USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association

NEWSLETTER

3rd Issue 29th Year

November 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

Photographer (Non-officer)
Pat Pasquarella

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

Ron Zimmerman
President Emeritus

Association's Website:
www.greatsitkin.org

From the President:

First of all, I would like to thank George and Mary Kaiser for putting on a great reunion on short notice. It seemed like everyone had a fun time and we got to see a lot of great sites, even though the numbers were small. I understand your reasons for not coming this year and hope to see you in Columbus, Georgia.

Joy and I are doing fine. We both received our Covid booster and flu shots and, like everyone else, are still cautious of what's going on around us. We are still planning on a cruise in January with the neighbors.

Since I am on the subject of a cruise, for those of you who have decided to go on the cruise Mike "Doc" Kleinbeck has set up for us in May, we are looking forward to seeing some of you again. One thing I would like to stress is if you can only do one thing next year, please opt for the Columbus Reunion. Ron and Sally Zimmerman have put a lot of time on this and we would rather see you there.

Next new item is that Mike Kleinbeck has graciously agreed to be the Association's new newsletter editor, so you may —or may not—notice a new format, but anyway, THANK YOU Mike for stepping up.

Dues are still being collected, so send your checks to George, and Tom Stachelski will mail your cards and pins if you have one coming. Thank you to the "new" old board for staying on another year and to our Chaplin, Mark Rucker, who continues to honor our members who have passed during the year.

Until the next newsletter, here is wishing you all a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Jim Dunno, President

Remember To Send 2022 Dues

Vice President's Words of Wisdom:

Good day all. I hope you are all well. It was great seeing everyone again after that long hiatus. I am looking forward to the next one. Membership is underway. We currently have 20 paid members. If you haven't already done so, then please send in your dues.

I am also waiting for reunion pictures from anyone who wishes to share them for the website. Please send to me on CD if possible or reach out to me so we can make arrangements.

Tom Stachelski, Vice President

Secretary Report:

Sunday, October 24. 2021 finally gave us some rainfall in California, which included much needed water and snow up in the mountains. The rains put out some fires and created hazards on the road. We will deal with that but I think things are looking up.

I'm looking forward to the next reunion, and I'm going to try to make it. The last two years have been a struggle. I had surgery on my knee and a lot of rehab so I can get around. While I was in the hospital they found some problems with my urinary tract. They performed surgery on my bladder and found a cancerous tumor, took it out, and said," we are going to look at this for the next couple years and hopefully you'll be okay." I received my first year clean bill of health, and I feel fine. It is just "Life."

On a better note I continue to volunteer by encouraging people to get vaccinated at the University of California Of San Francisco Medical center, the VA in San Francisco, and through the local engineering union. We must talk to others to get their kids vaccinated. If they are going to survive we need to take care of them.

So, for now I hope everybody is taking care of themselves and their family and friends. Hopefully we will meet again soon.

Joseph Rios, Secretary

Greetings From Repair 3:

Looks like life is getting back to at least the new normal. Some shipmates had a great reunion in Virginia Beach. Numbers were low, but we expected that with many still being cautious, which is fine. We visited two venues and had a great dinner Saturday night. We're looking forward to next September when we gather again in Columbus.

Speaking of Columbus, those who were there in 2018 remember the ship's challenge coins. It's always enjoyable when we see people really appreciate the spirit in which they are given. That brings me to an experience I recently had in Key West. Mary and I were in Mel Fisher's Treasure Museum, which is a pretty cool place. I was wearing a Great Sitkin T-shirt, and it seemed to have inspired a youngster who was there with his family to tap me on my leg, and said, "Sir, thank you for your service!" Then he snapped me a very nice hand salute. I always carry a couple of our coins with me, so I called him over, and gave him one. Totally blew him away and drove his dad to tears. It's good to be an old sailor.

A recent question on Facebook asked, "What was an experience you had that you might never be able to do again?" At age 71, there are many, but one thing that came to mind was when the Great Sitkin would pull away from the pier and head out to sea. It was humbling to realize the old ship was supporting you and all you would be doing.

That being said, Mike Kleinbeck has put together a cruise out of Bayonne. The details are on the next page. Mary and I are going. We've never been on one, never really on our bucket lists. But at 71, we realized that now it might be one of those "no regret" things. Give it some consideration, it would be fun for a bunch of us to get underway from "MOTBY" and pass UNDER the Verrazano Narrows Bridge again!

So that's it for now. As you've seen, Doc is taking on the task of getting out our newsletters. Maybe dig up and old Great Sitkin sea story, write it up, and get it to Doc for the Winter 2022 edition. Stay safe, smooth sailing to all.

George Kaiser, Treasurer

The Chaplain's Corner:

"Good Day to all of you!"

The reunion in Virginia Beach went well . It was very warm down there. It was good to see everyone. Had a lot of good seafood.

Please start making your plans for Columbus. Ron has worked hard on this one.

I wanted to updates about a few shipmates. Ron has finished his latest cancer treatments and is doing very well. Doctors are pleased with the outcome.

I spoke with Don McClane the other day. Both he and Patty had Covid. He is still in the hospital, and Patty is in rehab. They had both been vaccinated. They are recovering slowly. I talked to Charlie Stephanski. He has finished his cancer treatments and is feeling well. He had no side effects. He says to tell everyone "Hi."

Psalm 28:7-8 *KJV. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.*

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

Mark Rucker, Chaplain

Comments from the Editor:

I have "volunteered" to edit the newsletter. After graduating college thanks to the GI Bill, I spent 40 years as a reporter, editor, technical writer, and proposal manager. Editing the newsletter brings back memories!

I want to continue the tradition of shipmates trading sea stories and other tales of high (and low) adventure before, during, and after your service aboard USS Great Sitkin. Please send me some of your memories for the next newsletters. If you are afraid you are not a good writer, don't worry. I will work with you to make your story the best it can be!

Mike Kleinbeck, Newsletter Editor

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: $_____ [ ] 2021 YR ($20.00) [ ] 2022 YR ($20.00) [ ] 2023 YR ($20.00)

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

Comments: _____

_____

Signature: _____

2022 Reunion Information:

First I would like to thank Doc for stepping up and taking over as newsletter editor. Thanks Doc!

The 2022 Reunion will be held Wednesday through Sunday, September 14-18 at the Hilton Garden Inn, Columbus, Georgia. We got the same great room rate of $124.00 per night plus taxes, single or double Occupancy. The room rate includes a buffet breakfast for two Thursday through Sunday.

On Wednesday the hotel will sponsor a wine and cheese welcome reception. The menus for the patio barbecue and the annual banquet have been selected. The Saturday night banquet will be buffet style. The patio barbecue day will depend on the dates for the tours we select . With the restrictions the possible tour sites currently have due to the pandemic, we will not be able to determine the final destinations and days until at least the end of January.

As soon as I have the rest of the information confirmed and under contract I will let everyone know. I hope to have the full itinerary and reunion package costs by the next newsletter .

Ron & Sally Zimmerman
2022 Reunion Hosts

A Sitkin Ceremony

On July 23 Mark & Patsy Rucker traveled to Wauseon, Ohio to meet Ron and Sally Zimmerman. The were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Ron had asked Mark a year ago to officiate at their wedding vow renewal service. Ron actually got down on one knee and proposed again. Sally once again said, "yes."

2022 USS Great Sitkin Sail Away—Bayonne to Maine and Canada Cruise!

At this year's reunion, people requested we explore a cruise for shipmates, families, and friends. We found a 5-night cruise aboard the Royal Caribbean Adventure of the Seas starting May 26, 2022. The association's executive committee has endorsed this cruise but this is *not* an official reunion.

We are requesting the hold on our group reservation cabins through December 11. Please make your reservations before then.

We need a minimum of eight cabins to qualify as a group, which provides us with shipboard credits we can use for a reception or other activity. As of November 4, we have four confirmed cabins.

This cruise has both a military discount and group rates. Military discount prices start at $994.34 for an interior cabin with double occupancy, which is less than $100 per day per person. Oceanview cost is $1,162.34 per cabin and balconies are $1375.34 per cabin. Prices include taxes but not gratuities, which are.$14.50 per person per day. Some cabins will accommodate a third or fourth person at a reduced rate. A nonrefundable deposit of $100 per person is required for this rate. The military discount applies even if we do not have eight cabins and applies to everyone in the same cabin. Again, these prices are for two people in one cabin.

For family members who do not qualify for the military discount, the group rate prices are between $50 and $80 more per person with a refundable deposit.

The itinerary

Thursday, May 26, Depart MOTBY (now known as Cape Liberty) at 1500
Friday, May 27, At sea
Saturday, May 28, Bar Harbor, Maine.

Tender to shore
Sunday, May 29, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Monday, May 30, At sea
Tuesday, May 31, Arrive at Bayonne, 0700

Booking Reservations

You must make your own reservations.

To book reservations, call 800-465-3595 Option 4, Monday- Friday 9am-7pm EST. and Saturday, 9 am-6 pm EST. Any agent can assist in booking and making changes or payments.

Our group number is 6117314. Remember to ask for the military discount. If you quality.

You will need a credit card for your deposit as well as names as they appear on your passport or birth certificate, citizenship, age, gender, mailing & email addresses, and telephone number.

If you have questions, contact Mike Kleinbeck (contact info on page 1).

How Did I Ever End Up in the Navy?

Have you ever thought about how you ended up in the Navy? I have. I can't help it. Every time I attend our annual reunion or read the Sitkin newsletters, I reflect back to the time when I was on active duty in the Navy. In times of quiet solitude, memories of specific humorous incidents come bubbling up out of the past. I relive the incident; recall the people and what was said. These memories make me chuckle.

It was never my intention to join the Navy. It was spring of my senior year in college, and I was beginning to interview with various potential employers. When the discussion came to my "draft status," every interview ended with the recruiter telling me I would be drafted within 60 days after graduation. They said they would like to talk to me "after" I served my time in the service. Typically, the "service" meant the Army. I did not want to dig ditches in the Army, sooooo when I spotted a pamphlet on the Navy Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Newport, Rhode Island, I grabbed it. Given my situation, I applied, and, by some miracle, was accepted.

After acceptance, I was immediately inducted and promoted to E-2 and was given a set of orders to "**Report Home <u>Without Pay</u>**" until ordered to school. Sure enough, within 60 days after graduation, I was attending OCS. It was a four-month school and a much more difficult than I anticipated. Steam engineering, gunnery, piloting and celestial navigation, damage control, NATO phonetic alphabet, compartment numbering, port & starboard, ranks and various enlisted rates, rules/customs, Captain's Mast and Non-Judicial punishment and demerits for minor infractions like not saluting, shoes not shined or bunk made improperly was a lot for me to pick up. (Marching around with a rifle in front of the barracks was the only way to resolve the demerits.) In addition, about halfway through the school, I noticed that guys were beginning to flunk out. I would come back from the evening meal and find bunks stripped to the left and right of me.

There was a lot of stress on us. You had to study for the exams, but they never gave you time to study. Some nights after lights out, I would sit on the toilet with a flashlight studying for an engineering exam. Our days were filled with all kinds of things like learning how to march in formation, cleaning our barracks/toilets, shining shoes, etc. I was getting worried that I, too, might flunk out. I finally wrote a letter home preparing my parents for the eventuality that I might not make it. Bless my father. In his usual direct way of addressing any situation, he wrote back encouraging me and said: **"Alex, you have to make it! What are the neighbors going to say?"** That was my Dad!

Just prior to graduation, our salty barracks Chief Petty Officer (CPO) interviewed each of us for assignment preference. We all stood in line waiting for our brief interview with the Chief. When my turn came, the Chief looked at me and said, **"Paszly, what kind of ship do you want?"** I looked at him and said: "**I do not want to get seasick!"** He looked at me briefly and said: **"All right wiseass, you are going to an aircraft carrier."**

True to his word, I received orders to the USS Midway (CVA-41) out of Alameda, CA. The Midway was the largest CVA in the Navy at that time. While I can't remember the Chief's name, I remember him fondly. He was tough, but fair. There is a tradition in the Navy that when an Officer gets commissioned, he/she gives a dollar to the first individual that salutes him/her. Upon graduation and commissioning, this salty CPO saluted us as a group and shook our hand individually. We each gave him a crisp dollar bill. I recall fondly the warm, smiling salute and handshake he gave this "wise ass."

Alexander K. Paszly, Ensign

Next issue: Adventures of a wayward ensign