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Association



# USS PYRO Scuttlebutt



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## Nearly Six Decades Later, Pyro Returns to Norfolk



On July 24, 1959, Capt. Robert A. Patten received a silver cup presented to his ammunition ship USS Pyro during commissioning ceremonies at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Some 55 years later, four AE-24 plank owners joined more than 55 members AE-1 and AE-24 family members to raise not-necessarily silver cups at the 2014 Pyro reunion in Norfolk, Virginia.

With Ed Stone representing AE-1 in his inimitable style plus a generous mix of AE-24 regulars, a record number of first time reunion participants, representatives of the Pyro's first as well as (almost) final crews, a memorable memorial service aboard the USS Wisconsin; tours of Williamsburg and Jamestown; sailing off into the sunset — this time with spouses and adult beverages— on a harbor cruise; the awarding of four scholarships and a bang-up banquet, 2014 was a reunion to remember.

Read all about it and check out the photos beginning on Page 4.

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- ...And much more

# Uncle Pyro Needs You!

## 2014 Membership Drive

In these times of \$15 burgers and \$8 beers, a \$20 annual membership in the USS Pyro Association remains one of the best buys in town and a lifetime membership is even a better deal.

Not only do your dues help keep Pyro pride and traditions alive, but they also help support scholarships and other association good works.

Whether you served on AE-1 or AE-24, we need your help and your financial support to carry on with our mission.

If you haven't joined yet or have not yet paid your 2014 dues, please fill out the membership form on Page 16 and get you check in the mail now.

## Reunion 2015 Update

At the 2014 Pyro Association membership meeting in Norfolk, members expressed preference for three cities for consideration as site for the 2015 reunion: Lake Charles, LA; Branson, MO; and Nashville TN.

Learning quickly the perils of volunteering for anything, Albert and Sue Duplantis have been busily checking out venues in Lake Charles and say they are homing in on some attractive sites.

Meanwhile, Branson's convention bureau has mobilized to get nearly a dozen attractive proposals from hotels including the newly redecorated Lodge of the Ozarks, host hotel for our 2005 gathering.

Nashville? Well it seems *The Pyro Principles*, our need for reasonably priced rooms, permission to bring in our own adult beverages into the hospitality room and banquet facilities to accommodate the crew, are too much for the Volunteer State. Result: No bids from hotels to date.

Albert Duplantis vows to have a great program in place by the August 15 cutoff date and when Albert sets his mind to something, more likely than not it's going to happen.

Meanwhile, plans are in place to check out the current state of Branson facilities in early August (at no cost to the association).

Check the next *Scuttlebutt* for details on the location of the next reunion, hotels, memorial service venue, banquet arrangements as well as transportation and personal sightseeing options.

## Four 2014 USS Pyro Scholarships Awarded

Two previous scholarship winners and two new candidates, all with strong academic credentials and a bent toward employing their education to help others, have been selected as recipients of 2014 USS Pyro Scholarships.

The wherewithal to award four scholarships is available as a result of 'bare knuckles' fundraising by the scholarship committee led by John Wichtrich; the extraordinary generosity of Wichtrich, Frank Fanning, Bob Smiley and others who prefer anonymity; simply terrific crafts created by Lavonne Strunk, Linda Hyatt, Sharon Hamlin, Sally Nichols; contributors of Pyro memorabilia like Kimberly Box; the generosity of reunion attendees spurred by 2014

*(Continued on page 15)*

## Jack Patsch Passes



Jack Patsch passed away in early May a few days short of his 89th birthday after a series of heart attacks.

Her served as a coxswain on AE-1 from 1943-1946.

Charlene Iverson informed us of the sad event just before publication. A tribute will be included in the next *Scuttlebutt*

## Sick Call

*Wishes for a speedy recovery to Vance Worrell, who suffered a fall before the May reunion; Jasper and LaVonne Strunk; and Fred Hamlin.*



## From the President's Desk

**...in order to expand our mission critical good works, we'll need to expand income. A simple way to do that is to expand dues-paying membership — and we urge every Pyro sailor to sign up and to reach out to friends and shipmates.**

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### USS PYRO ASSOCIATION

#### Officers

*President*

Jared Cameron

*First Vice President*

Billy L. Eckstine

*Second Vice President*

Angel Otero

*Secretary*

Douglas Wisher

*Treasurer*

Bill Hogan

#### Appointed Officers

*Scuttlebutt Editor*

Jared Cameron

*Chaplain*

Vance Worrell

*MAA*

Jasper Strunk

*Membership Chair*

Kimberly Box

*Historian*

Tom Moulton

*Nominating  
Committee*

Gary Golay  
Jasper Strunk

The annual USS Pyro Association Membership Meeting provides a forum for Pyro people to chart the future of our group, provide guidance on the site of the following year's reunion, elect officers and honor those who have contributed to the association's achievements.

This year, an important part of the meeting was devoted to what the MBAs call 'strategic planning,' contemplating the future of our organization for the remainder of this second decade of the century.

The groups 'prime directive' is spelled out in the bylaws: "To promote and unite the fellowship of all personnel who served aboard the U.S. Navy ships named Pyro," to hand down Pyro lore and to maintain Pyro pride and tradition.

The broad sailing orders have been refined over the years and today's members support a 'tripod' strategy for fulfilling our mission. The three elements of the tripod are reunions, *Scuttlebutt* and scholarships.

Annual reunions lie at the heart of the mission. It's hard to think of a better way to renew decades-old friendships, honor deceased Pyro family members and share sea stories than in person at reunions surrounded by shipmates, spouses and offspring over a cool brew. Pyro reunions are great parties, too! Need proof? That contention is dramatically proven by the spate of first time reunion participants who try one gathering, sign up for a second and then become association regulars and mainstays.

But practically, if sadly, not everyone can make it to every reunion and many can no longer go to any. For those folks, *The Scuttlebutt* fills the gap, bringing photos of Pyro people past and present, updates on shipmates and memories of when we were young and sure to have are way to the far-flung Pyro community.

The final leg of the tripod is our relatively new USS Pyro Scholarship Program. Pyro Scholarships contribute to a number of important missions: They have changed and are changing the lives of young people, in some cases making the difference between obtaining a higher educational and not. They help harried kids, parents and grandparents who are scrambling to raise the big bucks needed to fund tuition. They reflect Pyro pride and teach Pyro traditions to new generations, turn a 'good party' into a good work and attract later generations of Pyro sailors to our association.

What does all this cost? Well, for the past decade, reunions paid for themselves and more often than not left a small surplus to finance the good works of the association. Transformation of *The Scuttlebutt* from a primarily snail-mail to primarily electronic publication has improved the experience for members, increased circulation and saved tens of thousands of dollars in printing/ mailing costs since the early 2000s. But reproducing and mailing to the remaining print subscribers is still a major annual expense for the association.

As with *Scuttlebutt* printing, association contributions to the scholarship fund are a major outlay, tho a bulk of scholarship funds come from our (sainted) individual givers and reunion fundraising.

Thanks to a series of tightfisted treasurers and careful officers, the association treasury is in good shape.

But in order to expand our mission critical good works, we'll need to expand income. A simple way to do that is to increase dues-paying membership — and we urge every Pyro sailor to sign up and to reach out to friends and shipmates.

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# Reunion 2014 Honors List

## Bill and Linda Hogan



Cynics who say, 'volunteers are worth what you pay them' never met our Pyro Association volunteers! And they surely never met 2014 reunion organizers Bill and Linda Hogan.

From conception to execution — selling the idea of a Norfolk reunion at the 2013 gathering...forging a strong relationship with the Norfolk Sheraton...negotiating great terms on an outstanding schedule of nautical and land-lubber activities...checking and double checking arrangements and, finally, making certain everything went smoothly when the crew gathered, standing in for the ailing chaplain... You name it! Bill and Linda made the event unfold with grace and aplomb, a textbook example of how to run a reunion that will be long imitated, but seldom duplicated. And who will forget Bill's heartfelt story of what Pyro scholarships have meant to his family? Thank you, Bill and Linda: You delivered a good time to everyone who attended and set an example of service and dedication for all of us to follow!



**Worthy of the highest Honors:** Frank Fanning, the Pyro's 'personal lubricant king,' for his generous contribution of trilipiderm© all-body moisture retention cream that makes Pyro women even more beautiful (if that's possible!) and — Frank's a two-fer — his work on and contributions to Pyro Scholarships; Bob Smiley for his scholarship contributions and continuing support of the Pyro website as well as his relative good humor in enduring loud music and raucous conversation at events; John Wichtrich for his scholarship leadership and contributions; Linda Hiatt, representing herself and all the quilt and craft contributors for their role in making multiple Pyro scholarships a reality; Mike Dodge, for traveling from Guam to join his second Pyro reunion. And, of course, to every participant in the reunion: Your presence made a big difference!

# Reunion 2014 Honors List

## Glue Pot Award Winners Mary Ellis and Myra Eckstine



Tom Sanborn created the glue pot award to honor members of the Pyro family for extraordinary service in making sure our organization 'sticks together.'

For 2014, selecting M&M — Mary Ellis and Myra Eckstine — as winners was an easy decision.

Mary and Myra — along with the quilt ladies and other memorabilia contributors — have worked tirelessly to raise money for scholarships and all association activities.

Their good cheer and good work over the years have been vital to the success of our reunions and the success of the Pyro Association's core

missions.

Remember to thank them next time they hone in on your wallet!



## Award-winning Pyro Photojournalists



Did you enjoy these photos of memorable moments at our memorial service? You chatting up a shipmate's date? Ed Stone cavorting? Sailors in stocks at Williamsburg? Then say 'thank you!' to our pro photographers, Diane Otero and Joe Valenzuela!

## Memorable Moments and Mini-Reunions



**First and Final.** Plank holders pose with penultimate crew members: (L to R) Mark Grimmer, Harold Wolf, Perry Ellis, Donna Looney, Bill Peregrin, Debbie Rutenberg and Angel Otero. **Deck Apes and Bang-bang Boys.** BM Robert Pearsall, GM Angel Otero; BM Loyd Ellis; BM Albert Duplantis; and Deck/Gunnery Officers Don McClurg and Rolland Stratton.



**AE-24 Where Are You?** Navigators Tom Moulton, Debbie Rutenberg, Perry Ellis and Frank Fanning. **The 'Boss's' Bosses.** (CDR) Rutterberg, (CAPT) Looney and 'Boss' Gunner's Mate Otero.



**Lady's Day.** Punctual and pulchritudinous Pyro ladies pose with — you guess it — Ed Stone. **Radio Shack.** Comm Officer John Wichrich with Radiomen Dutch Schwendeman and Gary Michael.

## It Wasn't Like This in the Old Navy! Ed Stone Seeking Reunion *Fellowship*?



### Pyro Reunion First-timers



Debbie Ruttenberg, Scott Lovelace, Donna Looney, Pat Wolfe, Warren Campbell  
Robert Pearsall, Malcolm Jones Carol Nabors Rolland Stratton George Gaulke  
Mike Reed, Steven Forwood, Jim Bottomley, Chuck Engelman, Fred Roehrbien

# Honoring the Departed



**Karen Sheipline, Howard Iverson, Harold Vail, Lew Steele and Gary Tyrell**



**Harold Cook  
Howard Iverson  
Pat Gannon  
Linda George  
Harriette Groth  
Maurice Guttromson  
Karen Sheipline  
Lewis Steele  
Gary Tyrell  
Harold Vail  
Eldon Woods**

Marian Nolan and Billy Eckstine prepare to scatter a bouquet on the waters to honor departed members of the Pyro Family. Perry Ellis eulogizes his shipmate, Cdr. Harold Vail. Bailey George remembers his late wife, Linda.



# Honoring the Departed



Scenes from the USS Pyro 2014 Memorial Service Aboard the USS Wisconsin in Norfolk, Virginia.



# Williamsburg and Jamestown Tour



Linda Hogan, Myra Eckstine, Mary Ellis and Marian Nolan trod cobble stone streets; Angel Otero finds a tavern.



Just Rewards? Loyd Ellis and Billy Eckstine experience colonial justice; Ladies Duplantis, Hiatt, Nolan, Eckstine, Campbell, Ellis, Otero and Desilets pose with a colonial who claims he is not John Wichtrich.



Linda Hiatt gets directions.



The crew gathers on Williamsburg's main street.

# Williamsburg and Jamestown Tour



Marian Nolan and Billie Eckstine; Angel Otero and Bob White; along with Jeanne Desilets, Patricia Michael and Linda Hogan explore Virginia's colonial capital.



Tom Moulton, Larry Shepline, Perry Francis, Don Sullivan et al recall their youths in colonial America; our guide sharesthe Williamsburg saga.



**If I had wanted to walk, I'd have joined the Army:** Motorcycle Mama Bonnie Grimmer, Bill Peregrin, Harold Wolfe and Bailey George rest their 'dogs.' The Hiatts and Jack Hon enjoy a cool one.



Just like the Pyro Mess Deck: The Duplantises and Linda Hiatt prepare to dine; Linda Hogan, Carol Moulton, Bailey George and Angel Otero enjoy the sea breezes.



**Two Bobs, Two Campbells:** Bob Smiley (L) and Bob White (R) dine with the Warren and Sue Campbell; Frank Fanning table hops for chat with Shepline and Wichtrich.



Gary and Patricia Michal join Bailey George and Ed Stone to muster on the mess deck.

# Banquet Time



Plank holders dine and Linda Hiatt shows off quilts.



The Wishers join Marian Nolan and Billy Eckstine on the dance floor. Your editor has no idea what is going on the next photo, but with M&M involved, we can be sure the Scholarship Fund profited.



**Dutch Treat.** The Pearsalls and Engelmans dine with the Schwendemans. **Bling Babes.** Carol Moulton, Susan Scanlan, Linda Wisner and Patricia Michal model their new scholarship supporting pearl bracelets.

# Banquet Time



Bill Hogan gets the program underway as Jared Cameron and the Bad Dadz band look on; Bailey George, Ed Stone (in a rare photo where he's kissing no one at all) and the Oteros prepare to dine.



Jack Hon joins the Duplantises and Hiatts for chow. A panorama of the banquet hall looking out on Norfolk Harbor.



**The Kindest Cuts of All.** Ed Stone and Donna Looney cut a rug; Mary Ellis cuts the size of John Wichrich's bankroll, offering a contribution incentive that seems to shock Carol Moulton.

## Four 2014 Scholarships Awarded

(Continued from page 2)

Glue Pot Award Winners Mary Ellis and Myra Eckstine...and many, many others.

Second year recipients are:

**Emily Borum** continues at Southside Community College in Keysville, VA, for another year and will then transfer with her associate degree to Longwood University in Farmville, VA, to obtain a bachelor's degree in criminology. "My dream is to pursue a career in criminal Investigation," Emily says.



**Katie Ward** is entering her fourth year at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah Oklahoma, where she plans to earn a bachelor's of science in Special Education and Elementary Education. "After I get my Bachelors degree, I will continue school and get a master's...I would like to work in a school and then maybe one day work at one with children who have autism," says Katie.

First time recipients are:

**Brandy Hogan** will be attending Longwood University in Virginia this fall, majoring in Special Education. She will graduate with a master's degree in three years.



**Michael Hogan** will attend Southside Virginia Community College this fall, initially taking general studies this year and then do law enforcement classes. After that, he plans on going to the game warden academy.



### Help Keep a Good Thing Going!

The association needs your help to keep the scholarship program strong!

Please send your checks in any amount, large or small, to Treasurer Bill Hogan and indicate the contribution is for the Scholarship Fund.

## PYRO PERSONALITIES

At every reunion, The Scuttlebutt staff tries to interview members, especially first-time reunion participants, about what they have done since their halcyon days aboard a Pyro. This year we had an exceptional crop of newcomers. Tho hampered by excessive consumption of adult beverages, we managed to get three stories of diversely interesting and notable post-Pyro careers. In alphabetical order:



**Donna Looney** first went to sea as seaman apprentice. She served aboard the Pyro in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the AE-24 became one of the first Navy ships to accommodate women sailors. As a surface warfare officer lieutenant, she was the Pyro's (and perhaps the Navy's — we're fact checking this) first female engineering officer. After leaving the Pyro she, rose through Navy ranks eventually attaining the rank of captain and serving as Commadore of the Bataan Expeditionary Strike Group in the Persian Gulf prior to her retirement in 2009. She currently resides in Norfolk where she is a ship superintendent at Maersk Line.

**Debbie Ruttenberg** was on AE-24 as a surface warfare officer from 1989 to 1993. Among other assignments, she served as the ship's next-to-last navigator (until relieved by Tom McDaniel, who is now chief of staff at the Transportation Security Administration). After leaving active duty, she has focused on national defense issues and terrorism as a consultant, currently with Lockheed Martin. She was promoted to commander in the Naval Reserve after deployments in Afghanistan where she worked with NCIS tracking terrorists. Still a sailor at heart, she lives on a houseboat in Washington, DC, and sails the seven seas on vacation.

**Rolland Straten** served as a LTGJ on AE-24 from 1963 to 1965. After leaving the Navy and earning an MBA from the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, he devoted himself to building and expanding his family small business in New Jersey. He was a two-time Republican nominee for the U.S. House of Representatives.

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:**

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