



USS Seattle AOE-3

Veteran's Association Newsletter



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Issue # 11

3rd Quarter - 2015

Issued: Aug., 2015

Editor: Dale Eicker

Contributing Editors: Bill Norris, Vic Hellberg,
Earl Boutell

TIME?

Reunion # 6 in Pensacola, FL was a huge success and the board and committee members have worked hard to get reunion # 7 plans finalized for our reunion in Branson, MO. A lot of info is included here and on our website. Keep watching the newsletter, and our website for any updates as we near the reunion date.

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**Lance Briggs
Earl Boutell**

Al Pitman

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SHIPMATES

Seattle shipmates one of our USSSVA shipmates has been working on a book of the history of the USS Seattle and needs your help. He has a lot of items from the first few years of her service and some from the back years, 2004 - 2005 but needs more from the middle years. So we have two requests:

- 1) If you have a year book after 1973, and would be willing to let us scan and share information in the book or:
- 2) Have some pictures in any format that you would like to see in the book or:
- 3) Have a good story or facts about the Seattle

Please send an email to Rich Toma richtoma16@yahoo.com or contact him on Facebook or contact Bill Norris.

Thanks in advance for your help...

Bill Norris

USSSVA President

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REUNION # 7

Branson, Missouri is the location.

September 8th through the 13th are the dates.

GRAND PLAZA HOTEL 245 N Wildwood Dr. Branson, Mo 65616 1-800-850-6646 or 417-336-6646

	Start Time	Return Time	Event Schedule	Member /Guest Fees
Tuesday	6:30 am	8:00 am	Hot Buffet Breakfast Hotel Restaurant – 9 th floor	<i>free</i>
Sept. 8th	8:30 am	2:00 pm	Golf Outing at The Pointe Royale (tee time 9:00am) Taking cars to the course – 866-334-4477 http://www.pointeroyalegolf.net	??
	9:30 am	2:00 pm	Shopping (Old Town Branson Boutiques) & Lunch at tea room	\$22.00 <i>p/p</i>
Wednesday	6:30 am	8:00 am	Hot Buffet Breakfast Hotel Restaurant – 9 th floor	<i>free</i>
Sept. 9th	12:00 pm	---	Official Check-in start USSVA registration fees (members only) Hospitality Room – handouts for members	\$50.00 / <i>Free</i>
	3:00 pm	---	Hotel Room costs at Grand Plaza Hotel (per room) – check-in	\$90.00
	5:30 pm	10:00 pm	Welcome Aboard Reception (light meal provided) Hospitality Room Ships Store open in Sunset Room of 9 th floor	<i>free</i>
Thursday	6:30 am	8:00 am	Hot Buffet Breakfast Hotel Restaurant – 9 th floor	<i>free</i>
Sept. 10th	8:00 am	9:30 am	USSSVA Board Meeting Board Members only – Ships-Store room – 9 th floor	---
	10:00 am	1:00 pm	USSSVA Show and Tell Special Guests: Captain Steve Firks 1996-1998 Terry Buckler US Army Green Beret	<i>free</i>
	3:00 pm	7:00 pm	Western Fiesta Dinner at the Hotel (eat at 5:00 pm) The SIX Show (catch bus at hotel)	\$70.00 <i>p/p</i>
Friday	6:30 am	8:00 am	Hot Buffet Breakfast Hotel Restaurant – 9 th floor	<i>free</i>
Sept. 11th	8:00 am	10:00 am	USSSVA Business meeting – Hospitality Room – 9 th floor Members Only	---
	9:00 am	2:00 pm	Ships Store open in Sunset Room of 9 th floor	---
	2:00 pm	10:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit to TITANIC MUSEUM • The SHOWBOAT BRANSON BELLE and Dinner on board • CLAY COOPER's Country Music Express (Bus from Hotel – Group Picture arranged at Titanic Museum)	\$101.00 <i>p/p</i>

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REUNION # 7

Schedule - continued

	Start Time	Return Time	Event Schedule	Member /Guest Fees
Saturday	6:30 am	8:00 am	Hot Buffet Breakfast Hotel Restaurant – 9 th floor	<i>free</i>
Sept. 12th	9:30 am	2:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INSPIRATION TOWER (at Shepherd of the Hills – a massive 230' tall structure located at Inspiration Point) • LUNCH • # 1 HITS of the 60's SHOW EXTREME ZIPRIDER (Optional at the Inspiration Tower)	\$70.00 <i>p/p</i> (\$25.00) <i>p/p</i>
	2:00 pm	6:00 pm	FREE TIME --- Ships-Store open (3:00 pm to 5:00 pm)	---
	6:00 pm	7:00 pm	SOCIAL HOUR Cokes, beer and wine provided by USSSVA Mixed drinks can be purchased at the bar	----
	7:00 pm	10:00 pm	USSSVA BANQUET Memorial Service Guest Speaker: Captain Steve Firks 1996-1998 {Dress Code: Business Casual}	\$40.00 <i>p/p</i>
Sunday	7:00 am	8:00 am	Farewell Breakfast Hospitality Room – 9 th floor	<i>free</i>
Sept. 13th	8:00 am	???	Ships-Store (open till last person leaves)	---

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Shipmates,

I wanted to pass on an invite and update on the USS Seattle 7th annual reunion in Branson MO this September. We have an exciting and fun packed reunion, starting with our 2nd annual golf outing Tuesday morning. The rest of the week we have tours, shows and other activities planned, including a theme dinner meal one night. We will have one or more get together times to talk about our time on the Seattle, show and tell times and some really fun stories. Our main event, the banquet will be Saturday night. Our reunion ends Sunday morning with our farewell Sunday breakfast.

You can go online at <http://www.ussseattleaoe-3.org/> and take our survey now and register and signup for events. See the next page for the BIO on our guest speaker - it's confirmed and Steven F. Firks, former Captain of the USS Seattle AOE-3 will be the speaker. Steven F. Firks was Seattle captain from, 11/26/1996 - 9/11/1998.

Following the USS Seattle he was the commanding officer of the USS Nimitz from June 1999 - May 2002. As we finalize the schedule I will post them on the USSSVA website and here. The dates of the reunion will be September 8th, 2015 - September 13th, 2015.

Should you have any questions, please contact me, bnorris5248@gmail.com or 281-785-6415.

Hope to see you there...

NOTE:

We also have a special raffle item --- "I'm Rick Campbell, a retired Navy commander and author for Macmillan / St. Martin's Press, and I'd like to donate a signed hardcover book to your association for an upcoming reunion."

Quoted from email received from Rick --- this will be one of our raffle items at the reunion in Branson.

Bill Norris
USSSVA President

Guest Speaker Biography

Steven F. Firks

Captain, USN (Ret)

Steven Firks was born in Crawfordsville, Indiana, attended Mollie E. Ray Elementary School in Pine Hills, Florida, and Hazelwood Junior and Senior High Schools in Florissant Missouri, graduating in 1970. He then attended the U.S. Naval Academy, graduating in June 1974.

Following graduation from the Naval Academy, Steve attended flight training, and was assigned to fly the A-7E Corsair II, deploying to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean with the VA-146 Blue Diamonds in USS Constellation (CV-64), CVW-2 in USS Ranger (CV-61) and VA-97 Warhawks in USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70). Following a tour in Fallon, Nevada flying the F-5E Tiger II and A-4F Skyhawk as an adversary pilot, he transitioned to the F/A-18 Hornet and made combat deployments for Operations Desert Storm and Southern Watch with the VFA-195 Dambusters aboard USS Midway (CV-41) and USS Independence (CV-62), including 32 combat missions into Iraq and Kuwait in support of Operation Desert Storm. He then attended U.S. Navy Nuclear Power School and in 1995 was assigned as the Executive Officer in USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), supporting combat operations in Bosnia. He commanded USS Seattle (AOE-3) from 1996 to 1998, deploying to the Arabian Gulf with the USS George Washington Battle Group. Following a short assignment as the Joint Operations Officer on Commander Second Fleet staff, Steve commanded the nuclear aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN-68) from 1999 to 2002, leading the crew through the first nuclear refueling of a Nimitz class aircraft carrier, and homeport change from Newport News, Virginia to San Diego, California. His last assignment in the Navy was in Colorado Springs, Colorado where he served as the Vice Director of Plans in U.S. Space Command and as the first Division Chief for Ballistic Missile Defense in U.S. Northern Command. CAPT Firks joined the Missile Defense Agency in July 2004 after 30 years' service in the United States Navy. Steve established the Ballistic Missile Defense System Watch Officer (BWO) team, which has grown to become a vital source of information for MDA Senior Leadership, and a centerpiece of MDA's around the clock support to Warfighters who defend the nation from ballistic missile attack. He currently leads Warfighter Strategic Integration – Colorado Springs, with responsibilities for the MDA Operations Support Center, BMDS Asset Management, Operational Readiness Reporting and BMDS Strategic Planning support.

Steve earned a Bachelor's Degree in General Engineering from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1974, a Master's Degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in 1986 and he earned nuclear operator and supervisory qualifications in U.S. Navy Nuclear Power School in 1994. His Military Awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (two Awards), the Meritorious Service Medal (two Awards), the Air Medal (one Award for Valor, two Meritorious), the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (one Award for Valor, two Meritorious), as well as other command and unit awards. Steve was the third recipient of the annually awarded Missile Defense Agency Star Award in May, 2007. He is married to the former Susan Taylor of Florissant, Missouri. They have been blessed with three children, Catherine, Jeffrey and Timothy, and six grandchildren, Kristen, Allison, Owen, Benjamin, Kaylee and Lauren.

BRANSON PREVIEW

(article by: Vic Hellberg)

Each year as we prepare for our reunion, a group of us head to the reunion city to choose events and interesting sites to assure we have created the best reunion ever. President Bill Norris, Earl Boutell and Vic Hellberg spent time in Branson choosing events for you. Here is a picture of the Grand Plaza Hotel and the view out the restaurant window on the top floor.



Branson is known for being extremely supportive of veterans. We can assure you we felt that for the entire time we were there. Be sure to wear your hats and shirts displaying your membership!! Here are a couple of pictures of the Titanic Museum. We took this tour and immediately added it to the list.



We discovered the stories of many who sailed on Titanic.

There are interactive galleries which bring to life the crew and passengers. There are lots of actual items from the wreckage. It is very interesting!

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The Showboat Branson Belle, America's Most Entertaining Dinner Cruise, features stunning lake views, a delicious three-course meal and an exciting patriotic show. The show and meal are featured on all cruises aboard the authentic 700-seat paddle wheeler, which cruises Table Rock Lake.

While we were doing all these things, we had to make our own schedule. This required us to drive to each event, park and drive back to the hotel. In between we made our own arrangements for eating. But when you come to the USS Seattle AOE-3 Veteran's Association reunion, ALL those things are arranged for you. All transportation is provided so you just have to show up.

Reservations are coming in every day now so get yours in as soon as you can. Over the next few weeks your email will provide you with more information on each event.

The shows, which are extraordinary, will be detailed in emails to come. We will be attending three: "Hits of the 60's", "Six", and "Clay Cooper's Country Music Express". Also, we will go to Inspiration Tower, have a Western Fiesta Dinner (under Jim Pease's guidance), Show & Tell at the hotel, including US Army Green Beret Terry Buckler, Banquet with memorial service for our lost shipmates and our Special Guest former Captain Steve Firks (1996-1998). Keep your eyes on your email for more information on all these events. Get signed up so you won't miss out. Your shipmates will be there!!!

Vic Hellberg

SHIP's STORE

Here are some items from the Ship's Store you may be interested in.

Go online to place orders.



A koozie for your drinks.



Key ring.



Mouse pad (use one at work myself)

Now for a special new item – by special request (many members have asked for this T-Shirt)..



Front view and back view. Vic has already gotten some of these in stock so place your orders now.

Letter from Earl Boutell

Freida and I drove from KC to Detroit (Marine City) on June 21 to visit with Tom and Terry Filo. John and Marian Cardillo had been to visit them 2 weeks earlier. Jim and Helene Dolente are scheduled to see them in less than 2 weeks. Around Christmas of 2014 Tom was diagnosed with ALS. As you may already know, Lou Gehrig's disease is always fatal. Some can live up to 10 years with it; others, like Tom, will live less than a year after diagnosis.

ALS results in nerves that are killed off that control voluntary muscles thru a chemical released by the brain. The arm and leg muscles are usually first to go, eventually the tongue and throat muscles die and the victim chokes to death. This process is irreversible. Tom lost use of his legs and left arm and hand, and his right arm. His voice is quite weak, especially towards the end of the day, so he has an amplifier that fits like a headset w/ mike. The thing that hasn't changed with Tom is his intelligence and especially his sense of humor. As a gift he received a new Navy blue camo hat, so one day and I told him several times not to take the hat off and turn around, that I'd get it. We laughed about it, and Tom said he'd "will it" to me.

Terry has to do EVERYTHING for Tom. This includes feeding, bathing, dressing, moving him, adjusting his chair, putting him to bed, brushing his teeth, changing catheters... fortunately there is plenty of help from Tom's family- a brother and sister and son and daughter. Tom's brother, John, was there from Alaska when we were there, their sister was to come stay with them around July 1st. Friends have stepped up to help, too. And lots of VETERANS! They call it, "Veterans helping Veterans." One is mowing their yard for \$5 a week. Another built a beautiful wheelchair ramp for the cost of materials. A wheelchair elevator was installed at the end of the front porch, allowing Tom to be lowered to the sidewalk and to their van. Someone remodeled the bathroom with a raised toilet, roll in shower, and sink with handicapped 'roll under' vanity.

Two organizations have stepped up to help. One is ALS of Michigan, or the 'ALS Closet' as Terry calls it. Come in and pick out what you need... steel ramps, special dinner plates, wheelchairs, transfer chairs, lifts, voice amplifiers, special chairs, chair elevators... all at no cost. Items are "on loan".

And the second one is Veterans Affairs (VA). They immediately rated Tom at 100% disabled, and gave Tom \$14,000 towards a van. Once Terry picked one out, the VA paid for ALL wheelchair accessible conversions. The VA paid for making the house ADA compliant, like ramps, handles and grip bars, special toilet assist bars, lift chair...

The Filo's are in good shape with all the help they have. Personally, Tom has accepted that he has a short time to live. Doctors speculate a maximum of 90 days, realistically 60 days. Tom said to me, "I've seen my friends, now I'm ready." All of the final arrangements are made, including Military Honors graveside. He considers every day a gift.

Although Terry has enough help for "her time", she has yet to accept Tom's certain immediate passing. "I just can't get my head around this." is how she explained it to me our last day with them. She works her ass off, all as an act of love. The hardest thing for her is moving Tom in and out of bed, and into and out of his lift chair in the family room. They have a set process for these, and with family help is fairly easy. Tom spends most of his day in his comfortable lift chair that adjusts, and watches TV. With company there, he gets outside more often. He has doctor appointments and up until recently had physical therapy. Both go to an ALS support group.

Editor's note: Our president (Bill Norris) is planning an "Ice Bucket Challenge" with the hopes that everyone who attends will participate. I'm sure that Bill is sending emails out and will inform everyone about the challenge.

SHOW and TELL GUEST SPEAKER

Terry Buckler was an Army Green Beret and volunteered to participate in what is now known as the Son Tay Raid. Terry has agreed to come and be our guest during the Show & Tell on Thursday during the reunion.

Son Tay Raid

Son Tay is a village 23 miles west of Hanoi. Our Intel indicated 61 American POWs being held there in a POW camp by the North Viet Nameese in 1970. A plan came together to recover our POWs in May. Fifty six Army Special Forces trained at Elgin AFB in Florida at a replica of the POW camp built for them.

They trained for 5 months and on November 21, 1970, the raid was a go. All together there were the 56 Green Beret, 92 airmen and 28 various aircraft involved.

By chance, the North Viet Nameese had moved the American POWs just a few days before our Special Forces arrived. There were enemy guards still at the POW camp and 42 of those became casualties while there were only 2 injuries for the Raiders. This RAID sent a message to the NVA, and boosted moral of other POWs.

We look forward to Terry visiting with us and sharing his stories.

Earl Boutell

WEBSITE

Navigation Tips from the Webmaster

Please visit our website: to meet the people that served aboard. We have Links to:

If you are a Visitor:

- * Purpose of our Vets Assoc.
- * Profiles - Board, Shipmates, Offices, Commanding Officers
- * Link to the Ships Store - Buy your USS Seattle Memorabilia and Clothing
- * Memorial - In Memory, Remembrance and Missing Shipmates
- * Reunion info - pass and future ones
- * Contact info to get in touch with your shipmates
- * Gallery - By-Laws, Spirit of Seattle, History and videos, Drawings of the Seattle, Links, Sea Stories and Museum.
- * Message Forum
- * Member Certificates

If you are a Member:

Class Connection
Notify Me
Message Center
Edit Contact Info
Edit Profile
Post Announcement
Email Configuration - Your own email Addr: Name@ussseattleaoe-3.org
Change Password
Log Out.

Please take some time and check out the website.
You can find your shipmates through the site and get lots of Seattle info.
Thanks to Myron for providing this info.

Fair Winds & Following Seas