

Summer 2009

Published by
The USS PYRO
Association

Contacts

Editorial:

Jared Cameron
3808 Brighton Ct.
Alexandria, VA 22395
scuttlebutt@ae-24.org

Membership/Circulation

Doug Wisher
1022 Winding Way
Covington, KY 41011
wisherdj@fuse.net

Money Matters

Tom Sanborn
114 Long Point Drive
St. Simons Island, GA 31522
v8hotrod@bellsouth.net

Web site

www.usspyro.com

FLASH!

Reunion 2010

Plan now to attend the

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN
HIGH**

'Y'all come!'



**Ruby and Gary Jaeger,
2010 reunion co-chairs**

**COLORADO SPRINGS, CO
WORLD ARENA HOTEL**

**Save the dates!
MAY 12-16, 2010***

- Great hotel — \$100 rooms.
- Air Force Academy memorial service*
- Pikes Peak tour
- Great Pyro people!

* All arrangements still pending formal agreement.



USS PYRO Scuttlebutt



Blast in the desert is no dud!



Maybe it was the inexpensive rooms. Or the penny slots. Or reunion chairman Bob Smith's repeated, above-and-beyond-the-call-of-duty trips to Reno to check out the, ah, facilities.

Or perhaps it was the chance to meet old shipmates and new friends or the opportunity to roast Tom Sanborn for \$10 a shot.



WHAT HAPPENS IN RENO STAYS IN RENO. NOT! (Top left) Bob Hauge contributes to the treasury while C. Ray Nichols waits his turn; (Top right) Bob Smiley gets amorous; (Bottom left) Helen Golay gets down. (Bottom right) Myra Eckstine gets lucky.

But regardless of the reasons, the Reno reunion was, well, a blast! Some 80 sailors, spouse and friends attended some part of the gathering, which included tours of Reno and Virginia City, a memorial service at the famous Boot Hill Cemetery, provocative and profitable entertainment, cheap drinks — and did we mention penny slots?

Better yet, the Sanborn Roast, Al Hansen's wine auction, quilts created by Patricia Michael and auctioned to benefit the association, plus an entertainer willing to collect cash contributions to the association in her bodice added up to an in-the-black treasury for the foreseeable future.

See the reunion photos inside on page seven and in the upcoming reunion memory book, which — when the editor gets off the dime — that will be available on the Internet to all and on disk to all reunion attendees and association members who request it.

PYRO PEOPLE

ON THE MEND

Karen Shepline. Proving that females are the strongest — as well as the deadliest — members of any species, Karen has successfully undergone a rigorous regime of chemotherapy. While not yet up to waiting on husband Larry hand and foot, she is



rapidly returning to her vigorous, personable and always plucky self.

Doug Wisher. Both the association's superb secretary (left) and his formerly faithful camera (right) took a figurative fall at the Reno reunion: Doug and Linda's camera headed south sometime after the Virginia City tour. And a hiatal hernia prevented Doug from attending the awards banquet. After returning home, Doug underwent surgery and 'is recovering nicely' under the tender, loving care of Nurse Linda, but, sadly, 'not ready to eat a big steak yet.' The prognosis for the camera is unknown. "Getting old ain't for the faint-hearted," says Doug.



Tom Palmer. As an erstwhile enlisted 'scope dope,' officer and California educator. Tom has a almost unlimited supply of excuses for not attending Pyro reunions. New for 2009: An abdominal



hernia that required surgery timed to coincide with the Pyro reunion and Magellan's scheduled dance lessons from Helen Golay. Tom (shown with grandson Emil) has recovered from the successful surgery and is now back to being a full-time cool California dude and grandfather.

Gary Michael. Best known as the husband of Patricia, whose quilting ability played a big part



in putting the association's finances in the black, and father-in-law of Lisa, who produces and mails the quarterly *Scuttlebutt*, Gary (shown delivering the snipe salute in Reno) is

recovering from a bout with skin cancer. He reports that doctors seem to have gotten all the cancer and that he has escaped the worst side-effects of radiation treatments.

Rita Tully is now entering her final round of chemotherapy for oral lymphoma that was diagnosed earlier this year and kept the Tullys from the Reno reunion as well as a planned Alaska cruise. Despite tonsorial troubles and other side effects of the treatment, Rita — another plucky one — is of good spirits and determined to get back to the full-time job of keeping husband Rick (shown above in the driver's seat) in line.



Welcome to new members

LTM William Peregrin
LTM Capt. George McMichael

Tom Morris
Mike Morris

Reno heros and 'sheros'



USS PYRO ASSOCIATION

Officers

President

Jared Cameron

Vice President

Billy L. Eckstine

Second Vice President

Tom Palmer

Secretary

Douglas Wisher

Treasurer

Tom Sanborn

Appointed Officers

Scuttlebutt Editor

Jared Cameron

Chaplain

Vance Worrell

MAA

Jasper Strunk

Historian

Robert J. Smith

Nominating
Committee

Gary Golay

Jasper Strunk

From the president's desk

By Jared Cameron

The recipe for a post-reunion *Scuttlebutt* issue should be easy to follow: Gently stir in photos of frolicking Pyro people, add appropriate shots of the memorial service. Cut in dance-floor antics. Season liberally with the obligatory annual goofy photos of Larry Sheipline and John Wichtrich. Announce the next reunion site with appropriate fanfare. Send the entire opus off to our crackerjack editing team and mail.

This year, the recipe wasn't quite that easy to follow. Photographer *par excellence* Doug Wisher's camera died, and many indoor photos shot at the hotel came back with a yellowish tinge that took all your editor's Photoshop skills to ameliorate. And neither member of the Sheipline/Wichtrich dynamic duo was able to join the festivities in Reno. Talk of a major slowdown in the travel industry notwithstanding, until Gary and Ruby Jaeger pulled an outstanding deal for Colorado Springs out of their hat this week, concrete offers from proposed reunion sites came in late, high or not at all. But all things come to those who wait and — with apologies to those who noted and commented on the *Scuttlebutt's* tardiness — here it is.

Post reunion difficulties aside, it was an outstanding event. And like all great ones, it wouldn't have reached new heights without the dedicated work of many Pyro people. Thanking all the folks who made this gathering a success is, thankfully, a thankless task, but here are just a few of the stars that added firepower to A Blast in the Desert:

Start with Betty and Bob Smith. With the same care Gunner Bob exerted as AE-24 cargo officer and underway OOD, they made a list, checked it twice and made sure every arrangement went off like clockwork. Bravo Zulu, Bob and Betty!

Special thanks go out to Pat Michael, Al Hansen and all the folks who contributed goods and services to the banquet auction. Pat spent countless hours creating beautiful quilts. Proceeds from their sale blackened the red ink in the association budget. Along with dragooning Pyro plank holder pals into attending the reunion, winemaker Al contributed Cabernet from the Hansen Vineyards that added significant cash to our coffers. And we are grateful to Bill Hogan, the Hiatts and all the shipmates who bid and won artwork and vintages.

I suppose we should also thank Tom Sanborn for being an excellent 'roastee,' accepting with somewhat good grace, octopuses on his head, letters that may or may not actually have been from his idol, Hillary Clinton, a dissection of his piloting skills and his alleged penchant for wearing feminine foundation garments. Then again, Tom loved every minute of it — along with the budget balancing that came with \$10 an insult.

Regulars, new faces, old friends all helped make the Reno reunion memorable. Tho it's unfair to mention some without naming all, I invoke presidential privilege to mention as few not noted elsewhere: Marge Knapp, whose welcome attendance after the death of Bob Mahan emphasizes the continuity the Pyro family; Jim Delaney, Pyro's only known Olympian (he won silver at the '48 games) and wife Mary Lou; AE-1's Don Green; Terry (Bad-as-Cameron) Kimzey; Oscar the Octopus artist Bill Peregrin; man of mystery Bob White; Bailey George; Motorcycle Mama Marian Pearson and her sister, Susie Kinder, who both had the good sense to marry Pyro sailors; the Hunters; the always good-humored Jasper and Lavonne Strunk; the Sullivans and McClurgs; the irrepressible Ed Stone and Bob Hauge... the list goes on and on, but this page doesn't...

On to the future: Keep an eye out for the next (and less tardy) *Scuttlebutt* for details on the 2010 Rocky Mountain High Colorado Springs reunion.

Remembering fallen shipmates

Former AE-24 skipper (71-72) **Capt. Donald B. Wikeen** died April 18 in South Carolina. He was 81.

Before he was stricken by the physical and mental ravages of age, Don Wikeen was an enthusiastic participant in association activities, a reunion chairman and association president from 1997-98. His last reunion was in San Diego; his first was at Dubuque 1985. He was the very first AE 24 shipmate to attend a USS Pyro reunion, leading to the joining of AE-24 sailors into the originally all-AE-1 group.

A 1950 graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Don's Navy career involved surface ships, submarines, staff assignments and mine warfare.

His first sea assignment was on the USS Mazama (AE-9).

Subsequently, he was graduated from submarine school and served on the USS Cusk and Torsk. It was during this era that Don developed a lasting relationship with the USS Blueback (SS-581): He was on that boat's pre-commissioning detail in 1960, returned as operations officer, executive officer and, finally, commanding officer. (After Capt. Wikeen's time, the Blueback, the last non-nuclear sub built by the U.S. Navy, appeared in *The Hunt for Red October*.)

Capt. Wikeen's staff assignments included stints as commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet Training Command; Commander Service Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet; Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet; and a tour on the staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Prior to his retirement, he served as Commander,



Fleet & Mine Warfare Training Center and Chief of Staff, Mine Warfare Command in Charleston, SC, where he subsequently retired.

He was graduated from the Naval War College and earned a MA in Education from the University of Hawaii in 1979.

Capt. Wikeen is survived by his daughter, Amanda.

But the beginning and end of Don's Pyro tenure were less than smooth, according to Gunner Bob Smith, who served as cargo officer of AE-24 under Capt. Wikeen.

"Out of the many, many change of commands I witnessed over a 30 year Naval career, D.B. Wikeen was unique in that he relieved Capt Evans at sea in rough weather enroute to Hong Kong during fall of 1970 and was relieved by Cdr. Bill Swan in inclement weather anchored in Sasebo, Japan. We were finally given permission to send the Captain's Gig to port with him. No other launches were made and we got underway."



Smith remembers the skipper as "honest, open for opinions-good or bad — and usually made the right decisions based on a lot of thought."

One of those 'right decisions' may *not* have been certifying Smith as underway OOD:

"Several of us wardroom officers were sharing a few drinks in his BOQ room in Sasebo on his first deployment," Bob recalls, "and he asked me if I felt I was ready to become OOD underway. 'Well of course I slurred.'

"At 0600 next morning the sea detail messenger is interrupting my breakfast with 'the Captain wishes your presence on the bridge.'

"Up I go and he said, 'Gunner, you are taking her out, don't screw up!'"

"That afternoon a service jacket entry 'qualified as OOD Underway' appeared with a note saying 'you got the mid-watch, Congratulations!'"

Bob Hauge adds: "Farewell. Don, your shipmates, daughter and granddaughter will always miss your presence. God's speed Captain Donald Wikeen, father, grandfather, officer and gentleman! Rest in peace forever more!.

Honored at Boot Hill Memorial Ceremony

LCDR (Ret.) John R Christopher, SR.

Jean Patsch

Marianne Sanborn

Capt. Donald B. Wikeen

Harold Max Summers

Freddie Wills

Harold Gilliatt (2006)

Allisin D. Deal (2006)

Warren Crosland (2001)

Ralph Thompsen

Remembering fallen shipmates

Friend, shipmate and American hero **Joe Pearson** went down to the sea in a ship for the last time when his ashes were scattered from the destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) with full military honors on June 7, the day after the 65th anniversary of his first visit to Normandy on D-Day 1944.

Chief Pearson (shown below with wife Maggie at the Branson reunion) died peacefully in his sleep of kidney failure on May 4.



The highly decorated chief will be honored at the association's 2010 memorial service.

Joe joined the US Navy in 1942 at age 18. He served in various campaigns in WWII including

North Africa, Sicily, Italy and the D-Day landings in Normandy. He went on to the Pacific to serve in the occupation of Japan, and in 1946 Joe served on the Flagship for "Operation Crossroads" atom bomb tests on Bikini Atoll, Marshall Islands.

In 1950 Joe went on to serve in the Korean conflict aboard a re-armament ship before returning to a Naval Training centre in Maryland as an Instructor in communications before finally retiring from the military at the rank of Chief Petty Officer in 1962. He served on the AE-24 from 1959 until 1962. The following article from the 501st Support Wing newspaper describes his life and times:

ROYAL AIR FORCE MOLESWORTH & ROYAL AIR FORCE ALCONBURY, England -- The old Chief beamed as young JAC Petty Officer Nicole Reddick told him "Chief, you are the saltiest salt I've ever met." When asked what was his favorite port of call during his many years at sea, Chief Pearson replied with a wink: "The last one and the one that we go to next."

Chief Radioman Joseph Pearson, U.S. Navy, landed under enemy fire on Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944, aboard Landing Ship (Tank) 306. After landing troops, his ship retrieved British and American wounded and returned them to



England. He retired from the Navy in May 1962 after

completing 20 years of honorable Naval service. He married his British wife Maggie and settled down in the UK.

About ten years ago, a JAC Navy Chief noticed an older man standing outside the Base Exchange at RAF Lakenheath with the distinctive belt buckle of a Navy Chief. He went up to the man and addressed him as "Chief." The surprised Chief Pearson said it had been many, many years since anyone had called him that.

Thus began a lasting bond between a generation of JAC sailors and Chief Joe Pearson. The Chief was invited to Navy events and even bought a new uniform to wear at JAC Navy Balls. He counseled new Chiefs during their initiation and told amazing sea stories to young sailors.



Chief Pearson (R) at the 2008 dedication the U.S. Navy Memorial at Utah Beach.

Chief Pearson passed away recently at the age of 85. JAC Commander, Marine Corps Colonel Peter H. Devlin, JAC Deputy Commander Navy Captain Henry J. "Harry" Babin, and JAC Senior Enlisted Leader Navy Master Chief John C. Frakes led JAC Chiefs and sailors at services for Chief Pearson.

The Chief's ashes were released into the sea off Normandy, France, per his wishes by the destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) on 7 June, the day after the 65th anniversary of his first visit to Normandy on D-Day 1944. Navy Commander Mike Feyedelem, CO of the Porter, wrote to Master Chief Frakes: "It was an honor to do this for Chief Pearson and his family. We rehearsed and pushed hard to get it done Sunday so it was as close to France as possible."

Chief Radioman Joe Pearson, United States Navy (Retired), will be sorely missed.

The CPO Joe Pearson Memorial Website is located at:

<http://memorialwebsites.legacy.com/cpojosephpearson/homepage.aspx>.

Remembering fallen shipmates

Cmdr. Sidney 'Sai' Manning, AE-24 CO from 1980-1982 passed away July 6 at the age of 87.

According to Capt. Joe Felty, who was Sai Manning's executive officer:

"He was truly one of the most impressive leaders in the Navy with a history of over 40 years of service.



When I was XO on Pyro, he was my second Commanding Officer and a true "sea daddy", leader and confidant.

"I will always remember this fine gentleman as many of you also mourn his passing."

Family and friends gathered together to honor the memory of legendary submarine veteran Cmdr. Sidney "Sai" Manning at a memorial service held at the Bowfin Submarine Museum and Park Tuesday, August 18.

He enlisted in the Navy in 1940 and would complete 42 years of honorable service first as an enlisted sailor and later as a commissioned officer. Even after his retirement in 1982, Manning remained a constant presence in the maritime community and Submarine Veterans Association.

"Sai", as he was known to friends and family, began his career at the Destroyer Base in San Diego and would first serve at sea on board the cargo ship SS Makiki in January 1942.

Manning volunteered for submarine service and graduated submarine school in 1943. His first submarine tour was on board USS S-12 (SS-117) where he officially qualified in submarines. His enlisted career would eventually take him to six different submarines including USS Icefish (SS-367), USS Devilfish (SS-292), USS Becuna (SS-319), USS Perch (APSS-313) and USS Cabezon (SS-334).

In 1958, he became one of the first Master Chief Radioman (RMCM) in the Navy upon the rank's official creation. Promoted from E-7 to the newly created rank of E-9, Manning skipped E-8 entirely.

Following a tour at the Naval Training Center in San

Diego, Manning received his commission in 1960. He would serve the rest of his career as an officer, including tours on board USS Nereus (AS-17), USS Proteus (AS-19), USS Vernon County (LST-1161), USS Deliver (ARS-23) and as commanding officer of USS Pyro (AE-24) during the Vietnam War. Manning would also hold several important staff and support positions including Staff, Naval Advisory Group Republic of Vietnam; Staff, Commander Eleventh Naval District, Service Group One Detachment in San Diego; Commander Service Squadron One; and Commander, Military Sealift Command Office in Alaska.

Well known and respected for his technical expertise, Manning was famous for his dedication to perfection and can-do attitude. His time in service would span three major wars (WWII, Korea and Vietnam) and take him to duty stations around the world including San Diego, Newport, Vietnam, Alaska, Hawaii and many more. Manning himself described what he believed made him a good leader in an article published in 2007.

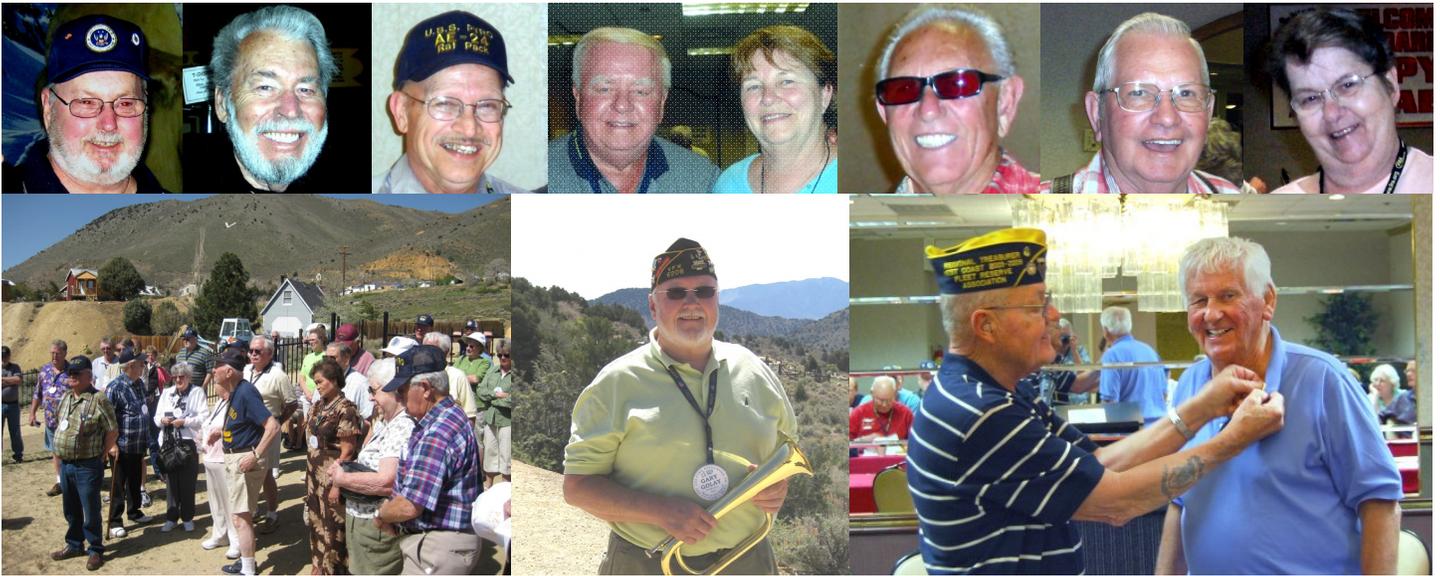
"I grew up with young sailors, lived with them, fought wars with them and I know how they think. I know how to anticipate their needs. I know where they want to go, and I think I know what's best for them. I believe they relate to me as well as I do to them.

"For those who don't, and there are some on every ship, you do the best with them that you can. I'm the guy who's judge and jury and father confessor."

In accordance with his wishes, Manning's remains are set to be scattered in the Pacific near Pearl Harbor. He is survived by his wife, Nadine; son, Anson; daughters Barbara and Debbie; brother Tommy; sister Lowena; and many grandchildren.



Reno memories



The crew assembles at Boot Hill to honor departed shipmates; Boogie-woogie bugler boy Gary Golay prepares to play Taps; Bob Smith pins a 30-year Fleet Reserve Association pin on Bob Hauge.



The Greatest Generation: Joe Nalle, Donald Greene, Bob Hauge, Elle Fricke, Ed Stone and Marge Knapp; Roasted Treasurer Tom with an octopus on his head; Sieverin, Moulton, Smiley and Nichol.



'Attack Democrat' Scanlan dines with Golay; Butch Barrett and (once) Wee Willy Peregrin lock and load; Gary Holmes ventures a smile whilst Patsy and Terry Kimzey pose American Gothic style.



USS PYRO Scuttlebutt

USS PYRO ASSOCIATION
Douglas Wisher, secretary
1022 Winding Way
Covington, KY 41011

Email:
wisherdj@fuse.net



*** THE PRIDE AND TRADITION FOREVER ***

We're on the Web
www.usspyro.com



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