USS GREAT SITKIN (AE-17) ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

April 2021

Association Officers

President
Jim Dunno
318 Bottecchia Blvd.
Johnstown, OH 43031
(740) 817-2177

Vice President, Membership Chairman & Webmaster
Tom Stachelski
213 Challedron Drive
Summerville, SC 29485
(910) 484-7629

Secretary
Joe Rios
507 Hemlock Court
Vacaville, CA 95688
(707) 328-1481

Treasurer
George Kaiser
311 W. Oak Lane
Glenolden, PA 19036
(484) 614-4897

Chaplain (Non-officer)
Mark Rucker
241 Larchmont Ave.
Springfield, OH 45503
(937) 322-1327

From the President

This is for the northern members, Hope you are all staying warm? For you southern members don't forget your sun screen. We both have managed to get our first Covid shot and now play the waiting game for the second. While the virus has wreaked havoc on everybody our reunion plans are not exempt from that same havoc, either.

So I will give you the run down. The hotel has said that currently at our Welcome Reception we need to stay seated and be served or not have our usual style of event. There would be no roaming the premises, no pool and again we would have to remain seated while in the Hospitality Room and for our Banquet. The DJ would have to go because we couldn't have a dance either and ONLY family members can sit at a table together! Also you have to throw in the rules set forth by the CDC and the illustrious governor of the state of Ohio. With this newsletter comes a registration form for the reunion, we are going to plan this like it is going to happen. I have completed all the arrangements except for 1 minor item. The Association and all venues have agreed to June 17th as a cut off day to continue or cancel the whole reunion, again, the 17th is the last day for which we can get a full refund on our deposits. So we need to have you send in your registration forms in order to obtain an accurate count of meals and tickets. If we decide to cancel, of course your money will be refunded. If you have any question I will be happy to give you some kind of answer.

On another note, dues are still being collected: you can remit them to George and Tom will get your new card to you. There is a new item at the ships store and I am sure George will mention it in his report. So until the next time stay safe and wear your mask.

Jim Dunno, President

Vice President's Report

Hello all, I hope everyone is well. We currently 41 paid members. As a reminder, please send in your membership dues for 2021. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at the next reunion. Be well…

Tom Stachelski, Vice President

REPAIR 3 REPORT

I'm going to start my report with two SitkinStories. While they will probably pale in comparison to our Shipmate Alex's tales elsewhere in the newsletter, they will hopefully rattle the memories of some shipmates from my time onboard.

I reported aboard Great Sitkin on 21 November 1969. Fresh out of Damage Controlman "A" School, and with all the lessons learned at Great Lakes Recruit Training Command, I was ready to be THAT Sailor. But a scant 25 days into my experience, I was detailed to the time-honored position of Mess Cook. Which, in retrospect, wasn't that bad. About a month into the job, I had to go to St Albans Naval Hospital in Queens for some minor surgery. Great Sitkin was at a pier in Hoboken, NJ, Todd Shipyards. The day I was supposed to go to the hospital, some sort of pipe failure in #5 Hold resulted in a large water leak, effectively flooding the 2nd deck with water up to the hatch coaming leading to the lower decks of the hold. I was told to go down and help SFP2 Rich Johnson with getting rid of the standing water after the repair was done. Too shallow for pumps, and far away from the bilges, the only way to remove it was to spoon it into trash cans with dust pans. Well, Johnson had another plan. He tasked me with going to the nearby Repair 3 getting the portable oxy/acetylene cutting outfit and 6 fire hose gaskets. Back in the hold with the things, Johnson had me stack the gaskets together into the water and press down on them. He then lit the cutting torch and proceeded to burn a hole in the deck, allowing the water to drain down into 3 Deck. Then we…I…. carried everything down to 3 and repeated the process all the way down to the bilges. The holes were never welded shut, and I'd imagine they were that way till the day the ship met her end at the breakers.

Now, like Alex, I have a lot of good stories from my 18 months on board. But I'll wrap up with a small one. My workstation and responsibility was Repair 3, which if you recall, was at the far back end of the ship. When we were well into the 1971 Med Cruise, we got a lot of stores from helos, dropped on the fantail. The goods had to be quickly removed off the fantail to nearby GSK by hand over hand method. One particular replenishment, we were getting geedunk for the Ships Store, which included several large boxes of M&M peanut candy. Somehow (?) an errant box, a WHOLE box, wound up in Repair 3. The misappropriation didn't go unnoticed by the SK's, but it never was found either. Suffice it to say R Division ate a lot of M&M's during our deployment. And I can just imagine the wonderment on the yardbird doing the demolition cutting back there, and finding still hidden bags of M&M's

Ok, speaking of Ships Stores, I still have a large quantity of Great Sitkin shirts and hats. Ships flags too. Advertised in full on the website.

Speaking of money, in the absence of a treasurer's report, just be aware that the account remains in good shape. I continue to be in awe of the Shipmates who send in annual dues. Dues go to support the website, for memorial donations for Shipmates who have finished their earthy cruise, and other noble gestures as designated by the executive board.

And that wraps it up. Holding out hope that in some fashion we will be able to gather in Cleveland in September.

George Kaiser, Treasurer

The Chaplin's Corner
Spring 2021

"Good Day to all of you".

Well winter is still upon us here in Ohio. Was out a little earlier and blew some snow off the drive. I can't wait till spring time.

I hope all are well and safe as we continue to fight this pandemic flu. Our son was tested last week and he was positive with the flu. So far only minor symptoms. He was already in quarantine because his cousin whom he lives with had Covid. Our family has been blessed.

I go this afternoon to get my first shot. As a first responder Patsy has had both shots and did well.

The reunion is fast approaching and I hope things have settled down by then. We will still have to continue safe practice I'm sure.

I am sure most of you heard about Dorothy's passing. I was not expecting that at all. We will all miss her very much. Please keep her family in your prayers. We need to keep the medical staff and first responders in our prayers daily.

I want to remind all today that God has not forgotten us and he is still watching over us.

Psalms 37:39 "But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble."

It's time to say good bye for now. Let's keep those families in our prayers that have lost a loved one who sailed aboard the Great Sitkin.

May the Lord Bless and Keep

Mark Rucker, Chaplin

Honor Roll Update
Joseph A. Cuneo

Wife
Dorothy Hodnichak

Secretary's Report

Hello again to all shipmates! I want to take this opportunity to say that I hope you and your family are doing well during this pandemic. I am doing well but still have some health issues and am looking forward hopefully to the next reunion.

I'd like to take a moment and share with you what I'm trying to do to help my fellow healthcare employees that are dealing with the day-to-day challenge of keeping people healthy. We think of first responders only being Policeman or firemen and also EMT technicians. But I can say in my 52 years of healthcare the healthcare people are in the same category. When you need to come to the hospital we're all there to make sure you get better. So please find a way a of protecting yourself and your family so we can deal with the ongoing emergencies during this pandemic. I'm so proud of all employees working in small and large medical centers and any sort of facility that keep us safe.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the next reunion.

Joe Rios, Secretary

SHOW YOUR GREAT SITKIN PRIDE BY FLYING THE COLORS!

We have 30 of these flags being made.
2FT x 3FT Nylon
Single reverse construction, digitally printed one side, white canvas header and 2 brass grommets.
$50.00 and FREE shipping.

Late January delivery.

Polo Shirts: Men's and Ladies, Navy Blue, Grey and Pink $15 ea

Ship's Picture Shirts:
T-Shirts - $10

All Ship's Store purchases, make check payable to USS Great Sitkin Association. Mail payment to: USS Great Sitkin Association, 311 W Oak Lane, Glenolden, PA 19036

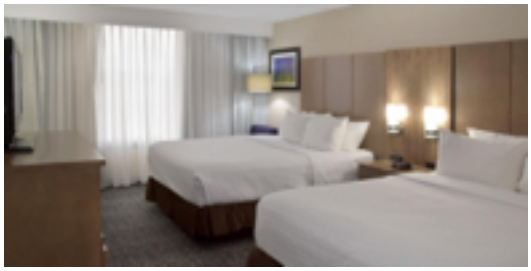
Crowne Plaza Cleveland Airport

7230 Engle Road, Middleburg Heights, Ohio 44130 {1-440-243-4040}

The Crowne Plaza Cleveland Airport is just 3.5 miles from Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. We offer complimentary airport shuttle 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The shuttle runs every 15 minutes. Upon arrival to the airport, proceed to the Baggage Claim area and follow the signs to the Hotel shuttle pick-up area.

Check In/Check Out: **3PM/12PM**
internet, wifi and parking included
Group rate will be $119.00 per night
good 3 days before and after, buffet breakfast for 2 included.

Individuals must identify themselves as part of the Great Sitkin to receive this rate.



USS GREAT SITKIN (AE-17) ASSOCIATION
2021 REUNION REGISTRATION- CLEVELAND, OHIO
SEPTEMBER 15TH THRU 19TH, 2021

_____ _____ Crew

Members Name and Age at Reunion Date Years served on board the Sitkin

_____

Home Address

_____ _____

Home phone cell phone (for reunion)

_____

E – Mail address

_____

Name(s) of others attending Reunion

REUNION PACKAGE

WEDNESDAY……. Welcome Reception

THURSDAY…….Christmas Story House
Lunch at the USS COD, tour and Memorial Service.

FRIDAY……. Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

SATURDAY……. Annual Business Meeting
Free time and Annual Banquet

Due to COVID19, the banquet meal will be box lunches, options are

____ Oven Roasted Turkey ____ Ham & Swiss ____ Italian Sub ____ Roast Beef

All boxed lunches include Bow Tie Pastas & a Cookie

_____ Number of attendees @ $190 per person

Make checks payable to: USS GREAT SITKIN ASSOCIATION
Mail registration form with payment to:
Jim Dunno
318 Bottecchia Blvd
Johnstown, Ohio,43031

PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE DUES WITH YOUR REUNION PAYMENT

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: AUGUST 9TH, 2021

Remembering the USS Midway (CVA-41)
by Alex Paszly

Lately, I found myself reminiscing more and more about the people I've known and worked with while deployed aboard ships. Being "locked down" at home during this "stay at home Covid-19" period gave me a great deal of time to reflect on my experiences while at sea. Of course, these experiences are always about the people I've known. The most memorable ones are those with unusually different and funny experiences that managed to stay in my memory decades after they happened. So, I want to tell you about three different sailors who worked for me in the Boiler Division (B Div.) in the Engineering Department of the USS Midway (CVA-41). All three of these men were "salt of the earth" and the very best I've had the pleasure to work with during my 30 years in the Navy. These stories are all true because you just can't make this stuff up.

Billy

I do not recall the names of these men but the memories are bright. I will call this young man Billy. Billy was about 18 years old when he came aboard the Midway, just before we deployed to the Western Pacific (WestPac). He was green, from the mid-west, raised in a good family. He was the kind of young man you would want to take your daughter to the High School Senior Prom. He was assigned to one of the 12 boilers we had aboard ship. He was bright and worked very hard. His Chief Petty Officer (CPO) told me that if you asked him to do something, you never had to check to see if it was done because it was always done quickly and correctly.

About half way through the cruise, Billy missed "Ship's Movement" when we left Yokosuka, Japan. He came back to the ship the morning we pulled into Iwakuni, Japan, about two weeks later. Missing "ship's movement" is a major offense. When he failed to return before the ship departed meant that his team, manning his Boiler, was a man short. Others had to pick up his work load.

As soon as Billy reported aboard, he was placed "On Report" and confined to the ship, i.e. "No Liberty". At some point before the ship got underway again, Billy had to go before the Captain for "Captain's Mast" to face punishment for missing Ship's Movement. For those unfamiliar with the Military Justice System, Captain's Mast is a non-judicial form of punishment that can be applied to individual military personnel, without a need for a court martial proceeding. Here, the Captain can hear the "charge" and, based on the seriousness of the "charge" as mitigated by the man's reputation and work ethic, he can pronounce punishment. Typically, for this type of offense, the Captain can restrict the man to the ship for a period of time, i.e. 30 days, and/or reduction in rate and/or a monetary fine.

As Division Officer, it was my responsibility to stand with Billy when the charges were read to the Captain by the Master at Arms. At that time, the Captain looked at Billy and asked him, "What reason do you have for missing Ship's Movement?" We could see that Billy was extremely stressed and ashamed for what he has done. All he could say in an agonizing and tearful way was **"Captain, she was sooooo nice! She was sooooo nice!"** The Captain was taken back and could hardly keep from smiling when he said "What was that again?" Billy replied, **"Captain, she was sooooo nice, she was sooooo nice!"**

While trying to keep a straight face, the Captain looked at me and asked, "What do you have to say for this man?" I gave Billy all the praise I could. I told the Captain that on board, he was one of my very best and recommended leniency, if possible, because I felt sure this would never happen again. I can't recall what punishment Billy got in addition to being restricted on board for a period of time. It was probably a fine in some amount. But, Billy did not disappoint. He was one of the very best Boiler Tenders (BTs) aboard. I will never forget him.

Johnny

Johnny was a typical young man raised on a family farm near a small Southern town. He had a large extended family with several brothers and sisters, as well as aunts, uncles and grandparents from both sides of the family. During our discussions onboard about our families, Johnny told me his family was very close, and was proud that Johnny had joined the Navy. He too was an ideal sailor, a genuine good and hard working young man who got along well with everyone, just a great young man to have in your Division.

We had returned from our WestPac tour, and Johnny was looking forward to going on leave to visit his family for Thanksgiving. Shortly after he returned to the ship from his Thanksgiving leave, I asked him, "How was your leave?" He told me the following story:

"Well ...., everything was great. I spent over a week before Thanksgiving visiting and catching up on things with the family. For Thanksgiving, my parents invited the whole family over for a huge thanksgiving meal. We had two large tables and card tables for the smaller kids so the entire family could eat together. My Mom cooked two large turkeys to feed everyone. I was sitting with my Mom, Dad, Grandparents and a couple of aunts and uncles. As the meal started and all the plates of food were being passed around the table, I happened to say; "**pass the f---ing salt."** Everything came to a sudden halt. Everyone in the room froze and stopped talking. It seemed like ages before someone passed the salt down to me."

He explained to me that swearing was just not used in his family, and everyone was shocked to hear "their Johnny" use that word. He quickly apologized, but there was just no way to explain himself. His parents and their small circle of friends just didn't talk that way and could not even begin to imagine how sailors talk in their everyday discourse aboard ship.

The word "f---ing" in the Navy is just "emphasis" added to a point or command being made. At least when I was aboard ship in the sixties, it was used all the time to make a point or to emphasize the seriousness of the request or command. As an example, you would frequently hear a Chief Petty Officer instruct his troops by saying "There will be no f---ing liberty until this f----ing work is done!" It was used to make a point. No one thought anything about it. It was a point made and all the men knew that the "f---ing" Chief was "f---ing" serious and there would be no "f---ing" liberty until the "f---ing" work was done! All of us who spent time aboard ship experienced and probably used this language. We can all smile and laugh at Johnny's discomfort. If the truth be known, my wife had to correct me any number of times when I came home from sea and slid into the vernacular used aboard ship. Hell, we were all sailors!

Jimmy

Jimmy was a 1st class Boiler Tender (BT), but more importantly, he was our "Oil King" aboard the Midway. As "Oil King" Jimmy was responsible for receiving, stowing and transferring the Navy Special Fuel Oil (NSFO) i.e. "black oil," used to fire the ship's boilers to operate the ship's main propulsion engines. He was extremely important, especially when the Midway was being refueled underway at sea. Jimmy was responsible for coordinating and monitoring the flow of oil from the "Oiler" as it was being pumped aboard. Exceptional care had to be taken in shifting the pumping of oil from one storage tank to another as each fuel oil storage tank was topped off and the flow of oil was transferred to another tank. These fuel oil tanks were frequently directly below berthing compartments, and any miscalculation could cause flooding in a berthing compartment, creating a major mess.

We were in port in Yokosuka, Japan, when the men asked me to help to set up a "B" Division party in one of the local establishments (i.e. Bar) in town. I agreed and we began planning the party.

To start, we had to establish some basic guidelines: (1) every member should be able to attend, and (2) we should take specific steps to ensure that no one gets in any kind of trouble. Since the ship was in three section duty, we would have to hold the B Division party on two consecutive nights since on any given day, one third of B Division had to be on on board for the "duty". In addition, we decided to take steps to insure that while the party was ongoing, no member could leave the bar. Everyone agreed that on both nights, specific B Division members would stand guard (w/ no drinking) to ensure that no member could leave the bar until the party was over, and that everyone would return to the ship together.

Based on these guidelines, I assisted the Senior Petty Officers in our Division for contracting a bar for two consecutive nights for the B Division party. We picked the two nights, everyone came up with their share of the rental fee and a number of responsible men stepped up to be a "guard" for one party night.

Jimmy, our Oil King, was an exceptional man. He was a strong family man who never went ashore while deployed, saving all of his money for his family. Since he did not drink and he did not catch the duty on either night of the party, he agreed to be a "guard" on both nights.

Everything went well the first night. Everyone had a great time and returned back to the ship without incident. Then, on the second night, the proverbial "stuff" hit the fan.

No one really knew what or how it happened. But Jimmy, our Oil King, got drunk and hit one of the girls, giving her a black eye. He then ran out of the Bar. The local Japanese police gave chase, apprehended him and put him in jail. Jimmy was in serious trouble because he was now "Absent Without Leave" (AWOL). When I got to the Police Station the next day and heard the charges, I found out that Jimmy was actually seen running over roof tops in trying to evade the police. We had to get him out of jail before he missed ship's movement.

To my complete and pleasant surprise, the local Police were exceptionally helpful. They told me that if I could settle with the injured girl in the Bar, they would let Jimmy out without any charges. He would be free to go, as long as the girl withdrew her complaint. I was assigned an English speaking Police Officer and we began to figure out how to get Jimmy out of Jail. The Police Officer told me to meet with him in a couple of hours at the jail. He would have the girl present, and we could work out a settlement.

I went back to the ship to purchase a number of cartons of tax free cigarettes. I contacted our B Division Chief Warrant Officer (CWO) and asked him to "pass the hat" for the required settlement we would have to pay and then headed back to the jail. I gave my assigned Police Officer the tax free cigarettes I had purchased and met the young lady to begin negotiations.

First, the young lady showed me her black eye. She stated that due to her black eye, she could not work for a given number of days. She wanted to be compensated for those days at a specific amount that she would have earned. Thus, our negotiations came down to the number of work days lost at a given amount per day.

You can not imagine how helpful that Police Officer was. As we began our negotiations, the girl (who spoke only Japanese) asked for a specific number of days of compensation. The Police Officer translated for me, told me what she said and recommended that I agree to half that amount. He then would talk to her in Japanese and argued for my side. After we settled on the number of days, we then negotiated the daily amount lost. To the best of my recollection, in both cases, the settled amount was somewhere between one-half to two-thirds of the amount she requested. In the meantime, our CWO arrived at the Station with the money collected from B Division. We paid the fine and Jimmy was released to our custody.

At Captain's Mast, based on his outstanding work ethic and reputation, Jimmy got off with a relatively short restriction to the ship, without reduction in rate or loss of pay. Since he never left the ship to go ashore anyway, restriction to the ship was not problematic. Jimmy stayed aboard ship for the remainder of the cruise.

Wardroom Humor

We just received our 1st shot of the Pfizer COVID19 vaccine at the University of Virginia Hospital. While there they told us the following:

“Have faith in the Pfizer vaccine. Don’t forget that they make Viagra also. If they can raise the dead, they can safe the living!