USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association

NEWSLETTER

1st Issue 31st Year

March 2023

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

Photographer (Non-officer)
Pat Pasquarella

Newsletter Editor (Non-officer)
Mike Kleinbeck
14404 Paddington Ct.
Solomons MD 20688
(301) 904-4122
mike.kleinbeck@gmail.com

Association's Website:
www.greatsitkin.org

Facebook Page:
www.facebook.com/groups/127536520612775

From the President:

Well, it's a balmy 17 degrees today and time to send out another newsletter before Doc takes off on another cruise. Joy and I are getting ready for a warm Caribbean cruise in a few days and, for those of you thinking about taking one, Doc Kleinbeck has one scheduled for June and would probably welcome you. *(Editor's note: See page 2)*

I have been trying to get this year's reunion planned. The hotel is ready, the bus company is ready, the Air Force Museum is ready, but the aquarium can't seem to get its act together; and when did DJs raise their price for a 4-hour gig to over $1200! All is really coming together except that last one, so hopefully we can get all of you to come this year. Face it folks, Covid isn't going away anytime soon, and you will be missing out on a good time.

Now for the usual reminders: if you have moved or changed your phone number or email address, please let us know. Dues for 2023 are due; George and Tom will take care of them for you. The ships store still has items available for reasonable prices and, if you talk nice to George, maybe he will cut you a deal.

Jim Dunno, President

Greetings From Repair 3:

Here's hoping everyone's winter went well. For us, it was pretty much free of snow. Now we look forward to an active spring. I'm going to start with a treasurer's report. Tom has an update on active members, but I get first crack at the figures when dues checks are sent to me. It always amazes me that we have so many shipmates sending dues in to support the association. The biggest thing you are supporting is the ship's website, which continues to get many viewers. After that comes the newsletter, which Mike does a great job of putting together. That being said, we still need you guys to get some sea stories into him. I served aboard the Great Sitkin for 18 months, and I could fill a book myself on some of the things I encountered.

Another good way to get some memories going is to connect with shipmates. About a year ago, I reconnected with Charlie Stephanski, also known as CWO Stephanski, the Main Propulsion Assistant (MPA) during my tenure on the ship. Just last week, I spent over an hour on the phone with him. Seriously, he has total recall of the Main Space—that's the engine room for you non-snipes.

A short story of an all-to-familiar occurrence in the engine room. Charlie was reminiscing about how we were always "dropping the load," which meant the electrical generators would go off line and the ship would lose power. It involved more than going down to the basement and screwing in a new fuse. It was a labor-intensive event that involved the boiler tenders, electrician mates, and machinist mates to get things lined up again. As a damage controlman, I never fully understood all that was going on. As a DC, our usual watch stations were outside of the engine room, but Mr. Stephanski accorded the lower rated members of R Division the opportunity to do our watch standing duties in the engine room tending to the evaporator, a large, hot, noisy machine that made fresh water out of salt water. I was something of a gear head, so I really didn't mind; but during the lost load operation, I was told to just stay out of the way. Done!

None of us are getting any younger, and sadly it seems we are hearing of more and more shipmates departing their earthly voyages. We need to stay in touch!

That being said, I hope many of you will be shedding your Covid fears and make plans to come to Cincinnati this September! Jim and Joy are putting together a good time with some new surprises. And looking ahead, Mary and I are heading up the 2024 reunion in Warwick, Rhode Island. Now, before you start scratching your heads and saying "where?" The venues we plan to visit, or will have available for individual trips include the submarine base in Groton, Connecticut; the USS Massachusetts Memorial in Fall River, Massachusetts; and Mystic Seaport, Newport, Rhode Island. We are looking at the second or third week in September. The exact date will be available in the next newsletter. In 2024, the reunion will start on Sunday and go to Thursday, to get better prices from the hotel. More details next time. And for 2025, planning way ahead, Alex and Joyce Paszly have offered to do a repeat of their successful reunion in Fredericksburg, Virginia.

So, that's it for now. Remember: dues, reunion, stories.

PS: We still have a good supply of Great Sitkin shirts and hats available. Use this link to get to the Ship Store on our website: https://www.greatsitkin.org/shipstore.html

Secretary's Report:

My report is in two parts.

First, I will share with you that California got a lot of rain and snow this winter, so it's helping a little bit with the drought. There's devastation all over the United States with a lot of people suffering, so if you can help your neighbor and especially your family, I think you'll be one step ahead of everybody else.

And now, here is the most important part of my report. We recently lost another Great Sitkin shipmate, Fred Gallagher. Fred and I served together aboard the Great Sitkin from 1964 through 1967. He was from New Jersey and I was from New York. For those of us who served with him, he was a great person.

Fred and I reconnected during the 2012 reunion in Maryland. After 55 years later, it felt like we had just seen each other yesterday. I could easily connect with a fellow sailor, and we started to share what we did in life. He shared with me about his family and I shared the things about my family—that felt good.

When I first reported to the Great Sitkin, I went to First Division deck force; Fred was in the Second Division deck force. We got together for activities such as going to the beach and enjoying multiple liberty ports.

Well, we did raise a little hell from time to time, but that's all part of being a good sailor. I know Fred was part of playing a prank on me when we were on liberty in France. Someone took a pair of my boxer shorts and gave it to one of the women dancing in the bar we visiting. I noticed one of the women was wearing a pair of boxer shorts—with my name on them! I was pretty embarrassed. "Way to go Fred!" We all laughed and had another drink.

Fred Gallagher (L) & Joe Rios

Fred was a good and excellent patriot, and I honor him and his family. From time to time when somebody comes into your life, you know it's special—and that's how I felt about Fred's friendship. I'm truly going to miss him at the next reunion. Let's all remember the people who helped us be a better a person to others.

In closing, I'm looking forward to seeing other shipmates at the next reunion, and I really feel I have a couple more years to give. I never say goodbye; I always say, "I will see you soon."

With respect your shipmate,

Joseph Rios from Northern California

Joseph Rios, Secretary

Vice President's Update:

As of February 9, we have 51 members who are current on their 2023 dues. Please remember to send in your dues for this year. We have a number of shipmates who paid dues in 2021 and 2022 but have not yet submitted dues for this year.

Fun Facts about our dues-paying members

- Number of 30-year members: 2
- Number of 25-year members: 9
- Number of 20-year members: 39
- Number of 15-year members: 72

Tom Stachelski, Vice President

Chaplain's Corner:

"Good Day" to all of you this New Year.

It certainly has started out with some big changes for some of us. Spent a few days in the hospital the first of November. I found out I have some heart problems I'm going to have to deal with going forward. Want to give a great big shout out to the good Lord for watching over me. Looks like we are moving forward in the right direction. I have great people who are watching out for me: my wonderful wife Patsy, daughter, Nicole, son-in-law, Brian, and my doctors and nurses.

I Peter 5:10: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

Let us keep our hand in God's hand and let him lead us this year.

I am ready for some warm weather They are predicting another snowstorm late this evening into tomorrow afternoon and into Thursday. I think we will just stay in and be safe. I am glad I don't have to drive in this stuff anymore.

May God bless you and keep you safe.

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

May the Lord Bless and Keep You.

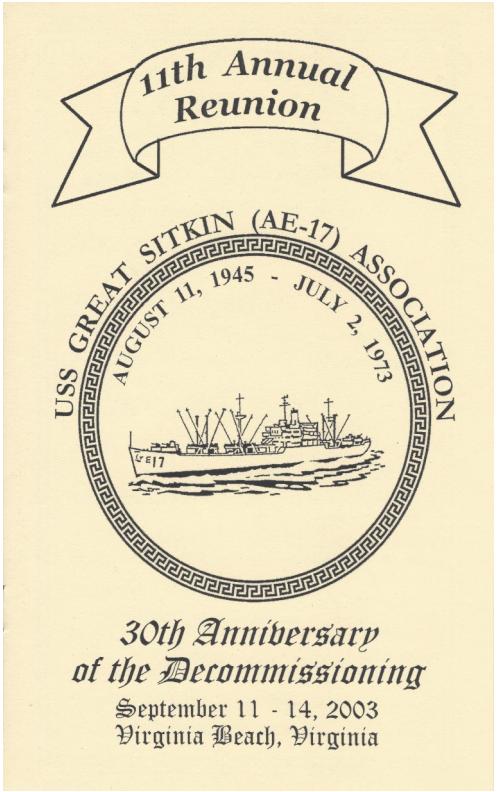
Mark Rucker, Chaplain

Honor Roll Update:

Joseph H. Grahn
Edmund Wesolowski
Emmanuel G. Stoes
Frederick Gallagher

Bermuda Sailaway 2023 Update:

Shipmates and relatives have booked 10 cabins for the May 27th cruise from Bayonne to Bermuda aboard the Royal Caribbean ship *Liberty of the Seas*. There are still a limited number of cabins available. If anyone is interested, contact Mike Kleinbeck, who will work with Royal Caribbean to see what is available and the actual costs. Final payment will be due at the time you make the booking because we are within the 90-day window for final payments.



2023 is the 50th anniversary of the decommissioning.

Why not plan to attend this year's reunion and help us celebrate?

The Last 30 Days

By Gordon Brown

Well, here I was again at NAVSTA Rota. What a crazy 4 years. I was headed home, but not until I ran into one of the new crew of the Sitkin. I think I first noticed his electrician rating patch. When I stopped to talk, I saw he was from the Great Sitkin. I had been gone from her a little over a year and a half. He was just looking around to find something to do. Not being much to do in the evening that I knew of, so we hit the EM club.

Nothing exciting so far. I had been thinking of getting a bite to eat and so was he. I thought that the cafe at the air terminal would be the best bet, so we meandered over there. I don't even remember what we talked about, probably what ports I had been to and some of the highlights.

By the time we headed back to the EM club it was dark. As we got close, we saw lights flashing all over. I thought maybe it was some type of celebration. Turns out it was some horrific donnybrook. Seems like Marines don't like their own kind. Even one officer was killed, if I remember right. One sailor was involved. This would have been in August of 1969.

Making my rounds back to Philadelphia to muster out, I pulled some duty changing out light bulbs in the WAVES barracks, just my cup of tea. Not even a single WAVE at the barracks quarterdeck. Maybe that was an "A" school function.

I later ran into Phil, an old shipmate from my second duty station, USS Palm Beach (AGER 3). He was also getting ready to muster out. We hung out “doing” South Philly. One night, looking for a coffee shop or club, we trekked north toward Center City past the stadiums, A car pulled up and two gorgeous young ladies ask if we wanted to

hang around. We jumped at the chance. They had a spiked can of Coke they shared with us. We rode around a bit, but nothing happened. What a bummer! We went back to the barracks and hit the rack.

That night, I had a dream of tons of brilliant Good & Plenty or Ike & Mikes.

Phil came by the next morning to see if I wanted to do morning chow. I told him about the dream and he said he had a similar one. Electric Circus (a nightclub in Greenwich Village), eat your heart out.

The next Philadelphia story was when I pulled my first shore patrol assignment although it was in the barracks. Another sailor and I were called down to the quarterdeck. We were assigned to stand at either end of the third floor entrance. We were told if anyone came to this certain locker we were to bring them down to the quarterdeck because there was a sizeable amount of illegal drugs in that locker. After about 20 or 30 minutes, a sailor approached and opened the locker. The other sailor took lead and I took up the rear. I even thought that I should be ready at each landing to jump him if he tried to push the lead sailor and make a run for it.

Well, I was 3 weeks short of making Woodstock.

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): $_____ [ ] 2023 YR [ ] 2024 YR [ ] 2025 YR

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

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Signature: _____

USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association
2023 Reunion Registration - Erlanger, Kentucky
September 6th thru 10th, 2023

_____ _____
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
Thursday: National Air Force Museum and Honor Ceremony
Friday: Newport Aquarium, Lunch buffet at the hotel
Saturday: Annual Business Meeting, Free Time and Evening Banquet

_____Number of attendees @ $200 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.

Deadline for submission: August 6, 2023

Additional Reunion Details

- Fly to Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Airport (Code: CVG)
- **Hotel:** Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport 1717 Airport Exchange Blvd, Erlanger, Kentucky 41018
- Hotel has free airport shuttle
- Rooms are $129.00 per night (must mention Great Sitkin reunion)
- **Phone number is 859-371-2233**
- On-site restaurant for breakfast (included) & dinner (20% off)
- Indoor pool
- Fitness center
- Complimentary on-site parking
- Complimentary WIFI