

Summer 2008

Published by  
The USS PYRO  
Association

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Covington, KY 41011

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# USS PYRO Scuttlebutt



## Reunion in Dubuque: We built it and they came!

### Reunion 2008 wrap-up

It was a marvelous reunion, seeing folks that I had not spent time with since the New Orleans 2004 event. A carefree four days that was worth every mile of my journey.

The heart warming comradeship and enthusiasm among the group giving hope the association is still very much alive, was a joy to witness. Finding new recruits for membership will insure a future of many reunions yet to come. The new members that attended their first reunion (which I always refer to as "virgins") were a most welcome addition. Please return and bring a guest.

My brother, Dean Fitzwater, insisted that I accompany him to his first reunion in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1997, where ninety-five members and guests were assembled. Sadly, many of those are no longer with us, but close enduring friendships were formed and you graciously welcomed Ellie. Thank you.

This collection of sailors who are blessed with fine officers (both elected and appointed), who are diligent and put forth much effort to please – ergo the reunions come off as a happy group. Bob Hauge surpassed all the previous reunions that he organized and chaired with the 2008 in Dubuque, the very city where it all began many years ago. He deserves more than a mere pat on the back, but unfortunately, that is all I can afford. With all his clout, I'm still disappointed that Kevin Costner was not on the field as in "Field of Dreams."

Wishing everyone a wonderful year of good health and contentment and looking forward to seeing you next year.

In friendship and love,

**Ellie Fricke**



**Spanning the USS Pyro's greatest generations:** Jasper and Lavonne Strunk (AE-24, 64-66); Bob Hauge (AE-1, 42-46); Linda Fox and Bill Hogan (AE-24, 64-67); and Angel Ortero (AE-24, '90s) were among the sailors, spouses of 50 plus years, new brides, significant others and family members on hand for the 25th anniversary Pyro reunion, May 14-18, on the banks of the Mississippi in Dubuque, Iowa. Get a glimpse of their sentimental journeys at this Blast from the Past reunion on pages 3, 4 and 5.

### Reunion 2009:

## Gunner Bob has the conn for 'Reno 911'



CWO Bob Smith (AE-24, 70-74) arrived at the 2008 Pyro reunion as a newly-wed and departed as the association's new historian and 2009 reunion chairman.

Based on Bob's subsequently confirmed reports of wildly reasonable rates (average \$51 a night for Wednesday through Saturday) at the Sands Hotel and members' desire for a West Coast — well, West Coast-ish — reunion, the association has tentatively selected May 13-17, 2009 for the gathering. Details in the Fall *Scuttlebutt*.

## Membership matters

### Trea\$urer's report highlights: Association on \$olid ground, but you can help \$ave on mailing cost\$

Award-winning Pyro Treasurer Tom Sanborn has made it his mission to leave more money in the association treasury when he departs the job – not soon, we all hope! – then was there when he took up the seals of office.

He's done an admirable job of doing so during this tenure: The association has a total of roughly \$5,000 in the bank with all reunion expenses paid.



To give members a better understanding of the financial picture, below is an overview of the association's debit's and credits interpreted from the Treasurer's Report by *The Scuttlebutt*:

The association has expenses — regular charges directly connected with servicing members. These charges include printing and distribution of the print edition of *The Scuttlebutt* (the association's main service to folks who don't attend reunions); reunion expenses assumed by the association including, traditionally, disk jockey/music at the awards banquet; printing and postage for holiday cards; the cost of mailing for dues reminders; and a few small administrative expenses. (Currently, Pyro website costs, which are not inconsiderable, are completely underwritten by Bob Smiley.) Not counting contributions from officers, these expenses come to around \$2,000 annually.

In addition to expenses, the association needs to have cash on hand to make advance payments to hotels, bus operators and other vendors who need cash for services before most wait-until-the-last-minute-before-booking members pony-up for reunions. Depending on the association's budgeting skills, most, if not all of these advance payments come back to the treasury by the time of the annual gathering. But, generally speaking, no deposits, no reunion.

It varies from year to year, but lately, income in the form of the membership dues runs about \$1,600 annually, but that doesn't take into consideration lifetime members, who have, in effect, paid in advance for their memberships. And with the \$200 in interest the association earns thanks to Tom Sanborn's careful shepherding of funds, the association is on solid footing — as long as membership levels don't decrease and Bob Smiley's website generosity continues.

The last thing the association wants to do is raise dues. So here are some other things that could put more money in association coffers:



#### ASK INSTEAD WHAT **YOU** CAN DO FOR YOUR ASSOCIATION!

1) **NO PAIN, MUCH GAIN.** The association's biggest expense is *Scuttlebutt* printing and postage for the print edition. We want every member to receive his or her *Scuttlebutt* every quarter, but the print edition costs big bucks and the electronic versions cost zip.point... **If you get your electronic *Scuttlebutt* without any trouble and still get a print edition by mail, cancel the print edition. If only half the people who receive both print and electronic editions stopped their print editions, we'd be back on solid ground for the foreseeable future. To unsubscribe, please contact Secretary Doug Wisher.**

2) **GET MORE MEMBERS.** The officers and membership committee are working on this, but nothing sells memberships faster than a buddy calling a buddy. This is especially true for 80's and 90's crews who are underrepresented on association rolls.

3) **HIT UP THE RICH GUYS.** Actually, several members have volunteered to help with their checkbooks in a pinch, but this should be a last resort.

4) **AUCTION OFF DATES WITH BOB HAUGE AND ED STONE.** If only they'd go along with this plan!

**Close, but no cigar:**

Ever since the *Scuttlebutt* started using photos, we've tried to find or shoot one of Tom Sanborn – who always says he has a good time at reunions – smiling. Maybe it was the Dubuque air or maybe it's marriage, but we came close in 2008:



Nope!



Close



Closer



Closest

**USS PYRO ASSOCIATION**

**Officers**

*President*

**Jared Cameron**

*Vice President*

**Billy L. Eckstine**

*Secretary*

**Douglas Wisher**

*Treasurer*

**Tom Sanborn**

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*Scuttlebutt Editor*

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*Chaplain*

**Vance Worrell**

*MAA*

**Jasper Strunk**

*Historian*

**Robert J. Smith**

*Nominating Committee*

**Gary Golay**

**Jasper Strunk**

# From the president's desk

By Jared Cameron

All the Pyro reunions I've attended have been great fun. And 2008 may have been the best of all - but I say that every year.

The fleshpots of Dubuque were more than adequate for most of us of advanced years, the people of the city were uniformly friendly and kind. The price was right. And Bob Hauge was an outstanding reunion chairman. But, I say that every year, too!

Of course — as I also say every year — reunions are about the people, not the venue. And this year was a great mix of 'the usual suspects,' fine folks we hadn't seen for a while (the Patsches, Dick McDonald, Fahrmeiers. Iversens, Bob White, Hinsons) and very welcome new faces (Tom Palmer with his California tuxedos, the Orteros). And best of all, we had brides (see page 5)! Of course, we missed not only folks like Don Hunt and Bob Kelly who have gone on to a new duty station, but also regulars like Helen Golay (the distinctly better half of Gary), Rick and Rita Tully, Tom Ryan, the Sieverins and many more.

As many photos as we can cram in are included in this *Scuttlebutt*. More will be in the Fall edition and the association will send everyone who participated in the reunion – and any member who requests one – a 2008 Reunion Memory Book on disk with scads of high resolution photos of everyone we've included and missed here. Since I say the same things every year, we've left it to Ellie Fricke to sing the praises of the reunion on page 1. And for the rest of this edition, I'll let the pictures do the talking!

b

## NATIONAL PYRO ENQUIRER

Iowa shocker! Dubuque disgrace!  
Sailors sans spouses



**The incorrigibles**

Paparazzi snap photos as Fanning sips in shock; Stone socializes; Hansen meets the *Field of Dreams* farmer's daughter; Sheipline tutors Fricke on baseball *sans* bat; Wichtrich meets a river boat hostess; spouses express shock at the antics; and Cameron (RHIP!) gets Clinton-esque with Marge Knapp, Linda Wisher and Elaine Sanborn.

### Reunion 2008: Welcome Beer Blast from the Past, Mississippi River cruise Dubuque Tour

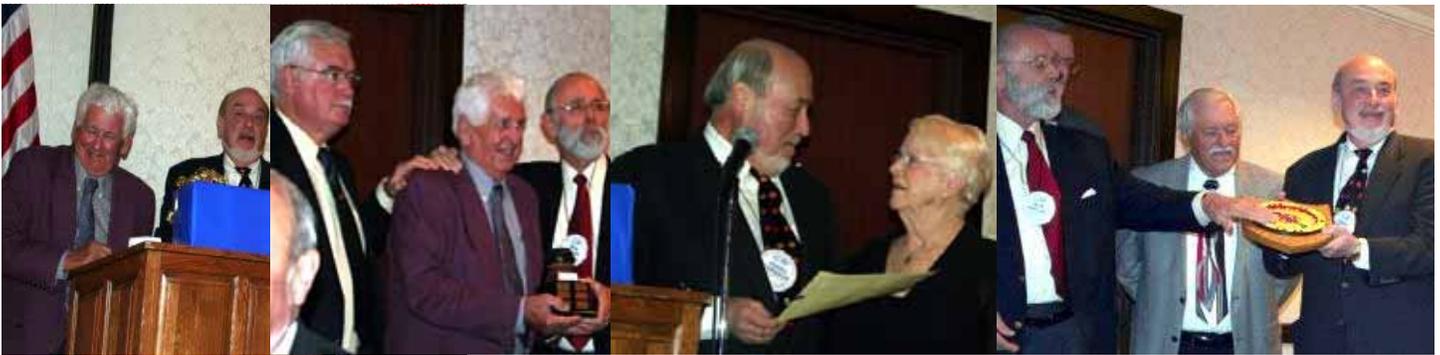


Top: Reunion Chairman Hauge greets guests; Art Derry Bailey George and Ellie Fricke chat; Howard and Charlene Iverson are happy to see the photographer. Row 2: Lud and Ann Miller chow-down at Holiday Inn happy hour; Larry Sheipline, the Worrels, Bill Hogan, Linda Fox and Billy Eckstine share a libation; Ed Stone, Marge Knapp, Lavonne Strunk, Mary Ellis and George Mahan meet and greet.

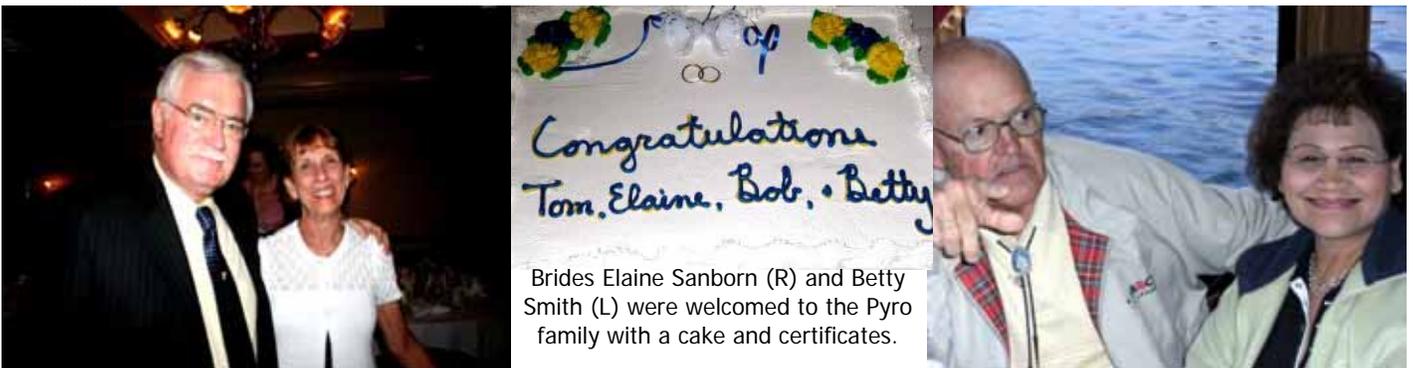


Top: Hauge checks in Golay and White; the Loyds make an extra seat; Eckstine snaps photos as Jaegars look on; Mark (Twain) and Angel (Ortero) discuss literature; Dave Hauge (Bob's nephew) and the Hinsons chat; The Fahrmeiers cruise; the bus heads for the Field of Dreams; well-built Sanborn and Knapp come to where they built it; Sanborn, Hauge and Golay at Field of Dream's home plate.

### Award winners, brides and banquets



Double dipping: Bob Hauge accepts the Ray Gillman Award for extraordinary service. Tom Sanborn presents the "Glue Pot," an award he created for members who 'hold the association together like glue,' to Bob Hauge and Bob Smiley. Cameron presents lifetime achievement award to associate member and association 'den mother' Ellie Fricke. Smiley — with Doug Wisher and Billy Eckstine looking on — presents a second Gillman Award, a Pyro plaque handmade by the late chief, to Jared Cameron. Webmaster C. Ray Nichol won a certificate of appreciation for his work in absentia. Full text of awards will be posted on the association website.



Brides Elaine Sanborn (R) and Betty Smith (L) were welcomed to the Pyro family with a cake and certificates.



Carolyn Hinson, Ann Miller and Linda Wisher dressed to the nines; Bob White, Marge Knapp and Bob Mahan; Wichtrich, Fanning, Hansen, Shepline and Palmer at Pepper Sprout; Pearl and Frank Ryan; Ellie Fricke, Art Derry, Millie Derry, Lyla Smith, Betty Smith and Bob Smith; the obligatory goofy photo of Shepline and Wichtrich (with the glasses upside-down). In the next edition: Mahan and Knapp dance through the years plus Art Derry's headgear.

# Remembering the fallen

The most solemn moment at any USS Pyro reunion comes as shipmates remember their fallen comrades. Dubuque 2008 was no exception as the crew gathered aboard the Spirit of Dubuque for the annual memorial ceremony, the chaplain read the names of the departed and the master at arms consigned a wreath to the river.



**Junior L. "Bill" Carey**

**Don Hunt**

**Robert R. Kelly**

**Clayton Labar**

**Joseph Lamach**

**Terry Schearer**

**Stanley V. Waldo**

**Van C. Yoder**

**To be honored at the next reunion**

**Harold Gilliatt (2006)**

**Allisin D. Deal (2006)**

**Warren Crosland (2001)**

**Ralph Thompsen**

## **Harold Gilliatt**

CWO4 Harold Gilliatt, USN, Ret, passed away from Leukemia on December 5, 2006, in Denton, TX. He was buried at the Dallas National Cemetery. I was with him shortly before he died.

CWO4 Gilliatt served as assistant supply officer and disbursing officer aboard AE-24 from 1961-63. Harold was a Pearl Harbor veteran. He served on a number of Navy ships and later in Vietnam where he was injured. He was a fine officer and was well liked by all who served with him. I considered him to be a personal friend, a fine officer and a Christian gentleman. He and his wife of more than 65 years, Margaret, attended

the Jacksonville, New Orleans and Branson Pyro Association reunions—**Barney L. Margason**

## **Allisin D. Deal**

On May 15, 2006, the Chief went home to be with the Lord. He was buried in our home church cemetery with full military honors. The Pyro was my husband's last ship before he retired and it was special for him.—**Jean Deal**

## **Warren Crosland**

We got a letter from his wife a year ago telling us of his death on 22 August 2001 in Provo, UT. He ran the boats on AE-1 and later worked with his bother and sons in the insulation business – **Charlene Iverson**

# PYRO PEOPLE

## Updates on shipmates and their families

### Life after Pyro: CDR Harold Vail

Though happy to be 'still vertical and ventilating,' retired CDR Harold Vail often likens himself to Joe Btfsplk, the character from the Lil Abner comic strip who walked through life with a perpetual storm cloud over his head.

Then again, he could have been CDR Lloyd Bucher, a fellow spy ship CO who was captured and brutalized by North Koreans in 1968. But we're getting ahead of the story here.

Born in Buffalo, NY, Harold Vail served in the Navy from 1947 to 1974 and was a member of the AE-24 pre-commissioning detail.

After departing the Pyro in August 1961, he has a two-year tour accompanied by his family, as Personnel Advisor in the Naval Advisory Group in South Korea. His wife taught English to ROK junior naval officers, his son and daughter attended an

American-run school, and "I was privileged to be selected as one of two Americans – the other was the naval attaché – to play on the ROK Navy baseball team in an inter-service tournament.

From 1963 to 1965, he was XO of another AE, this time USS Firedrake (AE-14). In December 1965, he headed East to Washington, DC, where he worked in new ship construction at BU Ships. Here the Btfsplk syndrome first appeared: "I was assigned the FDL (Fast Deployment Logistic) ship project under Admiral Sonenshein, which didn't get beyond the drawing board and the planning stages because of the politics and bureaucracy in D.C."



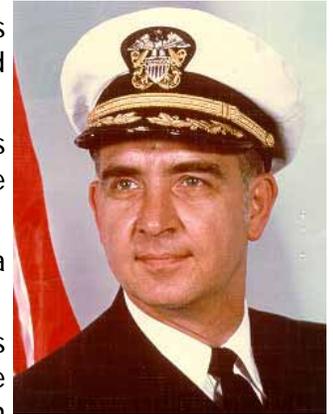
His Washington stint completed, he served as XO of the USS Frontier (AD-25) "before she was decommissioned and I went to PCO training. I was beginning to feel like that guy who walked around with a black cloud over his head."

Next, he served from July 1968 to October 1969 as the CO of the USS Oxford (AGTR-1) (right), "a technical research ship by designation, but actually a 'spy ship' similar in operation, but larger than the Pueblo that was captured by the North Koreans. She was a sister ship of the Liberty shot up by the Israelis. She was decommissioned three months after I left. (There's that black cloud again!)"

After nearly two years in the IFF Section at Office of the Chief of Naval Operations in the Pentagon where he served under Admiral Morrison, father of rock star Van Morrison, CDR Vail served until his retirement in 1974 as Assistant Operations Officer in the Office of Naval Research, monitoring and acting as liaison for the research ships of universities and institutions in their research operations throughout the world.

Even in his retirement, he kept his Navy ties, moving to Ohio as Naval Science instructor in the NJROTC Program in two Washington Court House, OH, high schools for 15 years.

He currently is a math tutor in the YouthBuild Program and assists young adults working toward their GEDs as requested by the county Community Action Program. He also keeps busy keeping *The Scuttlebutt* editor on his toes by catching recent errors including the mistaken listing of both CDR Vail and the late Wesley Allard, both AE-24 plank holders, as AE-1 veterans.



The year is 1968 and USS OXFORD is sailing into Sable Bay. Photo provided by co-commander Ed Cooper.

***Why not share your Life after Pyro? Send details to [scuttlebutt@ae-24.org](mailto:scuttlebutt@ae-24.org).***

# PYRO PEOPLE

Updates on shipmates and their families

## Bob Mahan stars at 2007 veteran's ceremony

*IN FLANDERS FIELDS the poppies blow  
Between the crosses row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

Back in 1937, shipmate Bob Mahan (AE-1, 42-46) recited *In Flanders Field*, a poem written by Lt. Col. John McCrae, MD (1872-1918) of the Canadian Army honoring the dead of WW I, in his hometown, Williamsburg, IA.



Some 70 years later on July 1, 2007, Bob returned to recite those words.

A thank-you note from the organizers tells the story:

"One advantage of writing the thank you letter is being able to choose who gets the last "thanks." In this case, it is Robert Mahan. A Williamsburg native who now lives in Cedar Rapids, Bob stopped in the sesquicentennial office in September of 2006. He told us that in 1937, when the "rock" in the Williamsburg City Park was dedicated to the area servicemen, he was chosen to read "In Flanders Field." If there was to be any program where the poem was again recited, he gladly would volunteer. At that time we really hadn't decided on a veteran's tribute, but during the winter the program evolved. Bob returned from the south in late spring and stopped in the office. We told him there was going to be a veteran's tribute, and asked if he would like to recite "In Flanders Field." We don't know who was more proud when he recited the poem on Sunday, July 1, Bob or the committee who chose him. It was the finest reading we have ever heard and was done entirely from memory. Bob, in his eighties, walked the entire parade route with Beveridge, Winborn, Townsend, Chipman, Tiernan, Boswell and Harkin. We were truly honored to have a special place for Robert Mahan in our Veteran's Tribute."

### "...praying for the rain in California so the grapes can grow and Al can make more wine"

If you never know whose lips you'll next be kissing and it all depends on who will buy the wine, you need the get to know Al Hansen.

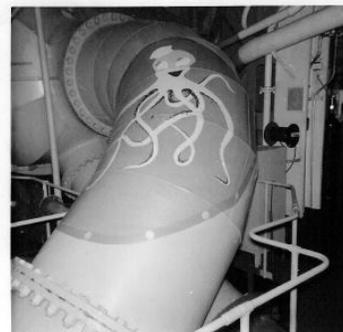
Al, who served on AE-24 from 1959 to 1961, runs a successful Concord, CA, commercial painting business by day. In his spare time, he grows the grapes to make more wine at his Clayton, CA, vineyard.



If you're planning on making the association's 2009 Reno reunion, you, too, should pray for the rain in California: If this year's vintage is up to Al's high standards, he promises to bring along a few bottles (cases?) for shipmates to sample in the dusty Nevada desert.

### What became of this octopus?

Tony Case, who served as a MM2 on AE-24 from 1960-62, wrote to ask shipmates about the fate of Oscar (right), "the only seven legged octopus in the Seventh Fleet." According to Case, "Oscar was painted on the main injection while I was on



board. Don't know if it was eventually painted over. When CDR Weise came aboard, he wanted it painted over, but CAPT Cramer stopped that idea. Don't know how much longer it lasted." If you know, help us tell Tony about Oscar's fishy fate. More questions: Is a seven-leg octopus an octopus or a septipus? Inquiring minds want to know!

# PYRO PEOPLE

Updates on shipmates and their families

## The Lamach legacy: Vet's daughters donate framed AE-1 watercolor

Joseph Lamach served on AE-1 as a metal smith and played on the 'famous' R Division basketball team. In his spare time, he transformed shell casings and scrap metal into decorative objects — including a frame for the much-loved watercolor of AE-1.



His daughter, Linda Lamach, a retired Navy AZC (AW) writes of his life after the Pyro:

*"After getting out of the Navy after WWII dad returned to Montana and went to work with his brothers in their auto repair shop. He later met and married my mother, Alice Sevier Lamach. He loved to tell the story of how he and some friends went into the restaurant where Mom worked in the family business. Mom walked up to him and wanted to know his name.*

*When he asked why, she told him she wanted to know what her name was going to be. They married and moved to Missoula, Montana, where he worked in the sheet metal field. Alice had a daughter Nancy and then they had Kathy and me. After several years Dad decided that he needed to find better fields of work and we did a lot of traveling until we finally ended up in Kennewick Washington. During that time dad worked on the dam above Libby Montana, he worked in Moses Lake, Washington on some project (he had to work as an apprentice because they wouldn't accept his previous work), then he worked on the Nuclear Power Plants in Richland, Washington, where he finally retired. Dad developed Parkinson's disease which caused numerous other problems. He died at the VA Hospital in Seattle, WA, two days after his 81st birthday. I still miss his wisdom and guidance. Dad never talked too much about the war, but he would pull out the box he had of coins he had collected from places he had been and show them to us. He used to tell us that he didn't really like to drink so he would be the one to make sure his buddies got back to the ship. He had made a camera and we have pictures of some of the places he was. Cameras weren't allowed on board I guess at that time."*

Chief Linda Lamach (L), who served at Naval Air Stations in Detroit, Alameda during the big quake, Widbey Island, North Island and a staff job in New Orleans before her retirement in 2005 and a contractor job at NAS Fallon, NV. Her sister, Kathy Weatherly (R), owns a company that produces medical garments used to reduce lymphadema and promote healing after surgeries in West Allis, WI. In 2008, they



decided to donate the exquisitely framed watercolor to the association in their father's memory.



**Joe Lamach 's AE-1 shipmates Howard Iverson, Bob Mahan, Ed Stone, Bob Hauge, Joe Nalle, Joe Patsch and Murray Brown with the framed watercolor in Dubuque.**



**More about the R Division Basketball Team:** This photo depicts the 'famous' R Division basketball team that CHALLENGED the USS Pyro AE-1 Officers All College Stars Team in the PI during WW2. Front Row [left to right] Floyd Tungsvig, Tom McMahan, Joe Lamach, next person UNK. Back Row [left to right] Leroy Hammeke, John Sales, Bob Hauge, Carl Harms, next two persons UNK. Please notice the skivvy shirt IDs, Sam Souvenir Shop, which makes a great story: AE-1 Capt. Sam Reffile [spelling dubious] assigned Joe Lamach to make bolo knives from steel files while the CO's Philippine stewards made bolo knife sheaves which the CO then presented t to various senior navy officers stating that they were recovered from various Islands during WW 2. Note: I wore a blank skive shirt during this picture but, the most 'famous' photo of me posed with the famous lettering my stance was mimicking the manner in which the CO always

posed. Well, this particular picture was posted in the GE DUNK location. During CO's lower deck inspection after WW2, I was decked out in the ID skive shirt and posing Sam style. I was the ONLY remaining member still aboard so, natch, every one on the ship heard about this, but the CO never said a word! Incidentally, the officers barely defeated us 112-12 and all the time we thought the ID shirt would DEMORALILZE them. Shucks, it never worked, but they did manage to smile. Somehow, the CO favored my presence as when I was transferred off the ship: He ordered his gig to get me "the hell off his ship." – *Bob Hauge*

USS PYRO Scuttlebutt

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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:**

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