



USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association

NEWSLETTER

2nd Issue 30th Year

June 2022



Ron Zimmerman, President Emeritus USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association

Ronnie Lee Zimmerman, Sr., (70), of Port St. Lucie, FL passed away peacefully at home with his wife Cecilia "Sally" and grandson Blake by his side.

Ronnie was born on June 26, 1951 in Wauseon, Ohio to Donald and Leola Zimmerman. Because he did not want to wait and be drafted, Ronnie joined the U.S. Navy in June 1969, just before his 18th birthday. Ronnie had a first cousin in the Marine Corps who spent 1967 and 1968 as a tunnel rat Vietnam. In no uncertain words, his cousin told Ronnie if he waited to get drafted he would not be going to boot camp by bus, train or plane, but by his cousin kicking his ass all the way there. Ronnie took his Induction physical and swearing-in at the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station (AFEES) Station in Cleveland, OH and left for sunny San Diego, CA and Navy Recruit Training.

After boot camp, Ronnie attended Storekeeper (SK) "A" School in San Diego. Upon graduation, he received orders with all sorts of funny acronyms describing where he was going. When Ronnie asked his first class petty officer what they meant, he said, "**Son, you are going to Vietnam...**" Before Ronnie left he attended heavy forklift school at the Seabee Base in Port Hueneme, CA and Counter Insurgency/Survival, Evasion, Resistance & Escape training in Coronado and Camp Pendleton, CA.

Ronnie's first duty in Vietnam was in Da Nang. After a few months, he was transferred to Saigon and then to a U.S. Naval Advanced Tactical Support Base in the southern tip of Vietnam. His team was so far south of all the other bases that they were in "Indian Territory!" After Vietnam, He was transferred to U.S. Naval Communications Station in Morocco, where he was assigned to the Special Services Department. Ronnie ended up managing the riding stables because he was the only one in the department that knew how to saddle a horse. Ronnie married Sally in July 1971 and took her with him to Morocco. Yep! She put up with him for more than 50 years.

Ronnie left Morocco and was transferred to the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) in 1972, where he ended his first enlistment in June 1973. He left the Navy, went back to the civilian labor force, and

entered college. It soon became apparent to him that being a Vietnam combat veteran and trying to go to college was not conducive to staying out of fights. Ronnie quit college and reenlisted in February 1974 in the TAR program (fully active Naval Reservist). He was stationed at the Naval Reserve Center, Great Lakes, IL, on staff.

In the fall of 1977, Ronnie left Great Lakes for Portland, ME, where he was stationed aboard the USS Affray (MSO-511) until spring 1980, when he transferred to the USS Fearless (MSO-442) in Charleston, SC. He left the Fearless in spring of 1982 for the Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center, Louisville, KY. He served there until the fall of 1985, when he transferred to the staff of Craft of Opportunity Program, Mine Squadron 11, Seattle, WA. He retired from the navy on February 28, 1990.



Ronnie had a great time (for the most part) during his 20 years on active duty. He had experiences he never would have had without joining the navy. Ronnie was able to see much of his country and the world. He met many wonderful people over the years and formed multiple lasting friendships, which included his wife, Sally. Sally was not only his wife but his best friend who stood beside him through thick and thin over the years.

After retirement, Ronnie went into real estate and ended up specializing in property management and ultimately owned his own business. He retired (again) and moved to Port St Lucie, FL in July 2005. During this time, he was "found" by George Kaiser who passed his name along to Glenn Frankenbach in 1999. Glenn contacted him, and Ronnie joined the Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association. At the 2000 annual reunion in Cleveland, Glenn roped Ronnie into becoming the association president. After that, he couldn't "give" the position away, serving as president through 2016, when he was named president emeritus. (That's okay! George Kaiser was at the same reunion and while he was laughing at Ronnie getting roped in, he got voted in as Treasurer).

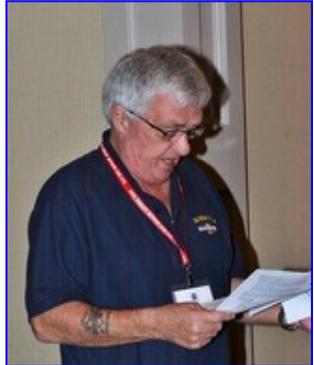
Ronnie is survived by his wife, Cecilia "Sally" Zimmerman, of Port St Lucie; son, Ronnie Zimmerman, Jr. (Dusty) of Seattle, WA; son Jason (Shawna) Zimmerman of Port St. Lucie; grandson, Blake Zimmerman of Port St Lucie; granddaughter, Rayliegh Zimmerman of Seattle; brother, Richard Zimmerman of Leesburg, VA; sister, Terri Volkman of Wauseon, OH; and sister, Vicki Dopp (William) of Archbold, OH. He was preceded in death by his parents Donald and Leola Zimmerman.

Personal Farewells to Ron, Pages 2 & 3



**Farewell to Ron Zimmerman,
Our Friend and Shipmate**

I first met Ron at the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Annual Reunion in 2005 in Charleston. A group of officers serving aboard the Sitkin in the mid-1960's heard of the Sitkin Association and the annual reunions. We contacted each other, became members, and reunited in Charleston for the first time since we left the ship. I will never forget my introduction to Ron. It was at the start of the "Welcome Reception." We all know Ron and you can picture the following: Ron came up to me and introduced himself, stuck his face close to mine and announced in his sweeeeet and veeery quiet voice, "We don't go by rank here!!!" That was it!!! He was a force of nature. The message was delivered and understood.



Over time, we warmed to each other and became very close friends. We talked and argued frequently by telephone. I began to appreciate the time and effort that Ron, as president, put into running the Great Sitkin Association and keeping it together. His drive and energy gave all former shipmates the opportunity to gather on an annual basis and recall and celebrate our military life and experience. He nurtured the association and we reaped the benefits.



Words are inadequate to describe the loss you feel when you lose a friend. But Ron is not truly gone. He is alive and with us until the last man who knew him dies. I came to love Ron Zimmerman and will remember him fondly for as long as I live.

—Alex Paszly



From the President:

It is hard to be joyful writing the report this time. When one loses a friend, it is hard. Ron and I spent many reunions laughing, going over items that needed taken care of at the business meeting, and just having a good time. As Ron was roped into being president many years ago he found the same rope and roped me into being president. Those are big shoes to fill but I give it my best; I think he knew that. Prayers go out to Sally and family during this time of sadness.

Our annual reunion is fast approaching; the cutoff date is August 24. This newsletter should be up-to-date with more info than the last one; I'm almost too embarrassed to admit I put it together like that. One change is that lunch at the Bullock House is covered in your reunion package and not on your own as previously stated. I received an email from the Columbus Visitor Bureau's Ashley, saying the price per person at Fort Benning had gone up! When asked how

much she said 15 cents, I told her I think we can handle that.

I have been sending out emails to our group and know I don't have all of you. So remember if you move or change your email address, please let us know so we can keep you in the loop. Dues are still being accepted by Tom and you can update your info there also. With that being said, see you in September.

Jim Dunno, President

Secretary Report:

Believe it or not 2022 is halfway gone already. It has been a difficult year for many members of the association family and for our neighbors. I am looking forward to the next reunion in Columbus. I'm still volunteering at the VA for fellow veterans.

Still experiencing a drought in California; what else is new, other parts of the country are also struggling with the weather.

Please send me your nominations for election of officers so they can be brought forward at our September reunion.

My son, Joseph Junior, hopefully will be traveling with me. He is going back to Fort Benning, his alma mater as an army veteran.

Please take care of yourself and your family and friends.

Joseph Rios, Secretary

Greetings From Repair 3:

In 1998, I received a post card from Mike Weeks. Mike was the engineering log room yeoman during my time aboard Great Sitkin. Simply stated, the card said, "If this is George Kaiser that served on Great Sitkin in 1971, please give me a call. If not, have a nice day anyhow." Mike Weeks! I remembered him, even though this was the first contact I had with anyone from Great Sitkin since October 1971. Not that I hadn't thought about her during the 27 years since I departed. Training and experiences I had on her were used in so many areas of my life. But now I was being given the opportunity to connect with shipmates. I called Mike, talked to him for a while, and he put me in contact with Glenn Frankenbach, the current president and one of the founders of the Great Sitkin Association. We corresponded for a couple of years about the ship; he invited me to come to the 1999 reunion, but I passed on it that year. In 2000, I was again asked by Glenn to come to Cleveland, but this time it seemed to be with a sense of urgency. So we decided to make plans to attend.

About this same time, I was on a chat room group, www.goatlocker.org for navy chief petty officers. One of the things it allowed us to do was put up our duty stations. It was through this website that I was approached by SKCS Ron Zimmerman, another Great Sitkin Sailor. Ron and I kind of latched on to each other. I'm not sure if I put him in contact with Glenn, but it soon became apparent that Glenn asked him to come to Cleveland with the same sense of urgency. It is now part of association lore that at Cleveland, Ron became president, and I became treasurer of this august body of shipmates. It was also the start of a 22-year relationship built around the care and feeding of this association. I have a special ring tone on my phone I used for Ron so I always knew when it was him calling. I'd answer it and hear "GEORGE!!!!" If I didn't answer right away, it would be something like. "Yep, you knew it was me. Give me a call." He helped build our QuickBooks account, worked through details of many reunions, built and maintained our website for many years, and gave us too many memories to cover in one sitting.

The memories of Ron and his service to family, country, and the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association will live on. For exam-

ple, in April I received a ship's store order from LTjg David Bull. David was Damage Control Assistant on Great Sitkin for the first 3 months I was aboard. He wanted to know if I could give him a phone number for Mr. Stephanski, MPA during David's tenure. Realizing this would require more than an email in return, I called him and was able to talk with David for over an hour. His connection with us came about via our awesome website. Another shipmate comes home.

Ok, here's the plug for our reunion . Be there! We're giving away more free stuff. That's all for now. Be safe, see you in Columbus!

George Kaiser, Treasurer

The Chaplain's Corner:

"Good Day" to all. Summer has finally arrived and people have been planting their gardens. I can't wait for the cucumbers and tomatoes to ripen.

This issue commemorates Ron Zimmerman, who passed away on May 26, 2022. He put up a long hard fight over the past few years. He had three types of cancer to overcome but it finally won. Patsy and I drove down to Florida and conducted his funeral per his request. Ron was a good man devoted to veterans and worked tirelessly to help them excel in civilian life. Please keep Sally in your thoughts and prayers.

Let's keep in our prayers those families that have lost a loved one who sailed aboard the Great Sitkin.

May the Lord Bless and Keep You

Crossing the Bar by Alfred Lordy Tennyson

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;
For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have cross'd the bar.

Mark Rucker, Chaplain

Honor Roll Update

Charles R. Zeamer
Joe Trevino
Florentino Araguz
Ron Zimmerman Sr

USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association
2022 Reunion Registration - Columbus, Georgia
September 14th thru 18th, 2022

Crew Member's Name and Age at Reunion Date

Years Served Aboard the Sitkin

Home Address

Home Phone and Cell Number (for reunion)

E-mail Address

Name(s) of Guests Attending Reunion

"Reunion Package"

Wednesday: Welcome reception, 6:00pm

***Thursday: Fort Benning, National Infantry Museum, Vietnam Wall, Memorial Service
Lunch on your own at the mess hall or offsite buffet***

***Friday: Tour FDR Little White House
Lunch at Bulloch House Included***

Saturday: Annual Business Meeting, Free Time and Evening Banquet

_____ Number of attendees @ \$190 per person. Amount Enclosed: _____

Make checks payable to USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association and mail registration form and payment to:
Jim Dunno
318 Bottecchia Blvd
Johnstown, OH 43031

Do not include membership dues payment in with your reunion payment.

Please note: Due to COVID, Tours are subject to change

Additional Reunion Details

Hotel:

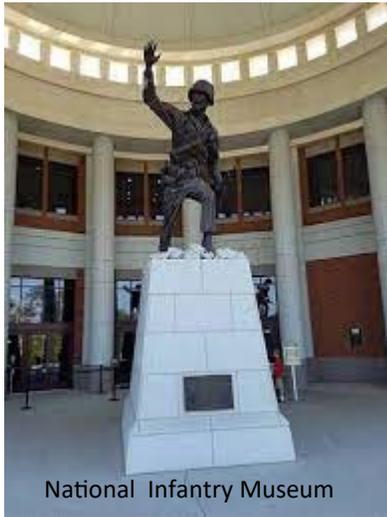
- Rooms are \$124.00 per night (mention Great Sitkin reunion)
- **Phone number is 706-660-1000**
- On-site restaurant for breakfast (included) & dinner
- Indoor (unheated) pool & jacuzzi
- Fitness center
- Complimentary on-site parking
- Complimentary WIFI

Transportation:

- Fly to Columbus Metropolitan Airport (Code: CSG)
- No hotel shuttle is available
- Airport is approximately six miles to Hilton Garden Inn. (15-minute ride) via taxi, Uber or Lyft
- Hartsfield-Atlanta airport is about 100 miles away

Miscellaneous:

- **Cutoff for registration is August 24!**
- Buses provided for transportation during the reunion
- Lunch at Bulloch House is now included in reunion cost



National Infantry Museum



Hilton Garden Inn



Bulloch's Restaurant



FDR's Little White House



See You in Columbus!

Great Sitkin Sailaway

Last month, four couples enjoyed a 5-day sailaway cruise from Bayonne to Bar Harbor, Maine and Halifax, Nova Scotia aboard Royal Caribbean's Adventure of the Seas. Mike & Cathy Kleinbeck; Jim & Joy Dunno; George & Mary Kaiser; and Jim & Mary Connallon enjoyed smooth seas, good weather, and excellent food. How was the cruise?

George Kaiser: "Simply stated, we had a ball! Mary and I were first time 'cruisers,' and we are hooked. Sailing out of ex-MOTBY was a great experience. Mike has already provided us with prospective dates for 2023. Wanna go for a ride?"

Jim Dunno: "Our travel agent, Doc Kleinbeck, did a great job picking out a cruise for all of us. Now if he could guarantee warm weather all the time it would be great, but it was sunny and in the 70s at the ports of call. Joy wants to go back and see more sites. So next spring, come join us."

Mary Connallon: "It was a pleasure to cruise with ship-mates of my husband. He was excited to share new experiences with them, like 'old times.' New parts of the world to explore together! And to share it with them was truly a blessing for me. The weather held out too, making it a great experience for all. "

Highlights of the cruise included:

- A beautiful Memorial Day tribute by the ship's cruise director and orchestra
- An informal visit with the ship's captain, who received a Great Sitkin challenge coin and t-shirt
- A visit to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax, which has items from the Titanic and the World War I explosion of an ammunition ship that devastated the city

If there is sufficient interest, I will be glad to coordinate another sailaway cruise next year. We've identified a similar sailing from Bayonne next May. It is a 5-day cruise to Bermuda and back aboard Royal Caribbean's Liberty of the Seas. If you are interested, email me at mike.kleinbeck@gmail.com.



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Ron Zimmerman

President Emeritus

Association's Website:
www.greatsitkin.org



Membership Update

In an effort to bolster association membership, the March issue of the newsletter was mailed to addresses we had for more than 340 former ship-mates. The mailing had some positive results because dues-paying membership went from 37 in March to 57 in June.

We still have not received dues from a number of long-time members, so please check you have sent them in.

Following is a list of ship-mates whose newsletters were returned as undeliverable. If you have a current address or email for any of them, please let Tom Stachelski know so he can update our records.

- Carl L. Anderson
- Richard J. Arena
- Ralph J. Baggitt
- Ronald P. Bobeck

- William L. Brecheisen
- Lee A. Bubb
- William H. Buser
- George A. Cardinale
- Paul Carlson
- Paul F. Chidester
- Dean R. Culp
- John A. Daly
- Gary R. Driessen
- David Dunning
- Carl M. Erbaugh
- Troy R. Farrell
- Thomas B. Fisher
- Daniel E. Gilchrist
- Joseph Grahn
- Billie D. Greene
- William G. Harkins
- Philip I. Hazelmyer
- Bobby J. Huff
- John E. Keilholz
- Joseph V. Lesieur
- Vernon Mack
- Paul D. Mallin
- Timothy McCarty
- Albert J. Merchant
- David Michaels
- Johnathan Middents

- Joseph T. Miller
- Thomas J. Mindas
- John J. Ogert
- Joseph M. Ouge
- Lawrence G. Peck
- K. James Petro
- Clyde E. Pierce
- Carl A. Pipp
- Elroy Potter
- Richard W. Rahill
- Julian W. Riehl
- James E. Rinow
- Frederick G. Rothe
- Roscoe J. Rousey
- Gary J. Salabak
- Joseph J. Sborz
- Daniel F. Schultz
- Daniel E. Sheehy
- Thomas P. Short jr.
- John P. Skarbek
- Joseph Skoczynski
- Robert E. Smith
- Stephen R. Squires
- Charles L. Thistle
- David Toothaker
- Larry D. Wallenstein
- Mark L. Wilant

USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association Active Membership: Active Member status in the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association is open to all crew members. Dues are \$20.00 per year and are used to cover the cost of the newsletters, website hosting, domain name, administrative and other expenses. The membership year is 1 January through 31 December. Membership cards issued to all crew members paying dues identify the individual by name, expiration date and number of years of Active Membership.

Payment of dues is not required to participate in any official function of the Association but is required for being an Active Member. Notices pertaining to dues will be posted on the website and in the newsletters. Active Members must have their dues paid prior to the annual meeting each year in order to retain their status and eligibility to vote.

To become an Active Member of the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association, please complete the application form below and send it along with a check made payable to:

USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association, c/o George Kaiser, 311 W. Oak Lane, Glenolden, PA 19036

Name: _____

E-Mail: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Dates Served Aboard: _____

Application Date: _____ [] New [] Renewal

Amount Submitted (\$20 per year): \$ _____ [] 2022 YR [] 2023 YR [] 2024 YR

[] Please send me a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws.

Comments: _____

Signature: _____

