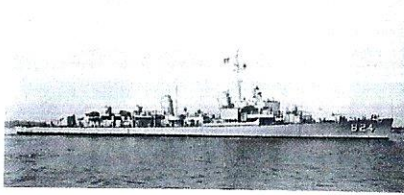




USS BASILONE 824



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KENWOOD

December 2019

Greetings Shipmates and Associate Members,

Well another year and reunion have come and gone. Special thanks to Fred and Sue Gehrish for being our host in Atlanta and all the people and groups that helped out. Special thanks go to the Nine Band Brewery, the Atlanta Braves and the color guard from American Legion Post 5 from Rome, Georgia for their services at our memorial service at the Marietta National Cemetery. We would also like to thank Representative Doug Collins for having an American flag flown over the capital building in Washington, DC and presenting it to us. Governor Brian P King also gave us a proclamation dated 23 September honoring the USS Basilone and its' crewmen.

We had an excellent group this year with the usual suspects as well as a number of shipmates that returned after missing a number of reunions. Barbara Demilt again represented the associate members, she also brought her friend Madeline. Besides Barbara, and members wives Lenny Cerzosie brought 2 members of his family, others brought their significant others. I also brought my 95 year old mother to the reunion. So as you can see we are a mixed bag and we want anyone who wants to come to a reunion, even if it's to only join us for an evening of sea stories and other fun to come. Remember associate members are always welcome to our reunions even if it's only to come to the Memorial Service.

Monday was sign in day with getting up to speed with old shipmates and telling sea stories. The welcome dinner was in the hospitality room catered by the Crossroads Bar and Grille. The menu consisted of BBQ sandwiches, Brunswick stew, corn muffins, coleslaw and potato salad. A fine southern style meal.

Tuesday we went to the Consolidated Gold Mines. I didn't know there were any gold mines in Georgia but there are. We even got to pan for gold like we did in Coloma, Ca at the reunion Jim Goodspeed put on. Lunch was at the Smith House and then on to Frogtown Winery to enjoy a taste. That evening we had a 50/50 raffle and quiz game.

Wednesday saw us starting at the Georgia Aquarium. You pretty much wandered around all the exhibits, which were impressive and a lot. The big thing was the penguin run all the kids loved it. Tis was the first of 2 places we toured that you had to go through a security checkpoint like at an airport. Lunch was at the Varsity, a famous eatery near Georgia Tech. The next stop was the Coke Museum. We saw a short video about Coke as we sampled the product. We saw the vault where the secret formula is kept. According to the tour guide no one person knows the whole formula. They also showed us a room with Coke memorabilia

and finally led us to an area where you could sample Coke from different countries and of course to the souvenir shop. The evenings' fun was a Jeopardy type game and 50/50.

Thursday we toured the Fox Theater, a major entertainment venue. The theater has an Egyptian and Middle Eastern sense about it. This could be because, if my notes are correct it served as a Shriner's meeting place when it was first built. Now it hosts many different events ever year. Lunch was at Mary Mac's Tea Room another famous local eatery. We went to President Jimmy Carter's Presidential Library. It was quite impressive to see much of his other work and not just his presidency. The replica of the oval office was interesting. That evening we had a famous company slogans contest and 50/50.

Friday we had our Memorial Service at the Marietta Nation Cemetery. American Legion Post 5 from Rome, Georgia provided the Honor Guard for our memorial service. After the service we went to the Marietta town Square for sightseeing, shopping and lunch. Then it was back to the hotel for the business meeting followed by the farewell dinner again put on by Crossroads Grille consisting of salad, Prime Rib, Chicken Marsala, green bean casserole, Broccoli casserole, Mashed potatoes, home fries, mashed sweet potatoes with toasted pecans and peach cobbler and banana bread for dessert.

Saturday we cleaned up and every one headed home.

The Business meeting was held on Friday. We held the annual election of officers with the following there were no nominations from the floor. So the following were elected by voice vote Phil Poplaski, President, Geoff Bender Vice President, Fred Gehrish Treasurer, Historian/Chaplin Frank Stepka, Secretary is a group function. Geoff Bender was appointed webmaster and ships' storekeeper. Frank Stepka was also appointed as assistant treasurer and Chaplin.

Al Dobos and Jim Goodspeed sent their best wishes for a successful reunion as they couldn't't make it this year.

K-9 Basilone update. Bas (the call name for K-9 Basilone) has his own facebook page and now has body armor, thanks to James Weaton who writes children's books and donates to get K-9's body armor.

Dues is due. It's still the same \$25.00 for a year and \$125.00 for a life membership. Dues can be mailed to Fred Gehrish at 5640 Whistling Cove Rd Gainesville, Ga. 30504. Treasurers' report was read and accepted. He also reminded me that we are a 509c19 organization non-profit and any donations to are tax exempt.

News from Bath, Maine about the new USS Basilone, our shipmate, Peter Saxman somehow got a picture of a cake that says Start Fabrication Ceremony May 23 2017. We are still looking to try and get us invited to the launching and commissioning ceremonies like we did for the Distinguished Marie stamps in 2005.

There is a new ships' storekeeper it is Geoff Bender. Geoff took over at the reunion. He is also the webmaster so you can order from the website which is ussbasilone.org.

We approved the following annual donations John Basilone Foundation \$250.00, Tin Can Sailors \$50.00, John Basilone Parade \$100.00, and The Navy Memorial \$100.00 and finally, \$50.00 to Vietnam Vet Radio, they play songs from the Vietnam era and you can call in and request a song. In our case we requested the Sloop John B (which is our association's adopted song) and they would ask a question or 2 and in our case we got out our reunion info

out over the radio. We don't know if this resulted in our getting the attention of any of our shipmates but hopefully it did.

We voted to have a reunion next year and John Sabourin stepped up and we'll be going to Providence. John hasn't picked a date yet but he'll put out this information on the association website, as well as other various sites that post reunions. John will be sending out information later next year.

The Historian got a ton of new stuff for the archives. Besides the picture of the cake announcing the start of fabrication on DDG122 from Peter Saxman, we also received a large binder of material from Jack Price with POD's and a lot of other items. Jim Deloray gave us a shirt for a child. I donated a Cruiser/Destroyer Magazine book that may have had the first published picture of the Basilone and Ticonderoga being replenished by the Sacramento, on the last page of the magazine there is also a mention of the Basilone in the Kudos section. I might want to get the magazine back as the ship I was transferred to form the Basilone is the main story. Rhoda Jeffery (Jim's widow) gave us a picture of the ship as well as a wall hanging. After some examination it was decided that the picture was different than one we have. Hopefully, I mentioned everyone that donated to our history archives. If you have something you think you want to give to the archives POD's (plans of the day), pictures or other items bring them to a reunion or contact one of the officers as to where to send the items in question.

Now for the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say, As you may know the ship went aground off the Fort Story Officers' Club (Army). During the grounding we lost a shipmate Anthony Servedio. The ship could not make water as the intakes to the evaporators were blocked. This necessitated the bringing in water by tanker truck until the ship was freed. Well the army went and took a piece of hose and put it in a shadow box with a bronze plate saying this is a piece of the USS Basilone umbilical cord and hung it up in the officers' club. Anyway a couple of years later a couple officers from the ship went on a rescue mission to get it back. They were successful. Enter XO Abdiel Yingling, the officers gave the umbilical cord to him for safe keeping. He kept it for many years until he came to a reunion (Norfolk or the first Newport reunion) and he presented it to the association. He then told us the following, after being chased by army MP's he denied any knowledge of the rescue. This brought about some back and forth until the Commanding Officer from Fort Story came down to the ship and if he didn't get the umbilical cord back that he would call a news conference to bring it to light. Well Abdiel said okay and we can discuss the security of Fort Story. That ended the attempts by the army to get the umbilical cord back. Abdiel said he would not give out the names of the officers involved unless they wanted to be known or if they were dead. I haven't been able to out who the officers were. Now for the rest of the story. Jim Cossey, who sent me an e-mail fleshing out some of the details of the rescue. The officers on the ship heard about the umbilical cord which the army mounted over the juke box at the officers club at Fort Story. Abdiel Yingling was hosting a wardroom party and all the officers we invited, except for those that had the duty. Well it was noticed that 2 officers were not present F, James Barnes and Fred Weiss, the Supply Officer. These 2 officers burst into the party about an hour later with the umbilical cord from Fort Story. According to Jim they had been to the officers club at Fort Story several times to see how they could get their hands on the plaque. They returned to the O-Club on the wardroom party night to execute their plan. At the club, each time they went to the juke box to look or play music, they would loosen the screws holding the plaque to the wall. At some point, they judged the screws to be loose enough to grab the plaque and run, and that's just what they did. However, they got to their car and headed off base with their newly acquired "treasure", reportedly chased by MP's who once they were off base did not pursue further. On arrival at Abdiel's house there were celebratory toasts at having removed from public view this insult to the ship. That's the rest of the story as far as we know.

One new item of business was brought up, Geoff Bender presented Vietnam Veteran lapel pins to those that were not at the Milwaukee reunion when they were last presented. They are for any veteran that served between November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975.

I must apologize to Frank Stepka for not mentioning Frank's honoring the wives that show up at the reunion with a rose for the last several years.

On a sad note we lost the following shipmates this year William Py, Frances (Frank) Crouse, Thomas English, James D Weppleman, Cecil B Foster, Harry Arvantis, Mario Corradino, Edward Mebane, Daniel Keller, Roger Tennyson, Stephen Tesini, Norman Reardon, David T Rogers, Eugene Caicco, Frederick Jolliffe, Kenneth Barthel, Carl J Stewart, John H Flynn, Dallas Rash,, JR, Donald Schoelles, Vernon Marion, Cliff Harris, John Townley, CO, Joseph Studer, Robert Levesque, Allan K Long, JR, Robert w Shiver, Jay Dial, Robert Doire, Michael Stitley, Louis Goldsborough, Brian Hawkes, Alfred Gore, Charles Bryden, Hugh Clifford, Fred Miller, Jerry K hodge, John J Nonneman, Mike Wilcox and Joseph Beamer.

On a more pleasant note we have found the following shipmates Brad Schwartz, Philip Lutz, R Michael Haggerty, Leroy (Lee) Raspa, Richard Tipton, Dave Boyden and Richard Whitcomb and Mark Dedrick.

If you happen to be in contact with any of our old shipmates or know of any that have passed away. Drop us their contact information, if living or their name if deceased.

We hope to see you at the next reunion in Atlanta this coming September 23rd.

Your Shipmate,



Phil Poplaski

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