



Summer 2006

Published by
The USS PYRO
(AE-1 & AE-24)
Association

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USS PYRO Scuttlebutt



Straight skinny on the 2007 reunion

**In
this
edition**

Of Rags and Riches



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Reunion 2007
Join your shipmates
on dry land
in
Philadelphia!
May 2-6, 2007
Pages one and two

See yuh in Philly!

by **Larry Shepline**
2007 Reunion Chairman

During the 2006 annual association meeting, members selected Philadelphia as the site of our 2007 reunion.

Why Philly?



**See yuh in Philly —
and that's an order!**

Aside from being a historic city with strong naval traditions, Philadelphia is a central transportation hub for the northeast corridor, which affords easy and economical access to members who have not recently had an opportunity to attend a USS Pyro reunion. Nearly forty percent of the US population lives within a day's drive of Philadelphia.

Interstate I-95, which links the entire east coast, passes within one half mile of our hotel. Amtrak trains operate, nearly hourly, from Philadelphia's 30th Street Station with

service along the Northeast Corridor and points west and south. Two discount air carriers, Southwest and Air Tran, as well as the major carriers, serve Philadelphia Airport, which is 6.5 miles from central Philadelphia's historic district.

Initial plans for the 2007 Philadelphia reunion are in place. The reunion will be during mid-spring from **May 2-6, 2007**. At this time of year, Philadelphia should be at its best: mild temperatures with both dogwood and azaleas in bloom. Mark those dates on your calendar now!

Pyro reunion hotel

We have reserved a block of 50 rooms at the Holiday Inn Historic District Philadelphia (pictured below). This recently refurbished hotel is an eight story, high-rise, full-service, three star, hotel located within walking distance



to over two dozen two to four star bistro/ethnic/fusion-type restaurants, several antique shops and galleries.

(Continued on page 2)

**“Come for the fellowship and shared memories,
absorb the history and culture
and enjoy the food and entertainment”**



The Liberty Bell is located just a stone's throw away from the reunion hotel — not that anyone wants to throw stones at the Liberty Bell.

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Better yet, it's immediately adjacent to Independence National Historical Park. This 45-acre national park features the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution were created, as well as over a dozen other buildings closely associated with the colonial period that are open to the public. Home to some of the first neighborhoods in the city, the Historic District is a combination of old-fashioned cobblestone and bright neon. Today, historic storefronts and narrow streets reflect 17th century trade, while small cafes and bustling galleries populate the area.

Great location, great rate. The USS Pyro Association's Holiday Inn Historic District group room rate is \$129.00 per night for single or double occupancy —more than a third off typical three-star hotel rates for this ideal Philadelphia visiting period – plus 14 percent state and local taxes. Additional room occupants will pay an additional \$17.00 per person per day. This rate includes a complementary hot buffet breakfast. The hotel will honor these group rates two days prior and two days post reunion departure. A discounted parking rate of \$10.00 per day is provided for the Pyro Association versus

the normal \$20.00 daily rate in the high-rise parking garage. However, parking is limited to vehicles less than 6.5 feet in height.

Reserving your reunion room.

Call the hotel reservations desk at 1-800-THE-BELL. Identify the reservation as part of the USS Pyro group room block. Alternately, reserve a room on-line, within the USS Pyro group room block, by using the three-letter code, PYR, while logging on to www.holidayinn.com/philadelphia-historicdistrict.com All reservations must be made before April 13, 2007.

Tour plans in the works

Here are some of the tours we're currently checking out. Watch upcoming Scuttlebutt editions for details.

- A motor coach tour of the major sites in the greater Philadelphia area, including those museum steps that cinema boxer Rocky Balboa — whose footprints in cement are shown in the photo on the right—climbed at the end of his run.
- A guided walking tour of the historic district with tours of the Liberty Bell Center, Independence Hall and the Philadelphia Mint with personal time to visit Betsy Ross's home, Ben Franklin's Grave and other historic buildings and sites.



- A docent-led tour of the Battleship New Jersey (BB-62) Museum and Memorial (left) now berthed at the Camden N.J. waterfront across the Delaware River from Center City Philadelphia. While the tour will include most of the topside spaces and the 16-inch gun turrets -- sorry snipes! -- the engineering spaces will not be open to the public until 2007. We hope to be able to arrange the Pyro memorial service on (and in) the New Jersey.

Philly's favorite food: Cheese steak in the city of brotherly love



No one travels to a city just to get a sandwich.

Well, not unless the city is Philadelphia and the sandwich is a world famous — and slightly notorious — Philadelphia cheesesteak.

Face it, the Philadelphia cheesesteak is no ordinary sandwich. It's big. It's greasy. It's stuffed with thinly sliced beef fried in grease, onions fried in grease and usually drizzled with Cheez Whiz, which is primarily manufactured from, well, grease. It's a dream come true for the manufacturers of cholesterol and high blood pressure medicine, a coronary incident looking for a place to happen.

But when the beef, onions, Cheez Whiz and grease come together on a roll and hits your palate somewhere within the borders of the City of Brotherly Love (don't try this at home, folks!) a culinary transubstantiation occurs: It's delicious. More than delicious, the Philadelphia cheese steak verges on the ephemeral. Folks from Philly consider it

the height of the American culinary experience. Granted, these are the same people who root for the evil Eagles and boo handicapped kids who don't find the gedunk fast enough at Easter Egg hunts. But everyone's right sometime and this may be their turn.

According to Winkopedia, the online encyclopedia, "The invention of the cheesesteak is claimed by Philadelphian Pat Olivieri who combined chopped-up steak and put it in a bun. He began selling the new concoctions at his hot dog stand. They became so popular he opened up his own cheesesteak restaurant in 1930. This restaurant still operates today as Pat's King of Steaks Pat's website

calls the 1930 preparation a 'steak sandwich' (not a 'cheesesteak') and says that 'as the years passed, both employees and customers alike demanded change . . . cheese was added.' Joe Vento of Geno's claims that he was the first to add cheese."

When you order a cheesesteak, *yah gotta do it right!* First, you name your preferred cheese — American, provolone or Cheez Whiz, please — then add "wit" if you want onions or "witout" if you don't. Example: *Gimme a Cheez Whiz wit.* If you care for additional toppings, say sauteed mushrooms or peppers, add that preference to the end of your order. And get it right: Some shops will refuse or delay service to customers who order incorrectly. Don't be like presidential candidate John Kerry who lost votes in the city for ordering a cheesesteak with Swiss cheese. According to the *Philadelphia Daily News*, local

"reporters snickered," because "in Philadelphia, ordering Swiss on a cheesesteak is like rooting for Dallas at an Eagles game. It isn't just politically incorrect; it could get you a poke in the nose."

Naturally, not all cheesesteaks are created equally. And a hearty debate rages not so genteelly among the Philadelphia denizens over which purveyor makes the best sandwich. Gino's and Pat's are the generally considered champs, but dozens of dark horses are still in the running.





News you can use

Items of interest to veterans and retirees

COLA 2007 UPDATE 03. In mid-June, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the May 2006 monthly Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is used to calculate the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for military retired pay, VA disability compensation, survivor annuities, and Social Security.

The CPI continued its upward trend, rising 0.5% in May for a total of 2.9% growth so far this fiscal year. A 2.5% increase in energy costs played a key roll in the jump. Last year, the CPI had risen 2.7% through the month of May and ended the year at 4.1%. With inflation running only slightly ahead of last year's pace so far, it would seem likely that we'll end this year in the same 4% ballpark. But there's plenty of CPI roller-coaster left to navigate in the next four months, and that outlook could change in a hurry.



VA PHISHING ALERT. Recently the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) whose membership covers over 1000 counties nationwide distributed a copy of a VA Phishing alert to all of its members. The alert, issued by the Chief Network Security & Support Section of the Hines Information Technology Center, is applicable to all veterans with internet access. Their report indicates that the Philadelphia VA's Network Support Staff is seeing increasing reports of veterans receiving email from the address abuse@vba.va.gov which asks them to check an account by clicking on a link provided in the email. This email is a phishing scam, an attempt to gain personal information. The email address abuse@vba.va.gov is fake and the link in the email is to a web site in Asia. Recipients of this email are warned not to open the website link provided and to



delete the email. This is just one in a series of on-going attempts to use the VA as a medium for harassing or stealing from veterans.

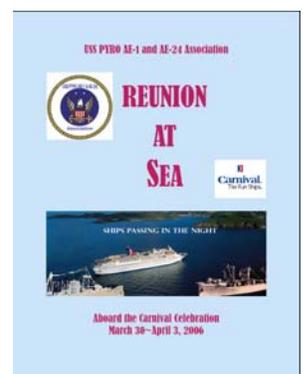
TMOP PRESCRIPTION ORDERS. DoD is planning a strong push to convince TRICARE Pharmacy Beneficiaries to use the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy (TMOP) rather than retail pharmacies. There are savings for both the beneficiaries and the government if the mail order program is used. It is a convenient and easy way to get the prescriptions you take regularly (such as those to lower blood pressure, or to treat asthma or diabetes) because they are delivered directly to your home. However, this is only practical if one is looking at maintenance drugs. If you need a drug immediately (like an antibiotic) then an MTF or a retail pharmacy are the only sensible options.

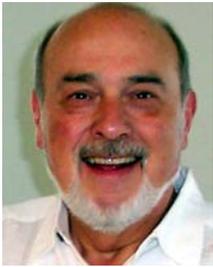


News you can use is derived from a variety of published sources. *The Scuttlebutt* especially thanks Lt. James "EMO" Tichacek, USN (Ret), for his *Retiree Assistance Office Newsletter*, the source of much of our material. To subscribe, e-mail: raoemo@sbcglobal.net

Memory book mailed

The USS Pyro Association Reunion at Sea Memory book was mailed on July 24 on disk as a PDF file to members who participated in the 2006 gathering and to other interested members. If you were on the cruise and don't receive your memory book or if you didn't sail away with us and would like a free electronic memory book, write Jared Cameron or e-mail scuttlebutt@Comcast.net for your copy.





From the president's desk

By Jared Cameron

**Carpe diem
— seize the
day!**

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No illusions here: When the good members of the association 'hired' me for this job, the selection was based on a dearth of other candidates and what Noel Coward called 'a talent to amuse.'

So I'm not about to break with the traditions of a three score years, go all 'adult leadership' on you and start telling members – most of whom have done a far better job at navigating the narrows and shoals of life than I – how to live their lives.

Still, the main subjects of this edition of *The Scuttlebutt*, the passing of our friend and association stalwart, Ray Gillman, along with the hard work Larry Sheipline has devoted to putting together a great 2007 reunion, call for an bit more gravitas than is usually found in this column.

Ray's death evoked both sadness and a degree of guilt in me. Ray and I often fought like proverbial cats and dogs over everything from politics to Pyro association philosophy to the appropriate price for reunion hotel rooms, but we always disagreed without being disagreeable. Still, now that he's gone, I ask myself, 'Couldn't I have been a little less fervent in our debates?' "Shouldn't I have called or dropped him an e-mail just to say hello?" And most of all: "Why didn't I take time to call just one more time during his final days?"

But we can't undo the past. We can only apply its lessons to the future.

And that's the message I want to send you today. It could be summed up in the Latin expression, *carpe diem*, usually translated as *seize the day*.

Shipmate Dave Indra wrote about this a couple of *Scuttlebutts* back: Wouldn't today be a great day to call an old shipmate – or a member of your family – just to say 'hi' and catch up? Do it! *Carpe diem* – seize the day!

Which brings us to the 2007 reunion: Sure, that event is several months away, but wouldn't today be a good day to start making plans to attend? Or to call a shipmate who normally doesn't do reunions and get him to come?

And wouldn't it be great if folks who haven't made the last few – or any – reunions were on the scene in Philly? Folks like Bob Hauge, Ellie Fricke, the Iversens, Ed Stone, Bob Smith, Lonnie Fry, Connie MacDonald, Don McClurg, Tom Palmer, Don Sullivan, Charlie Batten, Beans Benitez, Jim Boucher, Lew Steele... Betty Gillman and dozens of others...

Of course no matter how hard reunion chairman Larry Sheipline and the association officers work, it's not enough. Only if all members join in the effort can we make it happen. *Carpe diem* – seize the day!

Dutch Schwendeman weds Pat Drury

Surrounded by children, grandchildren, friends and even a Pyro shipmate, Martin E. Schwendeman (AE-24, 1964-66) and Patricia B. Drury were joined in matrimony July 23 in Alexandria, VA.

Providing a nautical undertone, their reception was held at the Mason House Pool and Yacht Club on the Potomac River, just down the street from George Washington's Mt. Vernon digs.

The riches 'Rags' left us all



*Any man's death diminishes me,
because I am involved in mankind;
and therefore never send to know
for whom the bell tolls;
it tolls for thee...*



When the bells tolled for Chief Raymond P. Gillman on June 11, they truly tolled for all of us.

'Rags' left a legacy of riches to all who knew him:

To his wife Betty, he left the warm memories of 10 years of marriage.

To the sailors who served under him, he imparted a striving for excellence, a sense of responsibility, a belief in self-discipline and a legacy of respect so strong that to this day many of the 'scope dopes' who served with and under Ray Gillman still refer to him simply as 'The Chief.'

To our association, Ray left an enormous legacy: His research in tracking down Pyro sailors who go down to the sea no more has given our group dozens of new members and decades—perhaps scores—of additional years of vitality to combat the inevitable attrition of demographics.

Raymond P. Gillman

1937~2006

Raymond P. Gillman, 69, died June 11, 2006, at Sebastian River Medical Center.

He was born in Morristown, N.J. and grew up in Miami. He retired



from the Navy as a chief petty officer after twenty years of service.

After his Naval service, he worked for the FAA in Vero Beach and Gainesville for 23 years. Survivors include his wife, Betty of Sebastian; sons, Raymond P. Gillman, Jr. and William E. Gillman, both of Mt. Pleasant, N.C.; daughter, Sherry Lynn Kittle of Mt. Pleasant; and stepson, Charles Michael Tackett of Clearlake, Calif.

Per Ray's wishes, his ashes will be scattered from a Navy vessel.

Ray Gillman never did anything halfway. If he had a fault, it was loving too well, never loving too little.

He loved Betty with a gentle fierceness, soft in voice, but strong in spirit.

He loved his country as a father loves a child: With an unwavering affection that overcame vocal anger at its foibles. And he loved the Navy, filled with earned pride in the contribution he made to his country and his service.

His relationship with our association was also paternal. And when 'father knew best,' but the 'kids' didn't listen, Ray fought hard to persuade, but never let his pique at perceived misdeeds alter his affection or high hopes for his shipmates and our group.

Ray fancied himself a 'hard ass.' He often played that role to Academy Award standards. But not far beneath the veneer of the hard-bitten chief, an impish grin and a twinkle in his steely grey eyes told those who cared to see that Ray was really a softie at heart. He always had time for a kind word, a knowing wink and those small acts of friendship and affection that recall the best of our days on Naval service and define the true meaning of the word 'gentleman.'

We'll all miss him.

But the hard edge of our sorrow at his passing is somewhat softened by thoughts of the benefits Ray brings to his new duty station.

Because if Heaven needs a new coat of paint or the angels are getting a bit lax in performing their celestial duties, the Guy in Charge has just the man to put things in shipshape order: Chief Petty Officer Raymond P. Gillman, USN.

Requiem for a heavyweight



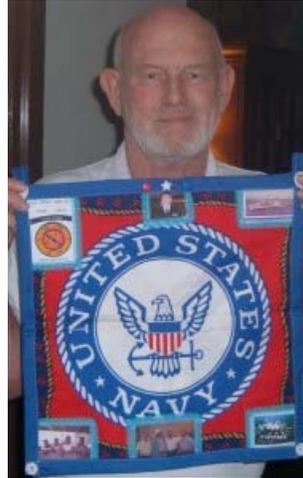
I loved him and will miss him terribly. Betty, his beloved wife, loved him deeply. May he rest in peace, and may he be logged into the Rainbow Bridge until I can again see him. His memorial on our website will not be able to say enough about him.

My brother, Jimmy Smiley, wrote him a song and he got to listen to it before he died. Jimmy called it "Gillman's Sail". I called it "Ray's Song." He was brave until the end. America lost a brave and loyal sailor. Goodbye Ray, my good friend and shipmate, and rest in peace. You deserve the best.—*Bob Smiley*

I am so glad we had a chance to talk there near the end...as I told you then, I will never forget you and never stop loving you. You were my Chief and turned a punk into a man. Soon we will be together again navigating thru a much bigger and smoother sea of happiness. We and the old gal (PYRO) will know happiness forever. May the peace and comfort of God hold you till we can be together again. I salute you as the best damn sailor I have ever known. Luv Ya, Chief. May the Lord's peace be with Betty during these trying times and may she find happiness in the knowledge that all your sailings will be smooth from now on.—Lonnie Fry

My heart aches for you Betty, Rags left so quickly. He left many funny moments with me, arguing politics, sharing books and he was so generous in mailing me so many great ones to read. I would like to share a small poem with you that helped me through some painful time in losing a loved one.

"THAT WHICH WE LOSE WE MOURN, BUT MUST REJOICE THAT WE HAVE EVER HAD."—*Ellie Fricke*

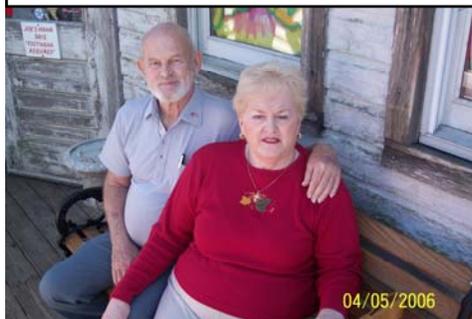


To all my Pyro family: Thank you for your prayers and phone calls. Your tributes to Ray on the guest book mean a lot also. I have wonderful memories of my time with Ray and all the good times with our Pyro family. God bless you all.

Betty Gillman

I would like to thank all of Chief Gillman's friends and shipmates for their kind thoughts and comments. I was very fortunate to have been able to spend his last few days with him. He genuinely felt that he lived his life to its fullest and had no regrets. I loved him deeply and will miss him dearly. Thanks, again.

Raymond P. Gillman Jr.



Ray Gillman passed away 11 June 2006. Ray's unexpected and sudden cancer so rapidly took its toll and, thus, we all lost a very dedicated shipmate. His involvement in researching the location of shipmates who served on the USS Pyro (AE-24) will always remain as his landmark point of accomplishment for the USS Pyro Association.

We all join together in expressing our thoughtful prayers on behalf of Ray and his wife, Betty, who now is left alone with loving memories of her ever-loving husband.

Yes, Ray's departure leaves an unexpected void in the USS Pyro Association. His shipmates will always relate to one another their experiences and times serving with their Chief aboard the AE-24.

Farewell, Rags you may be gone but will never be forgotten. All your USS Pyro shipmates join in wishing you smooth sailing and pleasant seas forever—Bob Hauge

Just wanted everyone to know that the chief was someone very special to us. He found Art and then got Art's buddies together. Just found one that was with him on Midway Island. Thanks to the Chief. If someone had someone that you wanted to find all you had to do was tell the Chief and he more than likely found them. Betty (Chief's wife) put up with all the hours he spent doing these things for people he liked. She is a very special person also. Like Smiley said they are both very special people. And Betty will always be a part of my family. Do not forget her in her time of need. — *Art and Millie Derry*

Ray Gillman will truly be missed beyond measure by me and so many others that he has touched the lives of. My life has been enriched by having known Ray. I was one of the sailors that Ray located for the USS Pyro Association. We had become good friends over the past few years. — Bailey George

USS PYRO Scuttlebutt

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

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:

Tom Sanborn, Treasurer
USS PYRO Association
114 Long Point Drive
Saint Simons Island, GA 31522