



NAVY NUCLEAR WEAPONS ASSOCIATION

"Keepers of the Dragon"

WINTER ISSUE

February 1997

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(619) 449-8031

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(619) 384-1482

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(904) 277-2476

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FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Shipmates; Ladies and Shipmates Thank you all for your attendance at the Twelfth Annual Reunion of the Navy Nuclear Weapons Association. You are the members that made it possible for the San Diego reunion to be such a huge success. My special thanks and a hearty "Well Done" goes to Joe Bland (1997 Reunion Chairman) combined with the most able assistance of his beautiful bride Florence for all the advanced leg (and brain) work necessary to make sure that upon arrival at the hotel, our association members were welcomed just like being home again. Also many thanks go out to Lou and Pat Catron and Tom and Kathy Best for all the advance notifications and newsletters announcing this reunion and it's schedule. My special thanks go again to the McAlester group for their continued assistance in the procurement of shirts, hats, name tags and other memorabilia that helps in making these reunions a memorable occasion. Also to Bob Brewer, Pat and Lou; Tom and Kathy; Jack and Eileen and the other able-bodied seaman that assisted in the initial set up of the Hospitality room and it's continued operation through-out the reunion. **Bravo Zulu !** Most of all; I believe that I owe a vote of thanks to my beautiful bride Isabel, who not only has consistently supported me in all my endeavors, but has also tolerated me all these years. Thank you my love. I have received quite a bit of positive feed back on both the Friday night buffet and the Saturday evening dinner dance. How about that Disk Jockey, wasn't he great and entertaining, but he did have to take a back seat to our M/C. Lou Catron, you definitely missed your calling big guy. I want to announce the 1997 NNWA reunion location. Dee Rochester (Benia) is the reunion chairman and the membership has selected Albuquerque, NM as the reunion site. This is of some significance as 1997 will be the 50th anniversary of the Navy Nuclear Weapons program. With the able bodied assistance of Darrell Cook (Oliva); Donald Derrick (Sharla) and Bill Grizzard (Nina) this reunion promises to be the reunion of all reunions. If you have never attended a reunion of this association before, or have not attended in a few years, this one is the one you need to attend. Some initial information on this reunion is contained in this newsletter, but Dee promises an individual mailing soon to identify the details of this reunion. Now that the smoke has cleared and all barrels are clear, I want to wish each and all of you a belated Merry Christmas and hope that the New Year has been great for you and yours so far. Hope to see you all in Albuquerque!!

:::Ernie and Isabel:::

FROM THE SECRETARY: I join Ernie in saluting the crew that set up and hosted the San Diego reunion. Kathy and I arrived early from Florida so we had plenty of time to enjoy the attributes of sunny southern California. The first thing Kathy found out; never being in California before; is the water temperature in the Pacific ocean is not necessarily the same as the Atlantic in October. When she ran full steam into the surf at LaJolla, the temperature was not the balmy October 85 degrees that she is use to, but a rather chilly 62 degrees. We also found out that while visiting Tijuana was neat, she does not understand the fascination of going there; which by the way is really great, because now I don't have to explain my fascination of Tijuana back in the early 60's and 70's. Another bullet successfully dodged by the newly wed. To pass on some of the information discussed during the Saturday business meeting held during the reunion: A bell ceremony and remembrance was held for our departed shipmates in 1996. The Pledge of Allegiance was conducted by all members present. Ernie announced that the business meeting was in order and thanked

the San Diego organizing committee and the McAlester group (Ozzie; Lavon; Ike and Sue) for hosting such a smooth and eventful reunion.. Lou Catron read the financial report and announced that the association was still solvent (Pat concurred); but that we needed to get new membership (new and old blood) involved with the association if we wanted to continue to carry the association forward into the future. Dee Rochester said that Darrell Cook wanted to remind the membership that he has a present lawsuit against the VA. If you need some information concerning this action, contact Darrell Cook at 11713 Bucking Bronco Trail SE, Albuquerque, NM. 87123 or (505) 298-8157. Dee also reminded the membership present that we needed to actively pursue finding old shipmates and soliciting their membership in the association. He said that if anyone needed any assistance in trying to locate an old shipmate, for them to either get on the Navy Retired Web Site for locator services or contact one of the NNWA board members for some assistance. For those of you who are interested, Darrell Cook has now located Mel Dornan, if any one needs his address, please contact Darrell. Dee reminded us of some NNWA history in that the association was originally founded in 1983 by Jim Buchans. Unfortunately Dee contacted me two weeks ago to inform me that Jim had passed on and is now on staff to the Supreme Allied Commander. The association has received a very nice thank you note from Jim's wife Jeanne for the floral arrangement sent by some of our membership. Please take some time out of your busy schedules to stop for a moment and thank Jim and his bride Jeanne for all their contributions and sacrifices given to make this the best country in the world. Dee also put out some preliminary information concerning the 1997 reunion, but that is covered a bit latter in this newsletter. Also while at the reunion I noticed several new members attending, two of which were Bill and Nina Grizzard and Dale and Arlene Miller. (Dale is still on active duty LDO LCDR). Russ Rhine made a formal apology for the 1995 Oklahoma reunion photographer and the photograph's taken at the dinner dance but never received. Seems that the photographer and his parent company had a miscommunication and eventual fall out, so you can guess the end results. We had the opportunity to help Walt and Martha Webb celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary while we were there, and Kathy and I celebrated our 3rd anniversary. If you remember, we were married on the dance floor at the 9th reunion by the disk jockey that had the duty that evening. Every thing has work out great since then. The members present at the business meeting voted on the location of the 1998 NNWA reunion. The vote was: West Coast: 2; Central US: 0, East Coast: Majority winner. Within the East coast region, we further voted to hold the reunion in Norfolk Virginia, as it will have been 1990 since we have visited that fair city. Member Alonzo Lowe has accepted the task of reunion chairman and has gone off busily to set up another reunion to remember. More to follow in another newsletter. It was nice to attend the reunion as 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 on the many tourist opportunities that the reunion committee set up for us to really have the chance to see all of southern California, but one of the most worthy items of interest to me during this reunion was the chance to go to the dinner dance and listen to two excellent guest speakers. LCDR Dale Miller gave a excellent presentation on the current status of the navy nuclear weapons consolidation efforts that are currently ongoing, plus a history lesson on what drove the Chief of Naval Operations to mark the decision for consolidation, not only of the historical weapons sites, but also the training and inspection activities and the various type commanders that have historically support this capability. I know Dale's wife was impressed as this is the first time that she found out what Dale did for a living. Also at the reunion was a most honored guest. Shipmate John William Finn, retired Navy Lieutenant and last Medal of Honor recipient still alive from the attack on Pearl Harbor. Joe and his bride both provided interesting commentary on the attack on Pearl Harbor, both from Joe's and his brides vision, Lt. Finn was at the time a Chief Aviation Ordnanceman and was wounded 20 times in the left arm, foot and belly. Manning a 50 cal. machine gun position he maintained the firing position for over two and a half hours causing much damage to the Japanese air planes that constantly flew over his position. Lt. Finn still had over 1000 rounds left when he was ordered from his position to be taken to sick bay. Like most of us who have experience life and death during the days of the Navy, most young people know of Pearl Harbor and Vietnam from only the history book. You never really understand the feelings and friendships till you "Been there--Done that". Got a T-shirt too, but it don't fit no more. Lt. Finn, our collective hats are off to you and the men like you who have offered so much for this country and have asked for so little in return.

Thought of the Day: "The game of life is not so much in holding a good hand; as it is in playing a poor hand well" I guess we all can equate to that some time in our lives?

Points to Ponder: To train your dog, you have to be smarter than the dog. It has always been that way. Now you can say the same thing about your computer.

In Passing: We made one fundamental mistake in the Revolutionary War. We should have fought for Representation without Taxation !

Last Thoughts: Did you know that an Ostrich is unable to fly, but can outrun most birds that are in flight ? One of the most important words in that statement is **But**. We may not have as many talents as another, or as much money as others, **but** we do possess something of infinite worth. Our unique, personal individuality. We may have some problems, **but** it is great to be alive and solving them. We may have more than our share of adversities, trials and tribulations, **but** we also have many blessings that we need to remember to count. We may be getting older, **but** we are also getting wiser. We may not have achieved fame and fortune, **but** we all have a few loyal and priceless friends that we can always count on. Remember one thing is your quest for happiness: A bee can never be an eagle no matter how he tries, **but** no matter how the mighty eagle tries, he will never never make sweet honey.

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 Albuquerque for the 50th Anniversary Reunion.

Vice President and 1997 Reunion Chairman: Benina and I had a great time in San Diego and we want to thank Joe Bland and his committee for doing such a great job. Thanks Joe and Florence. San Diego was especially good to me because so many of my shipmates and good friends were there. Also, one shipmate; who was the first Chief that I worked for, was present. Thanks John Blake, you made my day ! 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. The 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. Also remind them that our 50th Anniversary reunion is coming up in October of this year. 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 really quite simple. Contact me (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. In the 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 news of the next reunion.

The 13th NNWA Reunion and the 50th Anniversary of the Navy Special/Nuclear Weapons Units personnel will be hosted in Albuquerque, NM. Starting on the 15th of October and ending on the 19th of October 1997. This celebration and gathering of old friends and shipmates has been expanded one day (just this time) to allow everyone to leisurely partake of visiting, sightseeing and/or just plain relaxing with some old friends. The reunion site will be the Sheraton Uptown, Albuquerque; 2600 Louisiana Blvd. NE, Albuquerque. NM. 87110. Their phone number is (505) 881-0000 or toll free 1-800-252-7772. The room rate for members and guest of the Navy Nuclear Weapons Association is \$65.00 per night. Be sure; if you call early, to identify yourself as attending the NNWA reunion. We are setting up tours for 15 and 16 October and possible a short tour on the 17th. A golf tournament is also being organized. On Friday the 17th, a unique New Mexico dinner and entertainment is being planned. Dress will be casual. On Saturday the 18th, we have our normal dinner/dance scheduled with a choice of entrees; entertainment and some surprises may also be in store. One thing that I think would be nice for the 50th reunion would be to see if you still have your uniform and if so; what alterations must be made to "take it in" so that it will fit you. It would be extremely appropriate for evening wear at the Dinner/Dance. During the daylight hours of 15, 16 and 17 October I will offer to navigate my shuttle home for those that want to get out and about without taking advantage of the tours, but I can only get a few at a time. After sundown, I'll be in the Hospitality room. Also the hospitality room will more than likely be the first thing at the reunion to open and the last thing to close. Reunion details and schedules will be made available around the first part of March as I get the last of the details worked out. I will then send a mailing out to the membership identifying all the aspects of the reunion and soliciting your wants and desires so that all the final details can be worked out. Remember that Albuquerque is beautiful in October. The balloon fest will just be getting over with and hopefully some of the balloon's will still be in the area. It's normally nice, light jacket days with it being considerable cooler if you visit Sandia Peak (12,000 ft). If any one has any questions concerning the reunion, your points of contact in the Albuquerque area are:

Dee Rochester (Benina) 806 Kevin Way, Ridgecrest, California 93555 (619) 384-1482
Darrell Cook (Olivia) 3608 Moon NE, Albuquerque, NM 87111 (505) 298-8157

******We hope to see each and every one of you at the 50th Anniversary Reunion******