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**USS Basilone  
Association**

KENWOOD



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December 2025

Dear Shipmates, Associate Members and the crew of DDG122,

Congratulations to the new skipper of the 122, Commander Mathew Brooks who took over from Commander Carne Livingston on January 24th of this year. May they have fair winds and following seas in their future endeavors. The 824 was represented at the Change of Command Ceremony by Fred Gehrish and Geoff Bender.

In the Summer 2025 issue of the Tin Can Sailors quarterly publication on pages 12 & 13 there was an article on John Basilone and an order form where you can buy a picture of the 824 or the 122. Ordering information is on page 13. We have a link on our website [USSBasilone.org](http://USSBasilone.org) to the Tin Can Sailors web page.

For those of you who still travel internationally you might want to go the province of Benevento about 50 miles north of Naples to the Town of Colle Sanita. The reason this town is of importance is that both of John Basilone's parents came from this town. Raritan and Colle Sanita became sister cities in 2019. Colle Sanita named a street for John Basilone and put up a sign in his honor at the intersection of Via Relay and Via Manterrupt. Raritan also put up a sign acknowledging Colle Sanita as its sister city by placing a street sign down by the John Basilone statue. We would like to have a picture of you and the sign.

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A little closer to home, especially you west coasters, I found that John Basilone has a plaque at the Mount Soledad Veterans Memorial in San Diego, CA. It is located at Wall CC Wall Side1 Row 4 Plaque #33. If someone gets down to Mount Soledad we would appreciate a picture.

The reunion this year was held at Jacksonville, Florida, where the DDG122 is home-ported. On October 6th we had check-in for the attendees with a catered welcome dinner from Cheddars The food was good.

October 7th, we went to St. Augustine for a walking tour of 2-3 hours. Some of us didn't make it, including me. We saw a number of interesting places including Flager College, who's founder had a connection with Thomas Edison. We also saw Casa Monica and the Lightner Museum. We had lunch on our own and returned for the business meeting which will be discussed later.

On the 8th we did a base tour of the Mayport Naval Station and then had a tour of the 122. She is big. Bob Terhune led us up the gangway. and was rung aboard as Captain United States Navy Retired arriving, Bob was also rung off. We had a tour of the ship which was very informative. We got to see the Lena Mae Cafe which made our mess decks look really obsolete. They were even nice enough to open the ship's store for those of us that wanted to buy 122 hats, and the Chiefs Mess had 122 challenge coins for sale. We held our memorial service on the bow.

The highlight of the tour was "Combat". Prior to entering "Combat" we were asked to leave our cell phones in the passageway. The electronics on the 824 compared to the electronics on the 122 is like comparing the Wright Flyer to the Space Shuttle. The Weapons Officer was telling us about "Combat" and told us if he can see the target, he can hit it. Even though the technology is more advanced on the 122, we still share the same experiences.

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After that we had lunch at the Chief's Club on base.

That night we hosted some of the crew members of the 122 in our hospitality room. The first guest was a newly assigned sailor and wife and his little daughter Isabella. He and several other 122 sailors, who reported onboard after the commissioning, were given our challenge coin. We swapped sea stories with the crew of the 122 and they seemed to enjoy them. There was also a slide show of 824 crew pictures. The CO, CDR Matthew Brooks also attended the meet and greet.

The last day of touring found us at the USS Orleck which was moved from Orange, Texas to Jacksonville 3 years ago. Orange is where the keel of the 824 was laid down. We found out that Bob Terhune was an officer aboard the Orleck. We were supposed to go on a river taxi tour of the Saint John's River but that was cancelled due to a Nor'easter. The farewell dinner was at BJ's Restaurant. Friday everyone left for home. I would like to thank Jim Goodspeed for his donation of 3 books for door prizes. Karl Weber and his son Jeff for giving reunion hats to all the 824 members present and the CO, XO and CMC of the 122. They also donated 3 shirts as door prizes. Phil Poplaski donated a book "I'll Stay with my Boys", a companion DVD and a set of Distinguished Marine stamps. He also donated a number of official and unofficial first day covers from various places.

Dues are due (there are no dues for 122 crew): \$25.00 for one year, \$125.00 for a life membership or you can make a donation as we are a non-profit. Checks can be made out to the USS Basilone Association and sent to our treasurer Fred Gehrisch 5640 Whistling Cove Rd., Gainesville, GA 30504.

Thanks to Joe Fisher and the reunion committee for the work they put into the reunion. The election of officers was held with Phil Poplaski President, Geoff Bender Vice President and Fred Gehrisch Treasurer. Geoff has consented to continue being the webmaster and ship's storekeeper. Frank Stepka has agreed to continue as Historian,

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Chaplain and Assistant Treasurer. We voted to continue our support of the John Basilone Parade with our usual donation of \$100.00. The Treasurer reported that we are still solvent. The webmaster reported that some minor changes have been made to the website and that the reunion pictures will be on the website by the time I get done with writing this newsletter. The Historian reported no new memorabilia. We are always looking for pictures, plans of the day, family grams, and pictures. So, if you have any send them to us and see them posted on the website. The ship's storekeeper has reported some sales. For those of you that served when the Basilone was a DDE there are still some ship's store items available for you. I have in my possession microfilm where we got our search list but the last 3 years for the ship are not the best for trying to find shipmates. I will try to find which films we need and Joe Fisher has a friend who might be able to help us if I can identify the rolls needed. We also decided that we would donate all the film to the Tin Can Sailors if they don't already have it. We discussed having a reunion next year and are looking into possibly having one in Branson, Missouri or some place in Ohio. If you would like to host a reunion let us know at the website. So, keep an eye on the reunion section of the website and the webmaster's e-mails.

Finally, I was presented with the president's walking stick for my years of service to the association. It has the first President Charles Davis and my name on it along with an honor roll of shipmates that over the years made important contributions to the association. Thank you for this honor.

It is my sad duty to inform you of the passing of our shipmates Donald O'Conner, Leroy "Vic" Nelson, Robert DeFilice, Jim Kutch, Ernie Niforos, Bill Keet, Edward Goebig, Gerald Terbus, Edwin Lubas, Richard Mackey, Howard F. Smith, James Dike, Larry Hanson, Donald DeVito, Russel Norris, Mickey Ross, Ken Launer, Joseph Rizzuto and Robert Gnewikow.



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On a happier note, we have found the following DDE/DD 824 crewmen Jerry Purdy, William Ferbert, William Herbert, and Associate Members, Timothy Murphy and Dwayne Black

If you are in contact with any of our shipmates on the looking for list, send us their contact information and the same goes if you know of a deceased shipmate who is not in the memorial section of the website, please let us know.

Here's hoping to hear from you or see you at an upcoming Reunion.

Your Shipmate,

Phil Poplaski

On Board 69-70 EN2

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