



DDE


**USS Basilone
Association**

KENWOOD



DD

December 2022

Greetings Shipmates and Associate Members,

I would like to start this newsletter by thanking the reunion committee for getting us back together for the Chris Christenson Memorial Reunion in Savannah, Georgia. We chose to honor Chris this way because of his service to the association. Chris was at the first reunion in Raritan, New Jersey. He stepped up and hosted the first reunion outside of Raritan in the Annapolis, Washington, DC area. Over time he hosted or helped people that wanted to host reunions, he was the ships' historian and the ship's storekeeper at different time. He also got into the computer age by getting us on facebook. I'm sure I left some things that he did out but that's why we called it the Chris Christenson Memorial Reunion.

The usual suspects were there along with some in the I'll be there if it's close by. We had 2 DDE shipmates John and Shirley Berger and French Johnson who could only make it for the welcome dinner. We had one newbie Frank Brennan and his wife Susan. Frank wrote an article about the DDG 122 christening in the August issue of the Boston Broadside, The article is on page 11. Frank Stepka's wife Stephanie finally made a reunion. We had our best turnout of associate members Ellen Christensen, Chief Stacey Parker, Chris's daughter, Barb Demilt and Marlene Sullivan made it again. The final associate member to get to the reunion was Trina M. Haynes the daughter of Gary Parker. Trina is a budding author and brought down several copies of her book Manhunts & Murders The Story of Ret. Parker county Texas Sheriff Billy Cain which she autographed and gave away. I thought it was a good read.

The reunion started with the. Welcome dinner. The Geoff Bender gave us a presentation about what went on at the christening for the new Basilone. He told us about stepping the mast. This is a tradition that goes back to Greek and Roman time, coins are placed under the mast to pay for transportation over the River Styx. Geoff placed one of our challenge coins in the box. He also told us that coins worth \$1.22 (the new Basilone's hull number) and several other items were put into the box before it was welded to the mast. He also told us that John only surviving sibling Don Basilone was at the christening. While at there reunion we learned of Don Basilone's passing. Then copies of the christening DVD's were given to the crewmen attending. After this Frank Stepka unveiled our new reunion bell that now replaces the one that Fred Drescher made for us. The bell was donated to us by Long John Silver's sea food and the engraving was done by Simpler Time Brass Bell. Geoff Bender made the stand. Newbie Sue Brennan also gave out pins made by Navy Mom Marys flags. I believe that the pins are called tiny tokens of pride. There were also a Georgia and bell pin in the reunion packet.

The second day we went on a trolley tour of Savannah that was quite interesting. The tour guide told us that the parks every few blocks were used for militia training and other things. Also he showed us many of the historic buildings located around the squares. We went down to the River Road where we had lunch and saw the WWII memorial we also did some shopping.

The third day we went to Wormsloe State Historic Site. The home of Noble Jones, who was among the first settlers of Savannah and rose to become a prominent personality. The historical society is in the process of upgrading the site to be more interactive. Next we went to Bonaventure Cemetery to do another walking tour that was quite interesting. There are many former governors and other notables including Johnny Mercer a noted singer/song writer. Another famous burial site which had to be fenced in is that of 6 year old Gracie Watson. People claim to have seen her ghost and before her death she was much beloved and people flocked to her grave side and began taking pieces of the grave marker. This is the reason for fencing her in. During the evening events we received a video from Commander Crane Livingston, Captain of the 122 and CMDCM Nkomo Willie the Command Master Chief of the 122 expressed their regrets at not being able to attend the reunion. They also informed us that 25 122 crewmen were marching in the John Basilone Parade. I hope that they were as warmly welcomed as we were in the parades we marched in.

The third day saw us at Tybee Island for a play day with the dolphins. There are about 200 dolphins in the area we cruised. Everyone was going a little nuts trying to get pictures of them following the boat as they frolicked around the boat. They played sea tunes on the PA system and we got them to play our association song Sloop John B.

The fourth day we went to Fort Pulaski for our memorial service and a self guide tour of the fort. Fred Gehrish and Frank Stepka continued the evening games programs.

The final day saw the Farewell dinner and the drawings for the door prizes. Thanks to everyone that donated door prizes.

Dues is due. The price is still the same \$25.00 for a year or \$125.00 for a life membership. Dues and donations can be mailed to our treasurer Fred Gehrish at 5640 Whistling Cove Rd Gainesville, Ga 30504.

The annual business meeting was held with the election of officers (there were no nominations from the floor). Phil Poplaski was elected president again, Geoff Bender is Vice President, Fred Gehrish is Treasurer. Geoff has agreed to continue as ships storekeeper and Frank Stepka has agreed to continue to be Chaplain, assistant Treasurer and Historian. We had a small presentation to Trina Haynes to correct an error. We voted to make the following donations the John Basilone Foundation \$250.00, Navy Memorial \$100.00, Tin Can Sailors \$50.00 and Vietnam Vets Radio \$50.00. The treasurer reported that we are solvent and that we now have a zoom account for association business. The ships storekeeper reported that sales have been good. The webmaster reported that the 122's christening will be on the website along with more pictures. Frank Stepka got the association a small stand so that we can display the American and Navy flags so that we can pledge allegiance at the opening of the reunions. Since we didn't have reunions for the last 2 years we hit the historian up big. I turned over the picture of the damaged gun mount, the fork from the wardroom and the astern valve wheel. I will apologize to Al Tredo and Edward Alexander. In going through some of my stuff I came across an envelope from Al Tredo sent FREE from Vietnam and give to me at the Chicago reunion. Edward Alexander gave me 2 photos from the DDE period and a welcome aboard pamphlet from Destroyer Division 362. The historian has these items. The historian also informed us that Bob Clancy gave him several POD's from before, during and after the Shellback ceremony (crossing the equator) during the first Vietnam cruise. We were also

informed that the Basilone Parade committee sent us 2 pictures of the parade. Only 2 new items of memorabilia a came in this year is brief history of the ship from Jim Goodspeed call the proud crew. It's from the time of his reporting on board during Framing till his transfer. The last item was a family gram from July 4, 1977 that we got from John Preble. Finally we voted to have a reunion next year but no one stepped up to be the host. We then posted it on the website and Joe and Ruth Py stepped up for us. Thank you. The reunion is tentatively going to be in the Philadelphia area some time in September or October. But everything is subject to change. Information will be found on the website at www.ussbasilone.org. probably in the Spring. If we don't have your e-mail address please give it to us other wise you might miss out on reunion information.

It is my sad duty to inform you of the passing of the following shipmates whose name will be read at the next memorial service Howard Barsky, Robert Musgrave, Arthur Soule, Dan Dilick, Robert Vance, Charles McLellan, Robert Williams, George Chris Christenson, Martin Mark, Roger Perkins, James M Fitzgerald, John Prendergast, Robert Whittle, Nicholas Szydek, Roger Gerwin, Antonio Estrada, John Munson, Gary Parker, Gene Turner, Richard Lucente, William Frey, William Sohn, Richard A. White, William (Skip) Grenoble, William Lawn, Mark Fitzsinnons, Francis LaVallee, James Gieger, Thomas "Bam Bam" Bembenek, Edwin Martinez, George Quay, Charles Goodman and John Haines.

On a happier note we have found the following shipmates including some from the DDG 122 Gensal McClelland, Robert Lach, Robert Reneau, Stephen Webb, Sara Schwalenberg, Jason Holbrook, William Guy, Jr, John Barr, Zachary Heren, Norman Aguilar, Nkomo Willie, John Myers, Douglas Curto, Gary Davidson, Greg Brown, William Hansen, Gary Coppoch, Roger Smith and Frank Mcmillian.

Have a good Christmas season and we hope to see you all at the reunion.

Your Shipmate,



Phil Poplaski

On Board 69-70 EN2
Phone 315-457-6847
E-mail pepumkc8@aol.com

A Christmas Story
USS Basilone Association Version
“The Christmas Cruise”

T’was the night before Christmas and all through the ship,
All eyes were on the radar screen with a red and green blip.

The ship was in Cold Iron following the prescribed Holiday Routine.
The captain and most of the crew were on liberty, and hadn’t been seen.

To keep the wee duty section happy, and not overly bored,
Wives and ladies were consulted, and welcomed on board.

Jean was in the galley rattling them pots and pans and all,
Cooking Male Chauvinist Chili, with brown sugar yams! (Y’all)

Her assistants, Lin, Sue & Susan, were baking family recipes of old,
With standard ingredients and a secret spice, more precious than gold.

The passageways warmed, to the drifting promise of delight,
In the Christmas dinner, we would all share this night.

Mom Poplaski was crocheting place mats, all pretty and bright,
As Caryl mixed grog with Shirley Temple rum. (Yeah Right.)

Shirley & Dawn were stringing popcorn, just for the show,
While Brennan twisted dead bulbs, trying to make them glow.

Ms. Haynes read selected chapters, of the *Christmas Story*,
While Fogarty and Ely hummed carols, in voices gruff & hoary.

Suddenly the teletype began to clickity clack into a clatter.
Gehrisch leaped from his desk, to see what was the matter.

A report was coming in from Headquarters, in TOP SECRET code,
While Christmas music had the rest of the crew in a jolly old mode.

That Bogey blip (see line 2 above) just happened to be a sleigh, not yet in range,
But in serious trouble, which was both unusual and, indeed, quite strange.

You see, global warming had caused a blotchy thinness, in the icy runway,
And upon lift off, a roof shingle - anti-stick tile, had broken clean away!

If not repaired, the tile-less runners would cause much rooftop stress,
And the Basilone had the expertise, to prevent this international mess.

Hearing that the Basilone crew could repair diodes and other stuff,
Using old shoe leather, a special glue, and little bits of pillow fluff.

The Basilone was ordered to set up shop, in the cold winter air,
In the dark seclusion of Long Island Sound, to make the repair.

Fred dashed off to Mr. Moscynski, the only officer still aboard,
With orders to take the ship out slowly and safely seaward.

Dephilip & Berger had Engineering, ready to answer slow bells.
And Taylor made a sonar sweep, beneath the darkening swells.

Bender & Plonk assured all weapons, were safe and benign.
They then had Christenson & Stepka, single up all lines.

Basilone slipped her berth and moved out at a creep,
Not wanting to awaken other ships still soundly asleep.

Once on station, Radioman Barkalow guided the sleigh in,
To land softly on the flight deck, and have repairs begin.

In the wash of dim red lights, a jolly elf lightly stepped down,
As the deck crew swiftly started working with hardly a sound.

Offering coffee & Kahlua, and cookies, the crew gathered about,
Amid smiling ladies, many oohs & ahhs, but nary a shout.

Each replacement tile had simmered in the Chauvinist stew,
(see line 8 above)
In Jean's special crock pot that was hardly brand new.

When a young sailor asked if she really soaked the tiles in her chili,
Jean replied "Of course, it's the sauce that makes it stick. You silly."

The repair went smoothly, and the reindeer were prancing to fly,
The old elf offered Barbara the rumble seat, if she wanted to try.

Thanking him, she demurred, with very slight blush,
Then the Christmas delivery team, was off in a rush.

And in the far off distance, I could hear a soft refrain,
Joe... Joe! Wake up. You've been dreaming again.

But...

Coming out of my dreamy fog, I was sure I could hear...

Merry Christmas to you all, and have a Happy New Year!

A story
By
Joe Fisher

A Christmas Story
USS Basilone Association Version
“The Christmas Cruise Homecoming”
Part 2

**T’was, still, the night before Christmas, and all through the ship,
Our mission had been accomplished; it was very a good trip.**

**Equipment was stowed, and Mr. Mike had us headed for home,
The wake was silvery straight, and the bow showed a little foam.**

**The ladies were in the mess deck, all chipper and gay,
Laughter flowed from the 1MC, on this magical day.**

**We were rewarded with a portion, of Caryl’s spiked grog,
To warm our chilled bones, against the cold night fog.**

**First the harbor and then our slip, slowly came into view,
And without coaching, we all knew just what to do.**

**We eased in ever so slowly, without a bump or a dink,
Lines were made fast, and the brow over quick as a wink.**

**But then, two dapper figures, stepped out from the gloom,
Stepka knew instantly, they were Mr. Doom and Mr. Gloom**

**“NCIS, Boys.” “I’m Special Agent Lock and this is Agent Keys.”
“Take us to the Officer-in-Charge, if you wouldn’t mind, please.”**

**“Oh Crap!” uttered Christenson under his breath, (See footnote 1.)
They were ushered to the mess deck, and all the twinkling fun.**

**Footnote 1: You do realize this utterance is not quite precise,
But we’ve cleaned up some verbiage... censors are not very nice.**

**They stood nose-to-nose to Mr. Mike, in a superior air,
And began questioning him, with this know-it-all glare.**

**“You’ve been quite busy today. Perhaps a joy ride, but that couldn’t be,
Not in one of Uncle Sam’s boats? But I thought we’d just come and see.”**

Mom may have been the first lady to charge in,
Followed instantly by Ellen, Stephanie, and Lin.

“Now you just wait one minute, Sir”, she started to say,
Before the agents, were startled, and started backing away.

The sailors lined the bulkheads, all a gasp and agape,
They knew from Leavenworth, it was hard to escape.

By the time the ladies were finished, and all settled down,
Special Agent Doom, changed a smile for his old frown.

“Actually, we were sent over, to make sure you got in okay,
Headquarters wanted to thank you, knowing you had a long day.”

“But you’ve received a great gift, I’m sure you all can see,
You went to sea as wives and crew, and came back a Navy family.”

After sharing a glass of Caryl’s grog, and a round of good cheer,
The agents meandered away... calling back...

**Merry Christmas
to you all, and have a
Happy New Year!**

A story
By
Joe Fisher