



# USS Seattle AOE 3

## Veteran's Association

### Newsletter



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Issue # 31

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Contributing Editors: David Holton, Rich Toma, Vic Hellberg, and Bill Norris

#### REUNION # 13 - 2023 in Cleveland, OH

Plans are underway – first info will be out in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2023

Also in this issue, the memories from Reunion # 12

### Letter from The Association President

Shipmates

Another year is passing. Covid, which handcuffed the world, has not gone away but, things began returning to normal, which included having our 12<sup>th</sup> reunion after two years of postponements. We had a good turn out with over 60 crew and guests. But this year we had our best ever number of first-time reunion goers at 9 sailors. The greatest news was most all were from the 1980s and later. It is good to see sailors from those periods having interest in our association. Most all made a point to tell me they plan to return to Cleveland in 2023.

We asked for volunteers to help us with the committee work and being on the Board. Again, we were encouraged to have 6 people come up to volunteer their time. Four were first-time attendees and three will be on our Board plus we added long time attendee, Bob Meritt from the 1970s to the Board. And they are already contributing. Doug Hollenbeck did our live streaming of the reunion to our Facebook account, John Pettry and Russ Hughes are already working on some reunion ideas for 2024, Doug Moenich, who lives in Cleveland, joined the 2023 reunion planning committee, and Doug Jennings joined the Membership committee. I think you will see some big improvement to our association with these guys jumping in. See the next page for more info about board members and these volunteers.

We are in the early planning stages, but next spring we would like to have some regional meetings where Seattle sailors who are within 2-3 hours of each other could meet, say on a Saturday afternoon for lunch, and get acquainted. We are compiling the lists and will get back to you in early 2023. No real agenda, just staying in touch.

For those who have never attended a reunion, I encourage you to read this newsletter and go to our website [www.ussseattleaoe-3.org](http://www.ussseattleaoe-3.org) and read about our previous reunions. It would be hard to find a ship reunion who can boast of having 8 past Captains, 3 retired Rear Admirals, 2 Vice Admirals, one of which was still on active duty as an aide to the Joint Chief of Staff. We have had private tours of the newest P-3 surveillance plane, a briefing by the Commandant of the Jacksonville Naval Air Station where drones are flown all over the world, laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, given private guided tours of the Capital and White House and when in Norfolk we saw the USS Cole in port. They were on a liberty call and not giving tours, but they opened one up to us and we saw where the damage was inflicted and how they have memorialized it and, much more.

We would welcome all Seattle crew to join our association. Our members go from E-2 (who was an E-4 before.... Well, that is a long story from many years ago) through Captains and retired Admirals. Everyone is welcome to join. Just \$30.00 per year!

Hope to see you in Cleveland! Call or email me anytime!

Fair Winds and Following Seas,

David Holton, president USSSVA, 704-698-5948, [david@davidholtonconsulting.com](mailto:david@davidholtonconsulting.com)

At the 2022 Annual Reunion held in Charleston, SC the membership voted the following to serve as officers of the Association for 2022-2024.

**David Holton**- President

**Rich Toma** -Vice President

**Dan Justynski** – Treasurer

**Mark Giraldi** -Secretary

Following are the new officers (and some info about them) appointed to the Board of Directors serving from 2022-2024.

**Doug Hollenbeck** joined the Navy in 1979 and served aboard USS Seattle from 1981-1983 as a Religious Program Specialist E3/E4. He retired in 2000 as US Navy RPC (SW/FMF). After discharge he became an associate pastor from 2000-2002 and currently serves as Senior Pastor at Mount Carmel United Methodist Church, Covington, VA from 2002-Present.

**John Pettry** joined the Navy in 1994 and reported to Seattle in August 1999 as a new Second Class Petty Officer. His rate was Hospital Corpsman, and he served as the Preventive Medical Technician reporting to the Medical Department. John is currently on active duty and serving as the Detachment Master Chief (E9) at Naval Undersea Medical Institute in Groton, CT. John plans to retire in 2024.

**Russ Hughes** enlisted in 1976. His rate was AW (Aviation-Anti-submarine Warfare Operator). He did a tour as a P-3 aircrew in VP-11. He rose to the rank of AW1. In 1984 he was commissioned via OCS where he served four years in submarines aboard USS Andrew Jackson (SSBN 619) and USS Ulysses S. Grant (SSBN 631). In 1990 he reported to USS Seattle as Lieutenant. He was in the Red Sea supporting Operation Desert Shield as Cargo Division Officer and Assistant Supply Officer. In January 1991 he was supporting Operation Desert Storm. He and the ship returned to NWS Earle in March 1991. He continued to serve on USS Seattle until December 1993 including two Med cruises and several Caribbean Law Enforcement cruises. He transferred to the Navy Reserve in January 1994 where he rose to the rank of Captain in 2006. He was activated in 2008 and served in Iraq with Armed Forces Iraq until 2010 when he retired. He then took a job with the U.S. Postal Service rising to the position of Postmaster retiring in 2010. He resides in Richmond, Maine.

**Bob Meritt** joined the Navy Reserve in August 1969. After Boot Camp he returned to the reserve unit until August 1970 when he attended Radioman A School. He was sent to Rota, Spain in November and joined USS Seattle in Nice, France on December 24, 1970, as RM3. He was promoted to RM2 in 1972 and upon returning from a Med cruise was released from active duty in July 1972. From 1972 until discharged in 1975, Bob was attached to several Reserve units while attending college. In 1975-1976, Bob went to Optician School and became a licensed Optician as a franchised owner. He left the retail optical business in 1994 and went into the home remodeling construction business outside the Charlotte, NC area, when he continues today.

David Holton  
President USSSVA

## Letter from The Association Vice-President

Shipmates,

We have 21 members that live in Florida. More than any other state. Given recent events in the state, Cat 4 hurricane Ian making landfall near Fort Myers, I hope and pray that every member made it through this disaster safely and is in good health.

The association had a decent year signing up 15 new shipmates and one new Life Member. We have less than 3 months left this year which means it is time to start thinking about 2023 dues. Also, we all have kept in touch with a shipmate we served with, so encourage them to join our great association.

At this time, the country is in the middle of a 40 year high in inflation. This will NOT affect your association dues. Dues will remain the same \$30.00, the same as in 2009 when this Association was formed. A form is included below for submission of your dues.

I could not attend this year's reunion in Charleston SC but heard it was an over whelming success. Being a native of Cleveland, I will be back home in January to begin putting an agenda together for our 2023 reunion which will be held in Cleveland, OH next August. Cleveland is no longer "the mistake on the lake" as it was known in the 60s. I am already having problems trying to schedule all the possible events into 3 days. Official dates will be August 9<sup>th</sup> through August 13<sup>th</sup>. Start making your plans to attend soon. More info about hotel reservations and reunion registration will be available in early February 2023.

Happy Holidays to each of our members and their families!!

Rich Toma

Vice President, USSSVA



### 2023 MEMBERSHIP



Annual Membership cost is \$30.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year reported on board: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:    New Member \_\_\_\_\_    Renewing Member \_\_\_\_\_

Life Memberships are also available. Rates by age can be found on our website.

#### MAIL TO:

Dan Justynski, USSSVA Treasurer

254 Sugar House Ln.

E. Thetford, VT 05043

Make Checks Payable To:

**USS Seattle AOE-3 Veteran's Association**

## USS Seattle "Ship's Store"



### Special Christmas at the USS Seattle Ship's Store

Please read this information carefully. Former Captain Craig Honour was serving when the ship was being refurbished in 1992. The pilot house bridge rails were made of Philippine mahogany in the early 1960's. After 25 years of service, they were replaced with metal. The wood was rescued by Craig and moved with him until retirement in Jacksonville, FL. Then in conversation with Shipmate Bill Norris, a plan for using that wood was hatched. Bill, also, likes to work with wood and took some and made ball point pens. As I recall, I believe around 20 were brought to an association reunion and the story and pens were presented to the attendees at the Saturday night banquet. All the pens were snapped up by the shipmates who wanted to have a piece of their former ship for posterity. For those who have not attended a reunion yet to see the ship's store, I thought this might be worthy of bringing to your attention. I have 5 left to show you. My work number 641-752-3675 central time zone from 10 AM to 5 PM week days. Each pen has a number. Mention USS Seattle and I will take your call. Two things go with this purchase. You will get a special surprise in the shipment and we will pay your shipping.



#1 \$75.00



#2 \$75.00



#3 \$75.00



#4 \$75.00



#5 \$75.00



special box

Lastly, we will not charge any shipping for orders from the ship's store on our website through Christmas. We cannot actually remove the shipping because of the website but we will send the shipping with your order in cash. 2022 Reunion Recap – Charleston, SC

## 2022 Reunion Recap – Charleston, SC

By: David Holton, President-USSSVA

The 2022 USS Seattle Reunion was a big success by every measure. We had over 60 sailors and guests in attendance, of which 9 sailors were attending their first reunion! It all began as usual with a welcome time in the Hospitality Room as people arrived for refreshments and food on Wednesday.

Thursday morning was an early breakfast followed by a member's meeting at 0800. About 12 spouses and guests got together for their Meet and Greet breakfast while the sailors met in their business meeting. At the Business meeting we elected the new officers for 2022-2024. The 2023 Reunion was announced to be in Cleveland, OH, August 9-12.

At 1100 we boarded the bus to Patriot's Point in Charleston Harbor. We were met there by retired RADM James Flatley, III who gave us a personal tour of the USS Yorktown. He is an accomplished Naval Aviator and past captain of a carrier and an AO. He is the only person to have successfully landed a C-130 cargo plane on an aircraft deck as part of a test of potential heavy cargo delivery to carriers. We saw film of the landings as the plane had to approach just above stall speed to be able to stop on the short deck. There was less than 5 feet wing clearance to the island structure when landing. While he made numerous successful landings, the Navy felt it was too dangerous to train multiple pilots and heavy cargo delivery by C-130 was scrapped. He was also the past president of the Yorktown Foundation. There is a plane painted in his squadron's VF-31 colors on the flight deck bearing his name. His knowledge of the ship and experiences added greatly to the visit. RADM Flatley was also our guest speaker at Saturday's banquet. Additionally, at Patriot's Point was the USS Laffey a WWII destroyer that was attacked by Kamikazes. You could enter the gun mount and watch a film that captured the attack that day. It was a unique experience to be in a small, dark space and see and hear the noise and activities that took place in that battle. Also, there was an outdoor venue replicating the jungles of Viet Nam where you walked through bamboo seeing field hospitals, helicopters, and artillery complete with sound effects as you passed. It was like you were in country. That night we had a dinner cruise of the Charleston Harbor. Then returned to the Hospitality Room to close the evening.

At 1330 we departed for a guided bus tour of Charleston to see and learn of its rich history. During our tour we stopped at the Citadel, to view the beauty and history of this classic military college for young men and women focused on leadership excellence and academic distinction. We stopped at the Summerall Chapel, and the Citadel War Memorial located adjacent to the chapel and viewed the name of Joseph John Pycior, Jr. AW1, who was killed on September 11, 2001, at the Pentagon. He served in the U.S. Navy on numerous ships, including the U.S.S. George Washington and U.S.S. Seattle reporting on board in 1984. During Desert Storm, he was stationed in the Persian Gulf. He began working at the Pentagon in 1999.

On Friday we had another favorite event called Show & Tell. This is where we share stories about our times aboard Seattle. Bill Norris showed us the Shadow box he made of pins and coins from our first 10 reunions. There are stories that go along with each pin. We are compiling those stories and will be linking them to the pins and coins. If you have a story or special memory of one of the 10 reunions, please write it up and send it to one of the officers.

At 1330 we departed for a guided bus tour of Charleston to see and learn of its rich history. Back to the hotel and a cocktail reception and dinner. Our guest speaker was retired RADM Robert Besal. A highly decorated naval aviator which included Navy Distinguished Service Medal, four awards of the Legion of Merit, two awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism in arial combat, the Bronze Star, and more. He flew combat mission off the USS Kennedy in Operation Desert Storm. He also was CO of an oiler the USS Savannah for 27 months. He served as CO of the USS America, which earned the prestigious Battenberg Cup, designating it best ship in the Atlantic Fleet during his command.

RADM Besal currently serves along with over 750 retired admirals and generals on Mission Readiness which is making our leaders in Washington understand the importance of having the next generation ready to serve in the armed services. It is estimated that due to the complexities of equipment and rigorous training as much as 71% of youth between 17 and 24 do not qualify to enter the service.



## **2022 Reunion Recap – Charleston, SC**

By: David Holton, President-USSSVA  
(continued)

Saturday was our Free Day where folks could go on their own and choose from a long list of activities. The evening began with cocktails then some very special new twists. During cocktails the sound of bag pipes suddenly filled the hallway and into our meeting room. The piper, in full dress, played several tunes to the surprised sailors and guests. We then formed a procession, led by the piper, to our dining room. It was a treat for us and the entire hotel, including the surprised and envious USS Missouri reunion next door.

Once in the dining room, we formed two long rows of side boys with all the Seattle veterans and we piped in Captain Honour, past CO of Seattle and then RADM Flatley. Then a new surprise appeared as a model of USS Seattle was brought in and piped aboard. Be sure to read the article about it in this newsletter. We then honored our Fallen comrades by reading their names and ringing the bell. This year we read 92 names.

RADM Flatley was a highly decorated naval aviator including Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Legion of Merit with 4 Gold Stars, Distinguished Flying Cross with 2 Gold Stars, Bronze Star with Combat V, Air medal with Silver Star with over 350 combat missions, The Presidential Unit Citation with bronze Star Navy Achievement Medal with combat V. He ranks number three for total all time carrier landings for the US Navy. He has a rich family legacy of military service. His father was an Ace pilot in WWII and recognized for his innovations and changed how modern air combat is conducted. His two sons are retired Navy fighter pilots, one daughter is married to a fighter pilot Vice Admiral now and a second daughter to a Navy Flight Surgeon. Five grandchildren are currently serving in Marine Corps. He shared videos about his C-130 landing experience.

Our Ship's Store did a robust business. Be sure to check it out on our web page and order from there.

Sunday is an Eat and Go and a last chance to say farewell until next year! See you in Cleveland!

## **Another 2022 Reunion Recap – Charleston, SC**

More explanation of the "Surprise"  
by: Captain Honour

The cocktail hour at the Crown Plaza before our banquet found USS Seattle veteran's occupying the large atrium lobby while a second USS Missouri reunion was occupying a smaller section of the closed in back lobby. Suddenly the sounds of bagpipes started filling the air! A Scottish Bagpiper appeared in full regalia playing as he entered. He was restricted by the hotel from playing in the large atrium because the sound might wake sleeping airline pilots so he stopped just short of the Atrium where most Seattle sailors and wives were enjoying cocktails. Mike the Piper was in full view and we enjoyed the eclectic sound of the bagpipe music. Since a piper has not been part of our reunions, most Seattle veterans surmised the piper was for the Missouri reunion gathered behind him. Equally confused and looking at his backside, the Missouri veterans had no clue who the piper was supporting.

Our President David Holton then sprung the surprise that the piper was for USS Seattle. Our reunion weekend was close to 9/11 and other local events and we had not been able to get a color guard or band as they were dedicated to local events. David did get a lead on a bagpiper and after discussion with me decided the piper would be a nice surprise and replace the absence of a band and color guard. I had thought he would publish the news but David decided to spring it as a surprise to everyone on Saturday evening.

The surprise almost fell through during the cocktail hour when he suddenly appeared early in view of our cocktail hour at the front lobby desk in uniform but with a long sleeve shirt to hide the upper half. David noticed him quickly and spirited him out to the rear entrance parking lot where he entered from the surprise location.

The secret was well kept, and the surprise was real!

## Another 2022 Reunion Recap – Charleston, SC

More explanation of the “Surprise”

by: Captain Honour  
(continued)

He played off and on (bagpipes take a lot of wind so they need to rest after 3-4 songs) during the cocktail hour. The Missouri reunion all departed for their earlier dinner and several Seattle folks took the queue to start towards our dinner room early. After some discussion they returned back to the cocktail location. At the appointed hour we formed a two- by- two procession line behind the bagpiper. Since the piper was unfamiliar with our dinner area Bos’n Bob lead the procession with the piper playing behind and the rest of our reunion group marching behind in double line. The piper marched into the banquet room to the head table and kept piping till all were in. Then our only active-duty member, Master Chief John Pettry took control of the mic and called for side boys to form. Most all veteran’s formed two very long side boy lines and as a former Captain I was piped aboard through the side boys, then RADM Flatley was piped aboard.

### Surprise Again!

Normally at that point side boys would be dismissed but instead of dismissing side boys, the Master Chief announced, “USS SEATTLE ARRIVING” and the Bos’n blew the pipe! Everyone was wondering what... the...heck?! At the head of the side boys appeared model maker Steve Byrne ceremoniously holding a 1/72 scale model of USS Seattle in a clear case! As he marched through the side boys you could see the veteran’s straining to see the model! The piper then played ruffles and flourishes and Steve presented the USS Seattle model to the reunion and placed next to the head table on display! It is now owned by the Veteran’s Assn and will be part of all future reunions.

Steve Byrne is a master model maker. I had seen his work during a reunion in DC where he had a diorama of a VF-31 F4 and Vietnamese MIG-21 depicting the VF-31 shoot down of the MIG. The Smithsonian liked it so much they have accepted it for permanent display and made Steve an adjunct modeler for the Smithsonian. After that reunion, I contacted Steve to see if he might be interested in making a USS Seattle model and he offered to do so. We decided it should be made in the commissioning ship profile with the AAA guns before significant changes were made to her profile later in life. Steve ordered the plastic kit and jumped into making the model. He had to manufacture a kingpost from scratch and used soldering wire to simulate hoses as they did not come with the kit. He very professionally painted each section before assembly and if you look at the model in current form you can see some very sophisticated touches such as rust and oil stains on the sides, deck striping, door colorations, ship name and number lettering and the likes. He is a master at creating such great detail.

Steve works full time and as he neared completion of the model, he suggested we meet halfway between his home in Virginia and mine in Florida to transfer the model. Instead, I asked him to deliver it to the reunion in person and he did. Little did he know he would be holding the model as the model was piped aboard, a great experience for him too! And of course, to keep the surprise the only other person who had knowledge of the presentation was Bill Norris who engraved some coasters for Steve. Bos’n Bob, Master Chief and the piper were briefed Saturday evening just before the event, but the model came as a surprise to everyone else, including our President who was still basking in his own bagpiper feat!

### Surprise Again!

Captain Honour

## COLLOQUIALISMS

Those witty sayings – where did they come from?

The ones below were supplied BY: David Holton

**Bite the Bullet: Meaning: To accept something difficult or unpleasant:** In olden days when doctors had short supplies of anesthesia or in time of battle, they told the injured person to bite down on a bullet to distract from the pain. The phrase was first recorded in 1891.

**Break the Ice: Meaning: To break off a conflict or commence a friendship.** Before road transportation was developed, ships were the only transportation means of trade. At times, ships got stuck in the ice during winters. The receiving country would send out a small ship to “break the ice” to clear the way for trade. This gesture showed affiliation and understanding between territories.

**Cat Got Your Tongue: Meaning: Asked to a person who is at a loss for words.** The English Navy used a whip called, “cat of nine tails” for flogging. The pain was so intense that it caused victims to stay quiet for a long time.

**Turn a Blind Eye: Meaning: To ignore situations, facts or reality.** The British Naval hero, Admiral Horatio Nelson, had one blind eye. Once when the British forces signaled for him to stop attacking a fleet of Danish ships, he held up the telescope to his blind eye and said, “I do not see the signal they are sending”. He continued attacking and was victorious.

**Go the Whole Nine yards: Meaning: Try your best at something.** During WWII, the fighter pilots were equipped with nine yards of ammunition. When they ran out, it signified they had tried their best to fight off the enemy with the entirety of their ammo.

## Challenge to all Sailors

These are just a few examples. Have you heard others? Check their history and forward them to me and I'll include them in future issues of the newsletter – with your name in the “BY” line as an assistant editor. Send them to my email: [deicker@comcast.net](mailto:deicker@comcast.net)



## SHADOWBOX

Bill Norris unveiled the shadow box he's been working on at this year's reunion. In the works is a story book to go along with the shadow box, explaining each of the "ports" we have visited at our reunions. If anyone has an interesting story that happened at a reunion, please send it by email to: [deicker@comcast.net](mailto:deicker@comcast.net)

This shadow box represents the first 10 reunions beginning in 2010 through 2019 starting in Bremerton and going through Jacksonville. It includes memorabilia from each city and the venues we visited.



## SHIP'S MODEL

Pictures of the ship's model provided by Bill Norris.

The model was unveiled at the reunion when it was "Piped In" as "USS SEATTLE Arriving" after the guest speaker arrivals. It was a welcome surprise for everyone attending and something to be displayed at all future reunions.



## FAREWELL to SHIPMATES

Over the years we have lost 100 shipmates and at each reunion we have honored those who have passed on before us. There may be others we do not know of their passing. When we receive word of the passing of a shipmate, we try to find an obituary that we can include (for a limited time) on the ship's internet site. Listed below are the names of those we know that have passed since our last reunion.

**Roger Kane**                      Reported aboard 1974

**David Stein**                      Reported aboard 1969

**Stu Tyson**                      Reported aboard 1968

If you know of a shipmate that has passed, please send info in an email to: [deicker@comcast.net](mailto:deicker@comcast.net)

If you have a link to an obituary, please also include that information as well.

**Fair Winds & Following Seas**