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# USS PYRO Scuttlebutt

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## AE-24's last voyage now underway

The last voyage of the USS Pyro is underway.

AE-24 has left Mare Island under tow, bound for New Orleans where she will be melted down for scrap. As *The Scuttlebutt* went to print, the Pyro was preparing to leave the Pacific for the last time, entering the Panama Canal.

Before she departed Mare Island, shipmates from across the country — among them Bill Hogan, Bob Smith, C. Ray Nichol and Vanessa Miera — rushed to Mare Island for a final visit with the still-grand, if somewhat showing-her-age ship so many of us shared.

Others who could not make the trip, monitored her progress on Facebook and a series of web cams that are chronicling this sad last voyage.

Led by Kim Box (see her story on page 2), others shipmates burned up telephone lines seeking and finding information about the possibility of a last

*(Continued on page 3)*

**See ya in  
Louisiana, Cher!**

**Reunion 2012  
Ragin' with the  
Cajuns**

**May 16-20, 2012  
Baton Rouge, LA  
Holiday Inn South**

## Don't make me pull my hair out!



Full disclosure: Signups for Reunion 2011 are coming in at about the usual pace. BUT some folks who have said they're coming haven't sent in their registrations; some folks have registered for events, but not booked the hotel and visa versa.

We're now two months out from the start date. While torturing association officers with last-minute signups is a venerable Pyro custom, it's time to get off the nickel. Please book your

rooms and activities ASAP. I just don't have that much spare hair! — Jared

# Of love and loss on the Pyro

## LTJG Desilets's Name to be Added to Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

LTJG David McLean Desilets will be one of 10 service members honored this year with the inscription of their names on the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial.

LTJG Desilets began his military career in 1964 as a reserve officer. He was assigned to the U.S. Naval Communication Station in Yokosuka,

Japan, as an Ensign before transferring to the USS Pyro. He served as the USS Pyro's Communications Officer from April 1966 until his death on Sept. 4, 1966. He died of meningitis on board the USS Pyro while underway in the South China Sea.

Jeanne Desilets first learned the Wall didn't include her father's name years ago from a family friend who had visited the monument.



LTJG David M. Desilets (L) and daughter Jeanne (R)

According to the Navy Casualty Assistance Division, initially, the early casualties of the Vietnam War included on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall were combat deaths. Parameters were later changed to include other deaths within the areas of Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and other coastal regions. Since LTJG Desilets' death

was not due to a combat injury, it is very likely that it was overlooked.

Jeanne put in the request for addition in February 2011. Later that year, she attended the Pyro reunion in Washington, DC. There she had the opportunity to meet and talk with a few people who knew her father.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Kim Box and Rick Engle: A Pyro love story



In July of 1989, I reported to my 1<sup>st</sup> duty station, the USS Pyro... Two months later, we are getting underway, heading to Victoria BC, Canada. BT2

Rick Engels, who was best friends with BT2 Kevin Stottlemeyer, went TAD with us for this trip.

No matter where I went, I kept running into Rick on the Pyro and I always got a huge smile from him that melted my heart.

The night before we pulled into Victoria, he & I wound up sitting out on the fantail, looking at all of the stars and just having small talk. Needless to say, we spent a lot of time together in Canada.

Once we were back in California, Rick sat me down at dinner and said that we needed to talk... He told me that he had recently been diagnosed with the

HIV virus, as he contracted it while in PI. I was suddenly speechless, my heart sunk, and my eyes filled up with tears.

All I could do was put my arms around him and I didn't want to let go. I realized I had fallen in love with Rick and I wasn't turning my back on him.

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1990, we were married. It was happiest day of my life!

We both got out of the Navy around the same time and wound up moving to Minnesota, as that is where he grew up and all of his family was.

In 1994, Rick started having some complications that had him bouncing in and out of the hospital for a few months...

In mid-1995, we were dealing with some very

*(Continued on page 4)*

**"The Pyro and Rick will remain in my heart forever..."**

*AE-24  
on March 8, 2012 at  
the Panama Canal*

# The Pyro's final voyage



(Continued from page 1)

rendezvous with the Pyro in New Orleans.

## A BIG FAREWELL AT THE BIG EASY?

Knowing the many, especially East Coast Pyro people might savor a last chance to go aboard Pyro in New Orleans, Kim Box spoke with Southern Recycling, the shipyard that will scrap the Pyro.

Here is her report:

*"I just got off the phone with Randy at Southern Recycling. Our girl's ETA as of right now, is approximately March 24th, give or take a few days. He said the schedule they are running right now has become very tight, however, he is going to designate ONE DAY for visiting/boarding her. The unfortunate part to this is that it will be within that first week she arrives and the advance notice they will be able to give will be just a one day in advance. So, this will most likely only accommodate the people who live near the New Orleans area. Scheduling a trip out there based around the information I was given would be extremely risky and I do not encourage it. He was very firm on this and the reason for it is because her turn-around time is within the first week of arrival. Once she is there, it will take them a few days to secure her to their standards, as far as boarding safety goes. There are three days to this schedule: The day they confirm it is safe to visit/board, visitation will be that following day-then on day three, they will start dismantling her."*

### USS PYRO ASSOCIATION

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the move; at Mare Island; passing under the Golden Gate; a map of The Last Voyage thanks to to the Navy Oilers Association. More photos, info at

<http://navy.memorieshop.com/Pyro/index.html>

From the top: At Suisun Bay before

## LTJG Desleits's Name to be Added to Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

*(Continued from page 2)*

"It was wonderful seeing my father through their eyes. The Pyro shipmate's assistance, friendship and encouragement has meant more to me than I can express," she said.



**The Pyro memorial service for LTJG Desleits —  
Photo by CDR Fred Aquilina, USN (Ret.)**

During that reunion trip, she visited the National Archives to review the Pyro deck logs from 1966 and got to see her father's signature for the first time.

On a visit to the Wall, she saw for herself that her father's name was not included, and she vowed that the next time she'd be in Washington, DC, it would be to see his name there.

Eight months later, she received confirmation that the Department of Defense had approved her request that LTJG Desleits's name be added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. His name will be placed near those who also died in 1966.

True to her word, Jeanne will return to Washington, DC, to attend the ceremony held this Memorial Day at the Vietnam Veterans National Memorial honoring those from all branches of service being added to the Wall.

"I'm grateful and proud that my father's memory and service to his country will be honored in this way," she said.

## A Pyro love story

*(Continued from page 2)*

serious ones... Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (cancer), which is very common in AIDS patients. He went through countless radiation and chemo treatments until his body couldn't take it anymore. We both knew the end was near. I wound up quitting my job and took a four day class at the VA, on how to care for PICC lines and administer IV therapy so I could care for him at home as long as possible.

After two months of homecare, I did all I could do and he needed to be in a hospital setting for his final days... "Pain and suffering" was an understatement. On February 3, 1996 (just a few weeks before our 6 year anniversary), I lost my best friend and the love of my life. The day he died, he was 32 years old and I was 26.

The USS Pyro, you see, will always be a treasured memory in more ways than one. The Pyro and Rick will remain in my heart forever... Kim Box

*Kimberly Box was a MM-3 on the Pyro from 1988-1990.*

## AE-1 vet M. Schacheerle dies at 93

Milton Schachterle, died on December 13, 2012 at the age of 93. He served on the Pyro in 1944.

He was a Pearl Harbor survivor, serving on the USS Phoenix.

After the war, he witnessed the testing of the atomic bomb at Bikini Atoll aboard the USS Panamint.

He was a Colorado native and lived in Denver.

**Applications now open  
for 2012 Pyro scholarships**

At least one \$1,000 USS Pyro Scholarship for 2012 will be formally awarded at the Baton Rouge Reunion, May 16-20, 2012.

Rules, application online at

[www.ae-24.org/Scholarship\\_2012.pdf](http://www.ae-24.org/Scholarship_2012.pdf).

### Mini reunions



**Plankholders Bill Peregrin and Gerston Singer meet for the first time in 50 years**



**(SN) Jared Cameron (R) and (ENS) Tom McDaniels (C) belatedly celebrate (CDR) Debbie Ruttenberg's birthday in Washington.**



**Gary Michael 'visits' AE-24 in San Francisco**



### **USS Pyro 2012 Reunion Checklist**

Tell your children, grandchildren and doctors 'NO!' to weddings/graduations/surgeries during the reunion period.



Make your reservations at the Holiday Inn South Baton Rouge. Be sure to ask for the USS PYRO reunion rate. (If you're a smoker, request a smoking room early while our paltry allotment lasts.) When: Now would be a good time! Reunion rates: \$94.92. Direct Tel: 225-924-7021.



Use the form on page seven to sign up for the great reunion activities. When? The deadline is early Spring, but the sooner, the better.



Make arrangements to get to Baton Rouge. If you're travelling by air, flying to New Orleans can save money, but you'll need to rent a car and leave time after the reunion for the 1.5 hour drive to the airport. If you're driving from home, the hotel offers free parking. If you're flying into Baton Rouge, Holiday Inn will send a bus to pick you up at Baton Rouge Airport. Just let them know your flights 24 hours before arrival.



# Ragin' with the Cajuns in Baton Rouge



## Wednesday 16 May 2012

**18:00 Registration and Welcome Aboard Reception.** Arrive in Baton Rouge at your leisure. Log in and get reacquainted with old (and young) shipmates in the hospitality room. Welcome reception and Hospitality Room membership with adult refreshments included throughout the reunion. Remainder of the evening free.

## Thursday 17 May 2012

**Big East Road trip!** Depart the Holiday Inn South by motor coach for New Orleans. Arrive about 1030 at the World War II Museum. View the dramatic multimedia cinematic presentation of the events from Manchuria to VJ Day. Tour the museum (and the great gift shops). At about 1230, we'll take the short drive the French Quarter area. Lunch on your own at one of the great New Orleans eateries, sip a hurricane in the Quarter or shop till you drop in New Orleans high and not so high-end shops. Depart for Baton Rouge at 1500 and return to Holiday Inn South at 16:30. Evening free.

## Friday 18 May 2012

**0930 Remembering the departed on the USS Kidd.** Depart the Holiday Inn South by motor coach for a drive through tour of downtown Baton Rouge. After visiting the USS Kidd Museum, the group will be piped aboard the WWII destroyer for the annual memorial service. The ship's guns will fire a five gun salute to all the Pyro fallen. After the service, tour the Kidd and have lunch on your own at the Belle of Baton Rouge Hotel and Casino or another nearby restaurant. Return to the Holiday Inn at 1300.

**1315 Plantation life.** Depart the Holiday Inn for Nottoway, the South's largest remaining antebellum mansion, a stunning historic plantation near Baton Rouge on the banks of the Mississippi. Admission included.

## Saturday 19 May 2012

1000 Membership meeting

1200 Free time to explore Baton Rouge or kick back in the hospitality room

### Awards Banquet and dance

1830 Cocktails (Cash bar); group and individual photos

1930 Awards Banquet – with buffet dinner

2015 Dance with Cajun music group

2315-ish Good night!

## Sunday 20 May 2012

Time to go home, Cher. Or stay on for a few extra days at the great reunion rate.

USS PYRO Association  
***Ragin' with the Cajuns 2012***

May 16-21, 2012 Holiday Inn South Baton Rouge, LA  
**REGISTRATION WORKSHEET**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse/Guest \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_, State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
TEL: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**REUNION ACTIVITIES**

**Wednesday 16 May 2012**

18:00 **Welcome Aboard Reception and Reunion Registration.** *All reunion participants must register.*

\$25.00 per Person  
Number of Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday 17 May 2012**

0900 **Big Easy Road trip!** New Orleans, World War II Museum, French Quarter stroll and the World War II and shopping

\$50.00 per person  
Number of Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday 18 May 2012**

0930 **Remembering the departed on the USS Kidd.**

\$35.00 per person  
Number of Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

1315 **Plantation life.** Depart the Holiday Inn for Nottoway, the South's largest remaining antebellum mansion, a stunning historic plantation near Baton Rouge on the banks of the Mississippi.

\$35.00 per person  
Number of Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday 20 May 2012**

1930 **Awards Banquet** – with buffet dinner; dance with Cajun music group.

\$50.00 per person  
Number of Persons \_\_\_\_\_ Per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL**

Total Amount of enclosed check payable to USS Pyro Association \$ \_\_\_\_\_

To complete your registration, please mail this form and check to:  
**Bill Hogan, Treasurer**  
**PO Box 40**  
**Farmville, VA 23901**

USS PYRO Scuttlebutt

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Douglas Wisher, secretary  
1011 Edgehill Rd.  
Covington, KY 41011

Email:  
wisherdj@fuse.net



\*\*\* THE PRIDE AND TRADITION FOREVER \*\*\*

We're on the Web:  
www.usspyro.com



<b>Association dues</b>	
<b>Annual:</b>	<b>\$ 20</b>
<b>Lifetime membership</b>	
<b>Age 50 or under</b>	<b>\$250</b>
<b>51 ~ 55</b>	<b>\$200</b>
<b>56 ~ 60</b>	<b>\$175</b>
<b>61 ~ 65</b>	<b>\$150</b>
<b>66 ~ 70</b>	<b>\$125</b>
<b>71 ~ 75</b>	<b>\$100</b>
<b>76 ~81</b>	<b>\$ 50</b>
<b>82 PLUS</b>	<b>\$ 25</b>

**USS PYRO AE-1 & AE-24 ASSOCIATION**  
Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

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

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate/rank(s) aboard Pyro: \_\_\_\_\_ Highest USN rate/rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates aboard USS PYRO (AE1 or AE 24) \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Retired USN?  Separated under honorable conditions? Yes  No

**To join: Send this completed application and a check payable to the USS PYRO Association for either annual dues or the lifetime membership amount appropriate for your age to:**

**Bill Hogan, Treasurer**  
**PO Box 40**  
**Farmville, VA 23901**