program in place.
- 39) Upcoming retirement of most of the Navy's minesweeping capability causes concern in littoral-focused (shallow water) Navy.
- 40) USMC under investigation for Iraqi civilian deaths.
- 41) Several retired USMC and Army generals vocal about SECDEF Rumsfeld. Ask for his resignation.
- 42) Navy cracking down on hazing on board ships.
- 43) Service transfer bonuses still available for USN and USAF personnel transferring into USA and USMC.
- 44) Navy set to offer \$20 million in financial incentive for up to 300 officers to leave Navy early.
- 45) USMC in Iraq bans wearing of moisture-wicking clothing off base.
- 46) Former USS Cole skipper still waiting for promotion to O6. Cole returns to sea as part of Iwo Jima ESG.
- 47) Zarqawi, leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, is killed in air strike.
- 48) DD(X) program cut to 2 ships. Hull numbers to start with DDG 1000. Some in Navy question 4 digit hull numbers.
- 49) Carrier JFKennedy decommissioning may still happen this year.
- 50) Service budgets for '07 recruiting efforts have been cut.
- 51) Hospital Corpsman serving with Marines is Reserve Sailor of the Year.
- 52) USPS reverses decision not to hire injured (but recovered) Iraqi vet (National Guardsman).
- 53) Increased war requirements cited as reason for change in sea-shore rotation. 20,000 shore billets have been eliminated in past 4

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- years. Aviation BMs and Navy Counselors at top of list for more sea time.
- 54) 8,000 Marines and dependents being moved, at mostly Japanese government expense, from Okinawa to Guam.
- 55) Renovation of the Pentagon may cost upwards of \$3 billion.
- 56) Effective 1 July, Shape Up (physically) or Ship Out. 27,000 sailors at risk of being dropped.
- 57) Navy assesses Iranian Navy in light of increasing tensions in Gulf area.
- 58) Two more SSGN subs (25 yrs. old) due for conversion to conventional (non-nuclear) warfare. Scheduled for scrapping, conversions will extend life of subs by 20 years.
- 59) Some West Coast military installations may be slated for joint military-civilian use, if Congress has its way.
- 60) Debates over Chaplain wording of prayers for non-denominational vs. faith specific prayers is still hot topic in military as well as Congress.
- 61) Navy rating mergers to effect 70,000 sailors. 32,000 plus engineering personnel in eight ratings will be combined into three ratings. (Listing of ratings to be merged in previous newsletters).
- 62) Two teenagers arrested in connection with May theft of 26.5 million veterans' personal information from VA computer. Feds drop free credit checks.
- 63) DUIs and drug test results could become part of fitness reports and become reasons for separations from service.
- 64) Admiral Thad Allen becomes Commandant of Coast Guard.
- 65) Four new ratings took effect June 1 for E-6 and above; October 1 for E-5 and below (Navy Diver, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, SEAL and Special Warfare Combatant Crewmen).
- 66) New "Chief's Mess Training" to include first overhauled course work in 15 years. Included are courses in leadership, development, communication and support.
- 67) HM2 Juan Rubio receives Silver Star during service in Iraq.
- 68) Yokouska, Japan mayor reverses decision and will accept nuclear-powered carrier to replace USS Kitty Hawk.
- 69) 50,000+ enlisted & officers take part in Navy Tuition Assistance program.
- 70) Lost Navy sub, Lagarto has been found after 60 years on the bottom of the Gulf of Thailand.
- 71) Chemical weapons have been found in Iraq.



**Prepaid Military Phone Cards**



We are still looking for members to let us know about relatives or neighbors who are serving in either Operation Iraqi Freedom or Afghanistan. Please send us their APO or FPO address and tell us whether the person is serving ashore or afloat.



**Chaplain's**



**Corner**



**Prayer for Wreath Laying Ceremony**

**Nellis Air Force Base, NV**

*"Continuing Service to the Fleet"*

**Holy, giving and most gracious God**

We stand today in the midst of the desert. Our lives have crossed many deserts, and our journeys continue to lead us through these places and events which challenge us to grow and push ourselves beyond what we are and have been in the past. Our deserts don't have to be filled with sand...but are often desolate, lonely and demand all that we have, and all that we are.

Many others stand in those same deserts today...around the world, defending our freedom and keeping fast the watch. We pause in these moments to lift them up...to honor their continuing and faithful service to you and to our country, and to pray for their safety and speedy return home to loved ones and friends. Servicemembers in those deserts come from all branches of our armed forces, and we remember them with gratitude and deepest camaraderie in their current missions. Whether Navy, Marine, Army, Coast Guard or Air Force, all are bound to one another in mission and service.

We also remember another mission WE share here today, Holy One, reflecting and holding close to us once again, our shipmates no longer with us on this journey. We honor their service and sacrifices, their faithfulness and steadfastness, in days past and continuing on the journey to which they NOW embark. We ask your blessings upon them, for their duty and dedication, and upon us, as they serve as inspiration and witness to us in OUR continuing march on.

Gracious Creator, grant us, we ask, this time to lift up the men and women who serve, past and present, in those endeavors which put them in harm's way. Grant us also, we beseech you, the continuing endeavors for peace and freedom which we hold high as the result of arduous service. In the laying of this memorial wreath today, grant us both that wisdom and that peace.

All this we most humbly ask, in your most Holy of names. Amen. - Deanna Smitha, Nitro Assn. Chaplain



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

None.



USS Nitro (AE-2/AE-23) Association membership continues to grow. ***Our membership roll (cumulative total from '98 to present) now stands at 280.*** The

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

- June** - Edward Gibbons, Jr. (67-69)
- July** - Joseph K. Kennedy, Sr. (59-61)

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

***2006 Association Dues are \$24.15 (including S/H of Assn. Packet).*** The dues packet includes 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 are not included in this classification***). The cost of the Associate Membership will be \$14.20 (\$12.50 dues + \$1.70 S/H) per calendar year.



*"You know you're a Sailor when . . ."*

*You go out for breakfast on Saturday morning and order beans and cornbread*

*Your children tell you to "make a hole" as they tear through the house.*

\*\*\*\*\*

***Military terms gone Civilian***

- Balls to the Wall*** - To go all out.
- Dry run*** - A practice attempt
- Gung-ho*** - Excited to do something.
- Screw the pooch*** - To mess up.



110 degrees is still 110 degrees with or without humidity. I understand there were some winners and some losers at "Lost Wages".

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Washington, DC here we come! This will be the location where the Nitro(s) and our former shipmates will be remembered for their efforts for the fight for freedom. Arrangements are being formulated as this newsletter arrives at your place of residence. This time it's going to be at the "Lone Sailor" Memorial. It's our memorial.

I would hope the turnout for this reunion will be one to out do all the others to date. With the planned wreath laying and plaque presentation ceremony, this will be the reunion to attend, especially if you still have young children or grand children.

When the plaque letter arrives, please take time to remember your efforts, as individuals who helped the Nitro(s) complete their mission of "Service to the Fleet", and those

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you served with as crewmembers. Then make a donation if it possible.

At some point in the future, maybe the Association can have models of the ships made for display at reunions.

***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>**