

SUMMER 2012

USS WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION

2012 Reunion to be held in Charleston, West Virginia

Greetings Shipmates!

At our last reunion, it was suggested that it might be our last one. But a vote was taken and a majority decided that we should try to do at least one more. A few places were put on the table for a vote. Charleston, West Virginia won out. It was originally to be held on June 20, 2012 in celebration of West Virginia being accepted in the union in 1863. Due to the anniversary, it would have been almost impossible to get the accommodations that we require. So a later date was chosen. We will be meeting at the Holiday Inn Express on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, September 28, 29, and 30. Mark your calendar and make sure you join us.

The Holiday Inn Express is at 100 Civic Center Drive, Charleston, WV 25301. Their telephone number is 304-345-0600. Reservations can be made over the phone using a credit card or by mail with a check or money order. When making reservations, make sure you mention USS West Virginia or the password USS. The rate is \$90 per room plus tax and includes a deluxe hot breakfast buffet. Complimentary airport shuttle, free in room HBO, internet access, fitness center, and free parking are included. There are more than 15 pubs and restaurants within 2 blocks of the Holiday Inn Express.

Everyone should try to make this reunion because it may be our last. If that's the case it will be a chance to say good-bye to a great bunch of girls and guys. The highlights will be a trip to Beckley, West Virginia where a model of our ship is on display at the war museum. Those of you who know nothing about the model will not believe the craftsmanship put forth by the creator Jim Toler. The man spent better than 20 years on the project. He is really a devoted person. You can show your family and friends your general quarters and work stations. The detail is just unbelievable.

For those choosing to fly, the following airlines service the Charleston area.

- Air Tran—1-800-247-8726
- American - 1-800-433-7300
- Continental/United - 1-800-525-0280
- Delta Connection - 1-800-221-1212
- US Airways Express - 1-800-428-4322

If this is to be our last reunion, let's make the best of it. Come equipped with your finest sea stories. We have had some great times. There is a group of about 16 or so of us who have seldom missed a meeting. It's what keeps bringing us back, great buddies. It's funny but most of us did not know one another while we were aboard Old Forty-Eight. Now we look forward to meeting each other again at each reunion.

You will be taken by the splendor of the mountain area surrounding Beckley. It will live in your memory—don't forget your camera.

Margot and I want to wish each and every one of you the best time, with high hopes that we too can make it. Thank you for your friendship.

Joe and Margot Variot

2011 Reunion in Galveston, TX Highlights



Front Row (L-R): Paul Smith, Lewis LaGessee, Jim Downing, Tony Reiter, Clyde McClain; Back Row (L-R): Don Seibold, George Gackle, John C. Brown, Joe Variot, Morgan Pulver, Ron Aubry, Herbert Crask

The 2011 USS West Virginia (BB-48) reunion took place from October 16-20 in Galveston, Texas.

During the 5 days in Galveston, the following events were enjoyed:

- Welcome Aboard Party
- San Jacinto Battleground, Monument, and Museum
- Battleship USS Texas (BB-35)
- Johnson Space Center (NASA)
- Lone Star Flight Museum
- Moody Gardens Aquarium Pyramid & Rainforest Pyramid
- Nightly Bull sessions and trading of sea stories in the Hospitality Room
- Closing Banquet
- Memorial service for crew members who have passed since the last reunion

More information and pictures are available on the website at:
<http://www.usswestvirginia.org/reunion/2011>

At the 2011 reunion, taps was played for the following crew members and friends who passed since our last meeting:

Herman A. Kelley
 Alva Mettler
 Frank Feltz
 Francis Kleber
 Clement Leo
 William Rosson
 George Kurpis
 Salvator Rosso
 Al Rellergert

Leslie Salminen
 Richard Hall
 Harold Hall
 Howard L. Schoen
 Earl Poling
 Orval Aylesworth
 Joseph Kinamen
 Ernest R. Mangrum
 Arthur R. Brudzynsky

K.R. Eisworth
 James P. Mallatt
 Anthony Schmitt
 Glen Atkins
 Carlton Jackson
 Arlow Webb
 Chester Schoenrock

Where have we been? Where are we going?

Believe it or not the USS West Virginia Association had its first reunion back in 1955. The early reunions were held annually in southern California and usually coincided with the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor Attack since the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association wasn't founded until 1958. Over the years, reunions have spanned across the country including Hawaii.

About ten years ago the number of crew members that were remembered at our memorial service began to outnumber the number of crew members attending the reunion. Unfortunately, that trend continues and has led us to where we are today. We've had a great run. Lots of great memories and camaraderie, but reality is setting in and we may not be having any more reunions after this year. We've hinted at this in previous years, but with a lack of volunteers to help coordinate the reunions, it's become very difficult to coordinate reunions and arrange group discounts when we can't guarantee the number of attendees.

Our Association will continue for as long as there is interest and a story to tell. But unfortunately, 2012 may be the last organized reunion that we will hold. A final decision will be made at the reunion. Join us so your voice can be heard!

Pearl Harbor Survivor receives a medal from the Navy after 70 years.

On February 20, 2012 in Rome, NY, Pearl Harbor Survivor and USS West Virginia shipmate Sylvester Puccio was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for his efforts to save the ship on December 7, 1941. The Navy recognized that his efforts in leading counter flooding of the ship were critical in keeping the ship from capsizing—saving countless lives.

In Syl's own words, the ship fitter explains what he did to get the counter flooding effort going after finding the damage control lockers locked: "I knew I couldn't break the lock on the locker, so I took a large crank from the cable towing reel and attacked the hinges and demolished the locker door. The first thing I went for was a crank to open the counter flooding tank valves on the starboard side. The ship settled at about 8 degrees. If we did not counter flood, the West Virginia would have capsized like the Oklahoma—the ship was listing about 28 degrees before counter flooding."

Signaling his way to Captain's Mast by Raymond F. Albers

At the time we were anchored in what was being called Buckner Bay on the southeast side of Okinawa. It was late July or early August and the island had been secured. The carrier Suwanee was anchored nearby and on it was a friend of mine who was a radioman.

Since he could read Morse code as well as I, we were able to communicate by flashing light. As we talked about things in general one of us brought up the subject of where we thought we were going next. We wondered if the fleet was perhaps destined for the coast of China or Japan itself. As we were doing this an officer on the flag bridge which was just above the signal bridge was reading our conversation and reported that I was signaling info that might harm the fleet if some Japs still alive on the island were able to read what I was saying.

The outcome of this is that shortly thereafter I was "requested" to attend a Captains Mast. The Captain promptly advised me that I may have been jeopardizing the fleet with what my buddy and I were signaling. In short order I was demoted from 3rd class signalman to seaman 1st. class. Ironically, I had just become 3rd a few days earlier and had not even sewn my chevrons on to my uniform yet. A few days after this on Aug. 14th, I believe it was, the war ended. Very poor timing in signaling my friend. A few days later and I would have still been a 3rd class. I remained a seaman the remainder of the service and was discharged in Mar. 1946. Although my friend was adept at reading code via radio, I had to send code by flashing light slowly because if one sends it too fast it becomes almost a steady light and then it is difficult to pick up. If I could have signaled faster perhaps the officer wouldn't have been able to read what we were saying. Such is life.

2012 Reunion Activity Registration Form

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and the total amount. Send that amount payable to **USS West Virginia Association** in the form of a **check or money order** (no credit cards or phone reservations) to: USS West Virginia Association, c/o Mike Mullins, 2933 Cottonwood Lane, Chester Springs, PA 19425. Your canceled check will serve as your confirmation. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before **September 1, 2012**.

DATE	PRICE (\$/PP)	NUMBER	TOTAL (\$)
09/28/2012 Friday West Virginia Cultural Center. Exhibit of USS West Virginia history Depart hotel at 1PM Hospitality room open on return	\$ FREE		
09/29/2012 Saturday Lunch and Business meeting to discuss the future of the Reunion Organization. Rest of the day on your own. 12 NOON Hospitality room open after meeting	\$26.00 pp		
09/30/2012 Sunday Trip to Beckley, WV for luncheon banquet and tour of the BB-48 model. Load bus at 10:15AM Hospitality room open after return	\$50.00 pp		
Registration	\$50.00 pp		
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For hotel reservations at the Holiday Inn Express Charleston - Civic Center, call 304-345-0600. The special group rate is \$90.00 per night. This rate is good for two (2) nights before and two (2) nights after the reunion events. In order to obtain your special group rate, guests need to identify themselves as being associated with USS West Virginia or use the pass code USS.

ATTENDEES (For name tags)

NAME _____

DIVISION _____ YEARS ABOARD 19 ____ to 19 ____

GUEST NAME(S) _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME & PHONE _____

INDEMNITY CLAUSE (Must be signed regardless of payment method)

I, the undersigned, hereby assume liability for and shall indemnify, defend, protect, save and hold harmless the USS West Virginia Association and the Holiday Inn Express Charleston - Civic Center, its parent, subsidiaries and affiliates, and their officers, agents, subcontractors, and employees, from and against any and all liabilities, claims, judgments, damages, losses, including all costs, fees, and expenses incidental there to caused by or arising out of the gross negligence or willful misconduct on my behalf and which are in any way related to the services or goods contemplated by this agreement.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

PRINTED NAME _____ PHONE _____

Three Big Mistakes Pearl Harbor - December 7, 1941

From Reflections on Pearl Harbor by Admiral Chester Nimitz

Sunday, December 7th, 1941 — Admiral Chester Nimitz was attending a concert in Washington, DC. He was paged and told there was a phone call for him. When he answered the phone it was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

He told Admiral Nimitz that he (Nimitz) would now be Commander of the Pacific Fleet.

Admiral Nimitz flew to Hawaii to assume command of the Pacific Fleet.

He landed at Pearl Harbor on Christmas Eve, 1941.

There was such a spirit of despair, dejection, and defeat—you would have thought the Japanese had already won the war.

On Christmas Day 1941, Adm. Nimitz was given a boat tour of the destruction wrought on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese.

Big sunken battleships and navy vessels cluttered the waters everywhere you looked.

As the tour boat returned to dock, the young helmsman of the boat asked, “Well Admiral, what do you think after seeing all this destruction?”

Admiral Nimitz’s reply shocked everyone within the sound of his voice.

Admiral Nimitz said, “The Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could ever make, or God was taking care of America. Which do you think it was?”

Shocked and surprised, the young helmsman asked, “What do you mean by saying the Japanese made the three biggest mistakes an attack force ever made?”

Nimitz explained:

“Mistake number one: The Japanese attacked on Sunday morning. Nine out of every ten crewmen of those ships were ashore on leave. If those same ships had been lured to sea and been sunk we would have lost 38,000 men instead of 3,800.

“Mistake number two: When the Japanese saw all those battleships lined in a row, they got so carried away sinking those battleships, they never once bombed our dry docks opposite those ships.

“If they had destroyed our dry docks, we would have had to tow every one of those ships to America to be repaired. As it is now, the ships are in shallow water and can be raised. One tug can pull them over to the dry docks, and we can have them repaired and at sea by the time we could have towed them to America. And I already have crews ashore anxious to man those ships.

“Mistake number three: Every drop of fuel in the Pacific theater of war is on top of the ground in storage tanks five miles away over that hill.

“One attack plane could have strafed those tanks and destroyed our fuel supply.

“That’s why I say the Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could make or God was taking care of America.”

Once you read this book, it is very difficult to forget what is in that book. It is still an inspiration as I reflect upon it. In jest, I might suggest that because Admiral Nimitz was a Texan, born and raised in Fredericksburg, Texas—he was a born optimist.

But any way you look at it, Admiral Nimitz was able to see a silver lining

in a situation and circumstance where everyone else saw only despair and defeatism.

In retrospect it is obvious that President Roosevelt had chosen the right man for the job.

We desperately needed a leader that could see silver linings in the midst of the clouds of war.

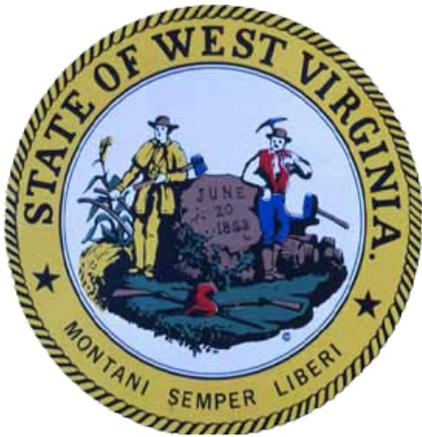
There is a reason that our national motto is “IN GOD WE TRUST.”

From Reunion Friendly News, Fall 2011



We'll be in Charleston, West Virginia Will You?

2012 USS West Virginia (BB-48) Reunion - September 28-30, 2012



USS West Virginia Association

Mike Mullins – Curator

2933 Cottonwood Lane
Chester Springs, PA 19425

Phone: 610-952-3542

Fax: 888-370-3238

We're on the Web!

www.usswestvirginia.org

The USS West Virginia Association's collection of information and artifacts is kept in the care of Mike Mullins, Curator. Our web site is one of the largest online collections of information about a battleship that you will see anywhere.



USS West Virginia crew member John C. Brown of Nelsonville, Ohio inspects the model of the ship in Beckley, West Virginia. John has made the trip to see the model every year since the model was dedicated on June 20, 2009.