

BIG BENN

FALL
WINTER
2013

REUNIONS...

2013 Long Beach, CA

Our 25th Annual Reunion is now past, but being in Long Beach and on the Queen Mary was definitely one of the highlights of the reunion. In and around the great Long Beach area there were many things to do and see and of course we had a great group of shipmates, family, and friends in attendance.

Total Shipmates registered for the reunion was 120
Shipmates coming to their first reunion who were registered was 35

2014 Gatlinburg, TN September 24—27, 2014

THE EDGEWATER HOTEL
402 River Road, Gatlinburg, TN

865-436-4151 or 800-423-9482
www.edgewater-hotel.com

Room rate is \$99 per night (plus 12.75 tax)

2015 Pensacola, FL

Dates and Hotel
will be
announced
next year.

*Shipmates, Families,
and Friends*

*We hope you have a
happy and healthy
holiday season
and new year!*



Vermont Veterans Home Recognizes BENNINGTON P.A.C.T.

16 August 2013



On the afternoon of 16 August, four of the six members of the USS Bennington PACT (LT Mike Ponto, FTG2 Tom Ganse, SK3 Joe Pires and ABEAN Al Becker) once again provided a picnic for all veterans at the Veterans Home in Bennington, VT. They also presented a \$350.00 check to the Veterans Home Administrator, Melissa Jackson, for the Members Assistance Fund. That fund is utilized for assisting the veterans in their personal needs.

During the event, Army Colonel (Ret.) Joseph Krawczyk (President, Board of Directors), Marine Corps Colonel (Ret.) Al Faxon (Assistant Administrator) and Vermont State Republican Representative, Mary Morrissey asked that the four members of the Bennington PACT to please stand and be recognized. Colonel Krawczyk then presented each of them with a challenge coin stating, "For your personal dedication, teamwork, serving our veterans here at the Veterans Home in Bennington, and for fulfilling your promise in so many ways, to make a difference, I'm honored to present you sailors with this challenge coin for remembering our veterans". Once the presentation was over, the PACT members headed to the rooms of the veterans, to engage in conversation with fellow veterans (male & female) from all branches of the military.



Each year in August, this group heads to Bennington, VT to participate in some local activities during Bennington Battle Day Weekend Festivities. Fridays of that week are for feeding the vets. On Saturday afternoon a memorial wreath laying ceremony for our recently departed shipmates, Marines and airmen is held at the Ship's Bell Monument and on Sunday, this group participates in the Bennington Battle Day Parade (in their Navy White Uniforms). After the parade, the VFW Post in Bennington hosts a luncheon for those who participated.

It's a wonderful time of the year to be in Bennington and the Town has taken an interest in our recent activities. If you are interested in hearing more about these activities or have ideas to improve on what we have been doing, please contact either PACT Chairman, Tom Ganse or USS Bennington Historian, Joe Pires.

Tom Ganse: Tomganse@comcast.net

Joe Pires: Jkpires@atmc.net

The Bennington Exchange Store

Ready for your business! You can see many items from the Store inventory on our website.
uss-bennington.org

If you have any questions about any items, colors, or sizes or would like to purchase some of the items contact Allan and Audrey Zerfas by email, phone, or mail.

Email: azerfas@verizon.net
Phone: 941-756-7227
Address: 4806 76th Court E



The Bennington Exchange has some NEW items. These shirts are in youth sizes and a choice of pink or brown.
S, M, L, XL



The Bennington Exchange has some items that will be discontinued. These items have limited sizes.

Sweatshirts – Gray with logo on front
8 in S, 17 in M, 8 in L, 3 in XL, 9 in XXL
Now \$15

Sweatshirts – Black with logo on front
8 in M, 4 in L
Now \$15

Sweatshirts – Navy with logo on front
3 in XXXL
Now \$15

Zipped Jacket – Navy with logo on front and back
7 in S, 8 in M, 1 in L
Now \$30

Zipped Jacket – Black (tan collar) with logo on front
2 in XXL
Now \$30

2013 Reunion T-Shirts
4 in S, 6 in M, 3 in L, 3 in XL, 2 in XXL
\$10



2013 Reunion Tote Bags - 14
\$15

Association Membership Dues



**As a reminder to all, 2014 dues are owed as of September 1, 2013.
Please make the \$10 check payable to: USS Bennington Association, Inc.
Mail to: Mike Ponto, 134 Sheraton Road, Syracuse, NY 13219.**

For those members that have paid 2014 dues, we thank-you! For members that have not yet paid, please mail your check to Mike and he will send your membership card to you.

All dues money collected is used toward our annual reunions, mailings and other expenses. Unfortunately, because of the high cost of printing and mailing, unless your dues are current, we will not be able to mail the newsletters to you in the future. We urge you to send in your dues and update your information if there have been recent changes.

Membership is open to all that served on the USS BENNINGTON in a permanent or temporary status, whether Ship's Company, Air Group or Marine Detachment. Members in good standing in the Association are required to pay dues annually but no later than the next reunion meeting. The membership year begins on September 1st and ends August 31st of each year. Payment of overdue membership dues will reinstate that member as a Member in good standing in the Association. Members in good standing have full voting rights at the business meetings and will be on the active mailing list for Reunion forms and Newsletters.

During our last business meeting in Long Beach, CA reunion it was decided that the dues would be increased to \$25 per year. The membership dues amount will be changed as of September 1, 2014.



★ 2013 USS Bennington Scholarship ★

★ On June 12, 2013, LT Mike Ponto and FTG2 Tom Ganse presented the Annual USS Bennington Association \$500.00 Scholarship to Lynden Dufour-Dean. Ms. Dufour-Dean graduated from Mount Anthony Union High School in Bennington, VT. She is a student at Coastal Carolina University in Myrtle Beach, SC. ★





Treasurer's Report
USS BENNINGTON ASSOCIATION, INC.
Income and Expenses
09/01/2012 – 08/31/2013(final)

BEGINNING BALANCE **23509.20**

General Donations	300.00
Association Membership Dues	2070.00
Bennington Exchange Store	1480.30
2012 Reunion Funds	2220.55

TOTAL BEGINNING BALANCE and INCOME **29580.05**

EXPENSES

09/11/2012	2012 Reunion T-Shirts	674.93
09/11/2012	USS Bennington License Plates for Store	210.00
09/13/2012	2012 Reunion Hosts and Speaker Plaques	363.27
10/04/2012	Order from store for honorary member	22.80
10/10/2012	Donation to Wounded Warrior Project	500.00
10/20/2012	USPS for stamps	45.00
11/03/2012	Production of Cruise Book CDs for store (Whittaker)	115.50
11/15/2012	USPS for postage	1.95
11/28/2012	Fall Newsletter printing/mailing (Weers)	488.78
02/08/2013	Accountant/Tax Return	350.00
04/12/2013	Web Hosting Fee (2 years) (Whittaker)	164.47
06/03/2013	FTD Florist for Marge Britt flowers (Copeland)	38.85
06/03/2013	USPS for stamps	48.00
06/03/2013	Quill – Laser Printer Drum	55.07
06/07/2013	Production of Cruise Book CDs for store (Whittaker)	207.50
06/12/2013	2013 Scholarship - Mt Anthony High School	500.00
06/14/2013	2013 Liability Insurance	547.00
07/08/2012	Remote access software renewal	75.55
07/09/2013	Balance due for 2012 Reunion (Moade)	1476.61
07/11/2013	Rhode Island Memorial Wreath (McGowen)	69.55
08/15/2013	Bennington Battle Days Memorial Wreath (Ponto)	106.00

TOTAL EXPENSES **7402.30**

ENDING BALANCE **22177.75**

2013 Long Beach Reunion Balance Sheet

Income		Expense	
Hospitality Room Money from Association	730.00	Hospitality Room	1722.82
	1000.00		75.30
Hotel deposit from Association	500.00	Hotel Expenses	500.00
Registration Fees from AFRI (\$3 per attendee) total attendees = 238	714.00	Registration Forms (printed and mailed by AFRI 336 x \$1.25)	420.00
50/50	384.00	Banquet meals for Color Guard and Photographer	245.00
Raffle/Auction	753.00	Fee for Banquet Speaker	150.00
Bar Tips	318.00	Business meeting microphone rental fee	33.25
Registration Fee Refunds \$3 for 9 attendees	-27.00	Pins/charms	485.14
Balance of Hospitality Room Money to Association	386.37	Tote bags	1351.00
Total Income	4758.37	Total Expenses	4982.51
Total income minus total expenses		-224.14	
Association Income at Reunion			
Membership Dues	1070.00	Gift Certificate Raffle	290.00
Bennington Exchange Store Income at Reunion			
756.10			

Advertise! Advertise! Advertise!

Looking for more shipmates is always important.
Remember to wear your USS Bennington hats, jackets, shirts, etc.
You never know who might see you.

When you find someone new be sure to tell them about
our association, website, and reunions.

Secretary's Report - Long Beach, CA 2013

Our annual business meeting of the USS Bennington Association was held at 0900 Sept 28 2013 onboard the Queen Mary at Long Beach California.

President Copeland called the meeting to order and asked all WWII veterans to please stand and be acknowledged. President Copeland asked all first timers to stand and be acknowledged. President Copeland then asked for a moment of silence for our departed comrades.

President Copeland then called on Vice President Ralph Clark.

Vice President Clark gave greetings from some shipmates that were unable to be here, Mr. & Mrs. Peckson, Phyllis Easley and Patsy Quinn. He also announced that the ship's store would be closing at 1pm today and will not reopen. Vice President Clark asked that all print legibly on the photo cards and photos would be taken from 4 to 6 pm with group photos taken after the banquet. He also welcomed all first-timers. Vice President Clark also asked everyone to wear their Bennington caps and jackets whenever you can so we can get new members, advertise, and advertise!

President Copeland then called on Secretary Loren Weers for his report.

Secretary Weers read the minutes of the St Louis reunion. Secretary Weers then read some correspondence received in the last year including a letter with a USS Bennington patch received from a USCG RM2 who got it at Gitmo in 1964. Another from Jack Capp YNC and another from John McCoy's son with citation issued for heroism during the explosion at Newport RI in 1954. Secretary Weers also received copies of a letter from Ernie Davis to his pilots' parents in 1945, and a letter from the attorney for Donald Stevens' estate with a check for \$300 for the USS Bennington Association. All these correspondence and patch were forwarded to Joe Pires our Historian for inclusion in the Bennington memorabilia. Motion was made and seconded to accept the Secretary's report.

President Copeland then called on our Treasurer Mike Ponto for his report.

Treasurer Ponto read his report and also reported that \$1480 was from the Bennington Exchange run by Allan and Audrey Zervas. Treasurer Ponto stated that our \$1M insurance policy excludes the serving of alcohol which is one of the reasons the board has decided to have staff bartenders provided by the venue from now on. We purchased a wreath for the Bennington Memorial at Newport twice a year, Memorial Day and Veterans Day and a wreath at Bennington Battle Days every year. Motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's report.

Treasurer Ponto advised that the board has recommended the dues be raised to \$25 per year to keep our organization self-supporting. After a lengthy discussion the motion was made and seconded to raise the dues and change the by-laws to show the dues at \$25.

Bill Coughlin made a motion that the By-Laws be accessible to the membership. Bill was advised the By-Laws are on the website and will be updated and for anyone who does not have computer access they could contact Treasurer Ponto and he would mail a copy to them.

Lifetime membership was discussed and after much discussion it was decided that a person could pay their dues in advance, but we will continue with no lifetime option at this time.

The group breakfast before the business meeting was brought up for discussion including the cost and after much discussion the motion was made by Doug Madison and seconded to eliminate the breakfast and start the business meeting at 10 am giving everyone time to have breakfast on their own,

(secretary's report continues...)

Bill Coughlin asked about the perks received from the hotel and was advised the free rooms went to the hosts and our photographer and the upgrades went to the Association and Auxiliary board members and WWII veteran.

President Copeland advised the membership of the election of the following offices: Vice President, Secretary and General Director #1. There were no nominations from the floor so Treasurer Ponto was asked to cast the one vote for the incumbents to continue in those positions, Vice President Ralph Clark, Secretary Loren Weers and General Director (#1) Doug Corrao.

President Copeland thanked Bob Holmes and Chief Rich Johnson for all their work putting the Long Beach reunion.

President Copeland called on Bob Shurmer to give a run-down on the upcoming reunion in Gatlinburg.

President Copeland asked for any suggestions for our 2015 reunion. Mike Ponto suggested Annapolis, MD; Loren Weers gave a presentation from Marv & Bobbi Itzen for Omaha, NE; Steve Leeds suggested Pensacola, FL; Rich & Etta May Boyd suggested Richmond, VA; and Boston, MA was also suggested. After a run-off Pensacola, FL was chosen for our 2015 reunion.

Treasurer Ponto held a drawing for \$50 gift certificates for the Bennington Exchange. The winners were: George DeJong, Mac Smith, Loren Weers, Tom Christenson and Roger Copt. The certificates were donated by Alan & Audrey Zervas and the Association earned \$300 from the sales for this raffle.

Don Miller presented seven framed pictures of the Newport RI Memorial to the Association. These were forwarded to Joe Pires our Historian for inclusion in the Bennington memorabilia.

Vice President Clark issued a welcome back to George & Marge Britt.

With no further business, President Copeland closed the meeting.

The Big Benn is our newsletter and we are looking for your suggestions on articles for future newsletters.

If you would like to submit an interesting article with or without pictures for a future newsletter or would like to suggest a topic for an article, please contact the secretary.

Loren Weers
weerscv20@outlook.com
605-226-0298

MINI REUNIONS and LAUNCH LUNCHESES

**Florida Annual Launch Lunch
February 26, 2014
Bradenton, Florida**

**Contact: Allan and Audry Zervas
azerfas@verizon.net
941-756-7227**

**USS Bennington was launched on February 26, 1944
Let's celebrate!**

**OR Division - Annual Mini Reunion
March 29 - April 5, 2013
Mesa, Arizona**

**Westgate Painted Mountain Golf Resort
www.westgatedestinations.com**

**Contact: Mike Marshall
mllahsram@zoomtown.com
513-734-1912**

If you have a "mini reunion" planned in the future; we would be happy to add it to the next newsletter. Please contact the secretary -

**Loren Weers
weerscv20@outlook.com
605-226-0298**

USS BENNINGTON INFORMATION SURVEY REUNION 2013

22 surveys returned - 99 surveys not returned

CV-20 (1)	CVA-20 (7)	CVS-20 (13)	No Answer (1)
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How many USS Bennington reunions have you attended in the past?

Surveys with No Answer (0)

- 0 (2); 1 (1); 2 (2); 3 (3); 5 (2); 6 (1); 8 (1); 10 (2); 11(1); 15 (2); 16 (1); 17 (1); 18 (2); 19 (1)

What did you find MOST enjoyable and consider a MUST at all reunions?

Surveys with No Answer (2)

- Hospitality Room (9)
- Socializing with shipmates and guests (6)
- First timers (3)
- Military/Navy events (3)
- Tours (2)
- Restaurants in hotel (3)
- Being walking distance to restaurants, shops, attractions (1)
- Free or inexpensive transportation (1)

What new activities would you like included at our future reunions?

Surveys with No Answer (10)

- Keep current activities (4)
- Leave it up to the Host—they know the area (2)
- Shows/Dinner shows (2)
- Casinos (2)
- Better/More information about things to do on your own (2)
- Videos/Documentaries of USS Bennington or other Carriers (1)
- Games/Cards in Hospitality Room

(survey continues...)

What current activities would you like excluded from our future reunions?

Surveys with No Answer (16)

- **Expensive Tours (2)**
- **Watch amount of drinking (1)**
- **Too many tours—leave one day to do what you want (1)**
- **Expensive Breakfast before meeting (1)**
- **Scattered meeting locations (1)**

What can you think of that would make the reunions better?

Surveys with No Answer (5)

- **ADA accessibility for everything (2)**
- **Nothing (1)**
- **Coffee in the hospitality room (1)**
- **Keep the reunions to 3 days (1)**
- **More shipmates (1)**
- **More attendance (1)**
- **Keep cost down (1)**
- **Association running the reunion (1)**
- **Free Internet (1)**
- **Make Hosts more visible (1)**
- **President not visible (1)**
- **Hospitality Room larger (1)**
- **More signs for reunion information (1)**
- **More signs for directions (1)**
- **Flags on stage (1)**
- **Reasonable banquet meals, \$90 for 2 people is too much (1)**

Do you have any comments or suggestions for association and /or auxiliary board members?

Surveys with No Answer (10)

- **Speak clearly and enunciate (2)**
- **Board members need to learn how to run a meeting or step down. (2)**
- **During meetings side chatter at tables make it difficult to hear other speaking (1)**
- **Board need to be more identifiable (Hats, Badges, etc.) important for 1st timers. (1)**
- **Board members do not listen to the membership; they need to stop running things like they are the only ones that have a say. (1)**
- **Why did all association and auxiliary board members get upgrades rooms at this reunion except one. (1)**
- **All board members need to be more involved; seems like only a couple do most of the work. (1)**
- **Board members need to read and use Roberts Rule of Order. (1)**
- **When will the Board respond to the questions and concerns listed in surveys? (1)**

(survey continues...)

Do you have any comments or suggestions about the business meeting?

Surveys with No Answer (8)

- **Meeting is confusing, no order, no rules, total chaos. (4)**
- **Need to have more discipline and order. (2)**
- **Too much side talking (1)**
- **Keep short and to the point (1)**
- **The President need to read and use Roberts Rules of Order. (1)**
- **Discuss all changes at the meeting, rather than the Board making changes before. (1)**
- **All board members should have a chance to talk, not just the President. (1)**
- **Board meeting should be after the business meeting. (1)**
- **Meeting needs to be open and transparent. (1)**
- **Learn Roberts Rules of Order. (1)**
- **No one is running the meeting. (1)**
- **Stop having them; nothing but arguing. (1)**

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this year's registration before the reunion?

Surveys with No Answer (12)

- **Name Tags not complete (missing division, rank, years, etc.) or names not correct or spouse/guests not properly listed. (3)**
- **Planners did not work with the hosts and it showed (1)**
- **Planner was not available when needed. (1)**
- **Registration needs to open longer. (1)**
- **AFRI did not acknowledge the receipt of my registration form and I had to call to verify I was registered. (1)**

Do you have any comments or suggestions about this year's reunion registration process, going on tours, the breakfast, banquet, etc.?

Surveys with No Answer (6)

- **Registration desk issues (not open early enough on the first day, not open long enough, not open for hours listed). (7)**
- **Registration and Dues tables need to be in the same location; this year the dues table was difficult to find and location was not ADA accessible. (3)**
- **Name Tags not complete (missing division, rank, years, etc.) or names not correct or spouse/guests not properly listed. (2)**
- **Business meeting breakfast too expensive and too cold. (2)**
- **Meeting breakfast was eliminated during meeting. (1)**
- **Have banquet at outside locations (like VFW, American Legion, etc.) prices can be reasonable and enjoyable. (1)**
- **Everything needs to be ADA accessible. (1)**
- **Need a better and more visible liaison at reunion. (1)**
- **Hospitality Room, meeting rooms, store, and banquet rooms need to be closer. (1)**
- **Tours too short. (1)**
- **Get rid of AFRI (1)**
- **Get a new AFRI representative this one was useless. (1)**
- **Some people do all of the work and it isn't AFRI. (1)**

(survey continues...)

Is there anything you would like to comment on, anything about the reunions, our association or auxiliary?

Surveys with No Answer (8)

- **Name Tags not complete (missing division, rank, years, etc.) or names not correct or spouse/guests not properly listed. (3)**
- **Planner representative never around when needed (2)**
- **Since the planners are on a “trial basis”; AFRI needs to run the reunion the way the Bennington whole membership want it; not their way or the way the President wants. (2)**
- **Planner representative could not explain why name tags are not complete or correct. (1)**
- **Need a new planner representative (1)**
- **Need a planner representative who can show they care about us. (1)**
- **Committees do an excellent job. (1)**
- **What is the PACT? (1)**
- **From a co-host - things went smoothly. (1)**
- **Outside company seems too expensive. (1)**
- **Great reunion site; hard to imagine a better one. (1)**
- **More shipmates need to get involved and/or run for office. (1)**
- **Board members running unopposed is not the way to implement positive change. (1)**
- **Term limits need to be set for board members. (1)**
- **For those that donate their time and talents and money to the reunion; thank you. (1)**

To those of you, who took the time to fill out the “Survey Forms”, thank you. The comments received by you shall remain confidential as stated. I’m forever hopeful that the information received will be used to improve our Reunion Activities each year.

Your assistance and continued support is most appreciated.

*Fraternally yours,
Joseph L. Pires, USS Bennington Historian
694 Iredel Court, Calabash, NC 28467*

Association Board of Directors

<p>President Bill Copeland 813-395-8902 (Winter) 978- 807-5137 (Summer) bcopeland@uss-bennington.org</p>	<p>Vice-President Ralph Clark 530-693-4478 ruffralph1@hotmail.com</p>
<p>Secretary Loren Weers 605-226-0298 weerscvs20@outlook.com</p>	<p>Treasurer Mike Ponto 315-488-5754 mpono@uss-bennington.org</p>
<p>General Director #1 Doug Corrao 480-577-5523 dcorrao@cox.net</p>	<p>General Director #2 Moise Gonzales 210-639-4928 moisegonzales06@gmail.com</p>
<p>Master-At-Arms Ray Martinez 916-685-9596 rayldym@aol.com</p>	
<p>Historian Joe Pires 910-579-0923 jpires@uss-bennington.org</p>	<p>Webmaster Lonnie Whittaker 806-496-2250 lonnie@uss-bennington.org</p>
<p>Storekeeper Allan Zervas 941-756-7227 azerfas@verizon.net</p>	<p>Chaplin Bill Tinsley 618-285-6140 rqtins64@yahoo.com</p>