



NAVY NUCLEAR WEAPONS ASSOCIATION

"Keepers of the Dragon"

WINTER ISSUE

February 1998

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(918) 823-4673

Vice President: Alonzo S. (Al) Lowe
(804) 588-7181

**Secretary/
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(904) 277-2476

Chaplain: Henry G. Stephens
(912) 923-8564

Historian: Don Micco
(216) 466-7804

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(760) 384-1482

Member at Large: Glen Newman
(817) 579-0645

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(303) 343-4241

Member at Large: James G. Hambley
(804) 340-6909

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Shipmates; It is a pleasure to have been selected to serve as your president for the next two years. I would like to, once more, thank Ernie Sanchez and last years officers and reunion committees for hosting the last two outstanding reunions. Now is the time you should begin preparing for this years reunion in Norfolk, Virginia. Al Lowe is our contact man on the scene, and at last report he has secured the hotel and was looking into establishing tours and other entertainment. I will be seeing you and all our shipmates in Norfolk. Reach out and touch some of your old shipmates and tell them of our association. It would be nice to see them all in Norfolk. Contact Tom Best for any news that you feel should be presented in this newsletter. Until then, be of good health. Oz

FROM THE SECRETARY/TREASURER: Sorry for taking so long in getting the first newsletter out, but retiring in January from Lockheed, turning over the Treasurer duties from Lou and trying to figure out this new computer has taken up a lot of my time. It's that time of year again where I join Oz in saluting the crew that set up and hosted the most enjoyable 50th reunion in Albuquerque New Mexico last October. Kathy and I drove in from Florida arriving early and was able to spent two very enjoyable weeks as the guest of Shipmate Bill Grizzard and his beautiful wife Nina. We spent plenty of time sampling all the local golf courses in Ruidoso New Mexico and the local Mescalero Apache casinos before driving up to Albuquerque for the reunion. If you have never had the chance to visit Ruidoso, you should really make the effort to go. Playing golf at 9000 feet was really an enjoyable experience for Kathy and I and the sightseeing in the southeastern mountains of New Mexico is breath taking for a couple of Florida flatlanders. Kathy was also able to finally "shop till she dropped" finding all the southwestern decor that she has been waiting to furnish her new home with. Luckily I drove the big van so we had room to transport all of her treasures obtained in either Ruidoso or the Albuquerque flea market (except for the furniture we had delivered). The overall trip was so relaxing that I finally made up my mind to retire and enjoy the good life of not working for a living. So on 30 January 1998 I finally hang up my shooting irons and join the ranks of the retired. To my knowledge, with RO (Bob) King retiring last October; that only leaves Tom Schafer and the crew out at North Island still working in the Navy nuclear weapons program. It's truly a shame that for all the years of all of us working as "Keepers of the Dragon" we have come down to those last persons in direct support of this great program. On to the news from the 50th reunion. If you missed the reunion, you missed the event of a lifetime. Dee (Benina) Rochester and Darrell (Olivia) Cook plus their respective teams put together on heck of a reunion. With side trips to Los Alamos and the Pueblo tours to the first annual NNWA Golf tournament hosted by Bill Grizzard, we were never at a loss of thing to do. The Friday night "Fiesta Mexicana" buffet was full of excellent New Mexican fare and the Saturday night dinner dance again proved to be worthwhile (especially the excellent New Mexican entertainment prior to dinner). We had over 100 association members in attendance for this reunion. The local FRA provided a Two-Bell ceremony for our departed shipmates with Dee Rochester and Henry Stephens presiding over the ceremony. Don Micco again took the time and effort to bring and display his excellent collection of history for the Navy nuclear weapons

programs over the years. If you have any old artifacts that you feel should be kept as history, please contact Don and make arrangements for him to display your history. I want to take a moment and announce that in October 1997 the navy officially closed the doors of the largest depot operated by us. Naval Weapons Station Yorktown (Skiffs Creek Annex) shut down leaving only North Island as the last Bastille in what we knew as the surface weapons programs. The passing of an era is coming very fast with the anticipation of North Island closing it's doors in October 1998. The only active sites left will be Strategic Weapons Facilities Atlantic and Pacific. For your general information, CNO reports that only 3800 personnel (military, civil service and contractors) are left participating in the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP). As you can see at the top of this newsletter, a new board of officers were elected at the 50th reunion. We wish them the best of luck in guiding our association over the next two years. As we continue to shrink in size, I'll remind you that if you know of an old shipmate or two who do not belong to the association, please pass this newsletter on to them in hopes that they will find the camaraderie appealing and join the association. The next reunion is to be held in Norfolk Virginia starting on 6 thru 11 October 1998. Al Lowe is the host chairman with Jim Hambley and Bob Foxwell assisting Al in the detail preparations. Al will send out additional information in the March timeframe as he puts the reunion together. Please plan on putting that time aside and visiting Norfolk for the reunion. Norfolk is bound to bring back memories of our earlier years. This a chance to see old shipmates and friends from many years back, and to have a opportunity to re-ignite old friendships and make some new friends. It was also very nice to partake of the many tourist opportunities that the reunion committee will set up for us to really have the chance to see all of the Tidewater area. The reunion for 1999 is to be in the North Western area of the United States. Details will be published as they firm up. The last item of information is that with my retirement, Kathy has decided that I need to join the 21st century; so she has taken away my 3x5 cards; my grease pencils and has bought me a real live computer so that I can become "State of the Art". With so many members now being "On Line" I thought I would provide some of the e-mail addresses that we currently have. If by chance that you also are on line and would like to communicate. please provide me with your e-mail address so that we can let the rest of the association know. I also plan on trying to put together a Navy Nuclear Weapons Association Web Page so that we can both communicate to all the other shipmates out there that at unaware of our association and communicate between ourselves. As soon as I can figure out how to spell Web Page, I'll get started on developing it. With the able bodied help of my computer literate son (Tom Jr.) hopefully we can have one up and running in 1998. "Watch this space"!

Comments from our Member at Large: As a reminder from the business meeting; membership; whether it be old, new, lost or recently found will be the longevity of the Navy Nuclear Weapons Association (NNWA). We still have a lot of shipmates out there who have not received news of this annual ritual. I personally challenge each and every current member to contact at least one of those lost (but not forgotten) shipmates and invite them to re-ignite some old memories by attending one of our reunions, or by joining the association. I bet that they will be happy that they did and you will feel great for re-igniting that camaraderie. Also take the time to locate one or more past shipmates who have been members of the association in the past, but for one reason or the other, are in arrears with their membership dues. They either have been dropped from our mailing lists or are in jeopardy from being dropped due to membership arrears. Remind those shipmates that it only takes \$20.00 to reinstate their membership, no matter how long it has been. Wouldn't it be great to get all of us together one more time ! We also could use a point of contact from each of the old nuclear weapons areas, such as the Tidewater; Clarksville; Yorktown; Yellowwater; San Diego; Concord; Las Vegas areas. If you would like to be a Point of Contact in one of these area's it's really quite simple. Contact me; Dee Rochester (name and number or the newsletter heading) and we can work out some newspaper articles or letters to fraternal organizations in you areas to help reach these old shipmates; or maybe even contact some new shipmates. Also we are always looking for future reunion sites. Albuquerque and New Mexico areas; Darrell Cook has 17 plus new or renewal members and at last contact John O'Malley has 3 more. Thanks to Darrell and John. Remember your roots and lets get in contact with some old friends and shipmates. Enough preaching, lets get on with the next reunion. If you are interested in becoming a point of contact in your area, or have located some old shipmates interested in joining the association, please feel free to contact one of the Members-at-Large located at the top of this newsletter.

New Members: Thought I would add some information on those new members joining the association in 1998:

Carl K. Johnson of Wilbrham, MA; Robert D. Tome of San Antonio, TX; Dean R. Larson of Griffith, IN; James (Kimo) Uratani of Santa Clara, CA; and James D. Pearson of Cambridge, MN. Welcome aboard shipmates. Hope to see you all in Norfolk this October.

Thought of the Day: Experience is one thing that you have plenty of when you are too old to get a job!

Points to Ponder: Think of life as a good book; the further you get into it, the more it begins to make sense

In Passing: Too many people expect wonders from democracy, when the most wonderful thing of all is just having it!

Last Thoughts: <<<The Real Story of Christmas>>> Not long ago Santa was getting ready for his annual trip, but there were problems everywhere. Four of his elves were sick, and the trainee elves were not producing toys as fast as the regular ones; so Santa was beginning to feel the pressure of being behind schedule. Then Mrs. Claus informed Santa that her mother was coming for a visit. This stressed Santa even more. When he went to harness the reindeer, he found that three of them were about to give birth, and

two others had jumped the fence and were out enjoying the holiday cheer. More stress for Santa! When he began to load the sleigh, one of the boards cracked and the toy bag fell to the ground breaking and scattering the toys. Now very frustrated Santa headed for the house for a cup of coffee and a shot of whiskey. When he went to the cupboard he found that the elves had polished off the liquor and there was none for him to drink. In his frustration he dropped the coffee pot breaking it into hundreds of little pieces all over the kitchen floor. He went to get the broom and found that the mice had eaten the straw that it was made from. Just then the door bell rang. Santa cursed as he headed for the door. As he opened the door there stood a little angel with a huge Christmas tree. The angel said "Where do you want this tree Santa?" And that my friends is how the Angel came to be on the top of the Christmas tree!

Kathy and I wish you and yours the very **BEST** of the past holiday season and hope each and every one of your families the greatest of the New Year. We hope to see all of you in Norfolk Virginia for the next reunion in October 1998. You'll be able to recognize me easily. I'll be the one with the relaxing look of retirement and the nice Florida tan gained for many days on the local golf courses.

Some late breaking news: Sadly we must report that our Shipmate Jerry Lessons has past to his last duty station on the Staff of the Supreme Commander. Like many of our shipmates, Jerry dedicated his life to the Nuclear Weapons program, both as a professional sailor and for many years as the production controller at Skiffs Creek and was truly a "Keeper of the Dragon". Fair winds and following seas Jerry. You'll be missed shipmate!

NNWA members e-mail addresses that have been provided to Tom. If you are on line, let Tom know at thbestsr@net-magic.net and we will get your e-mail addresses published so your shipmates can contact you.

RON KITTERMAN	RKITTERMAN@PROAXIS
CARL PATRICK	CPATRICK@WORLDNET.ATT.COM
SPARKY HAUKEREID	AHAUKEREID@AOL.COM
KEN FALKENBERG	KFALK@UNM.EDU
JERRY DOUGAN	RDOUGN@IX.NETCOM.COM
GEORGE DIAMOND	GEOOD@WORLDNET.ATT.NET
LOU RIVERA	LRIVERA@INJERSEY.COM
CHARLES B. CUSHMAN	CBCUSH@EARTHLINK.NET
WILLIAM R. PETERS	PETERWMR@ARN.NET
JIM FEATHERSTON	JFEATHER@ARKANSAS.NET
ROY OSBORNE	HUNTERGUNN@AOL.COM
CHUCK ORVIS	CEORVIS@AOL.COM
ELTON CALL	CALLEL@IDA.NET
GEORGE NORTON	ANORTON@RIOLINK.COM
ERNEST QUEECK	EQUEECK@CAI.PLINEX.COM
JERRY SCHMITT	GSAINV@AOL.COM
LYNDEN RADER	LLRCR@AOL.COM
DARRELL G. COOK	COOKIE@ABQ.COM
ALONZO S. LOWE	ALLOWE@PRODIGY.NET
ERNETT CHRANE	ECHRANE@WEB-ACCESS.NET
LOU CATRON	SKETTER2@JUNO.COM
THOMAS H. BEST SR.	THBESTSR@NET-MAGIC.NET
LARRY FELDBRUGGE	FELDBRUG@PACBELL.NET

Notes from the new treasurer:

Do your association (Navy Nuclear Weapons Association) a big favor. You know that we operate on a very small budget and the all Board of Governors "volunteer" their time to make this association what you want it to be. Look on your mailing label. On the bottom of the address label is a number; i.e.: 96 or 97 or 2002. This is the year that your membership dues expire. Dues are \$10.00 per year. If your number is 97 or less, then you are in arrears in your dues. We cannot continue to bear the expenses of mailing to those members in arrears, so please take a moment of your time and send the treasurer a check to bring your membership up to date. Help us keep this association afloat shipmates.