U.S.S. Constellation CVACV-64 Association

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If you know of anyone who has a change of address, telephone number, e-mail address, or cell phone, please contact Stephen Ribak at
603-459-8048 or steven.ribak@comcast.com
New Address - As of 12-1-2018:

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USS Constellation CVA/CV-64 Association, Warwick, RI, September 9-14, 2018
Reunion Summary

The annual Connie Reunion was an incredible success this year with one hundred plus folks in attendance. There was something for everyone. If you were curious about Naval History, Naval War Museum, Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, or a Lighthouse Cruise, then you would be satisfied with the fullest through our outstanding tours. We started the reunion Sunday evening with a casual welcome reception at the Crowne Plaza Providence Hotel in Warwick, RI. The hotel was a first class place with very nice accommodations, super-hot free breakfasts and great customer service (including courtesy van to restaurants, town, etc. anytime). Kudos to Gus and Kathy Rossonando and Military Reunion Planners for securing a contract with this fine establishment at a favorable rate.

Monday morning we traveled to Battleship Cove, Fall River, MA to board and explore WWII battleships, a submarine, a landing craft and PT boats. The highlight was going onboard the USS Massachusetts BB59 to hold our annual memorial service to honor and remember our fellow shipmates who saw their last sunset since our reunion in New Orleans, LA 2017. At the conclusion of the service, following taps, Glenn South graciously agreed to toss the memorial wreath into the harbor memorializing burials at sea. Then we proceeded to the mess deck for a buffet luncheon. Tuesday we travelled to Boston for a full and rewarding day which included a bus tour covering Fenway Park, Harvard Common, and Cambridge. The guided walking tour of Paul Revere’s Freedom Trail brought history to life at the Old North Church. We continued on to the Charleston Navy Yard and Museum to board the USS Constitution frigate, which included seaman cadet docents who shared historical stories about the famous first warship of the US Navy. Wednesday, we visited The Breakers, a Vanderbilt treasure of a mansion suited for the lifestyles of the rich and famous. This was a “must see”! It was lavishly decorated in gold, silver and platinum. Indescribable!! We visited the Naval War College Museum in Newport and enjoyed a mesmerizing guided tour of the chronology of naval history. This day culminated with a bus tour of the City by the Sea, Newport.

Thursday began with the Executive Board and General Meeting. Treasurer Sidney Rodgers reported we are solvent with $20,850 in Ship’s Store (Museum account), $1,779 in Reunion account, and $10,450 in the Regular account. Membership Chairman, Stephen Ribak, reported 171 Lifetime members, 1 Associate Lifetime member, and 50 honorary members, for a total of 222 active members. We have approximately 325 total members. We have approximately 325 total members. He had to set assial 23 members for delinquent membership dues. It was voted by the Executive Meeting to give our annual $1,000 donation to Fisher House and DAV ($500 each). Using charitynavigator.com we confirmed the percent of money to the veteran versus expenses of the program as follows: Fisher House gives 92 cents on the dollar to the veterans, while Disabled American Veterans provides 84 cents on the dollar. These are exceptionally high returns for nonprofit charities. Elections were held for all officers. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to temporarily combine the officers for Secretary and Treasurer due to lack of nomination for Secretary. The elected officers for 2019-2021 are as follows: President – Rafael Rivas, Vice President – Bob Beece, Secretary/Treasurer – Sidney Rodgers. Mr. Rodgers, thank you for accepting the combined position of Secretary/Treasurer. You are doing an exemplary job for the Association. I must also thank Paul McGehee serving as my Treasurer until he resigned, before Sidney Rodgers. Congratulations to all!! Other volunteer positions filled were Chaplain – Tommy Best, Webmaster Rebecca Best (but she would like to find a replacement for her), StarScope Editor – Doyle and Jean Gilliam, Master at Arms – Dave Martin (USMC). Thank you, volunteers, you are very much appreciated by this Association.

The selected city for our 2020 reunion is Louisville, KY hosted by our very own Doyle and Jean Gilliam. After the General Meeting, we went on a Lighthouse Tour on Narragansett Bay. Who knew Rhode Island has 30+ islands and many lighthouses for our viewing pleasure! Back at the hotel, photo ops, by our seasoned photographer and mate (Leslie and Mary Ann Stessel) were great, and then cocktails and furious auction/50-50 ticket sales by Dennis Chapman, Brent Hammer, Barbara Cecil, Joan Shelton and others was underway. Thanks to all who donated to our auction, John Pendleton (Jim was unable to attend, send him a “thinking of you card”), Betty Bell, Gregory Martinez, James and Dorothy Grimes, and many more. After a delicious and generous steak and fish dinner, the 50-50 was won by Carol Tarnbasco and Dennis Chapman, both donated theirs and the Association’s winnings ($792 total) back to the Association for the model ship. The ship costs were $4,005; so far we collected $3,638 leaving a deficit of $367 for complete recoup of funds. A wall of fame is on FB and website applauding donors. There are still a few members/nonmembers sending donations to the Treasurer. Thank you Dorothy Grimes and Bobbie Stoddard for running the ship’s stores sales. We enjoyed dancing after the meal and the exciting auction. I am so proud of everyone. Hope to see you in El Paso, TX 2019!

As I reflect on my two term presidency, I look forward to a new horizon of leadership; we are in good hands in the future. I enjoyed serving you for the last four years and with lots of help from many folks in the Association, was able to accomplish many things. In January 2015, I prepared a funeral service for the USS Constellation CVA/CV64 and delivered it in Brownsville, TX, as she was being pulled by
a giant sea going tugboat into the ship channel for complete
dismantling by the International Shipbreakers Company. It
was a sparse crowd of alumni from the Connie and a pretty
good crowd of civilian onlookers. It was a sad day on the
one hand and a great day on the other hand. There was not a
dry eye in the room at the end of the service. Dinah created
a special program cover about 5" x 8", there was a squiggly
line diagonally separating the tan sand from the ocean blue
water, Connie started on land, sailed worldly oceans and
returned o land for her demise. A blazing yellow Connie
logo was placed dead center. She was but hard cold steel;
what made her famous was the spirit of those who lived on
her and will live forever in our hearts because of people like
you and me. Thanks to Rich Romeo, Marty Horowitz and
Phil Tambasco I spoke at the Building92 tribute wall
ceremony in Brooklyn Navy Yard, where a cloned copy of
the bronze memorial plaque was mounted in memory of the
50 shipyard workers killed in a fire aboard Connie
December 19, 1960. Creation of the “Connie” museum (pro
bono) onboard the USS Lexington in Corpus Christi Bay,
TX was a dream come true. The purchase of a wooden
model ship to be delivered and installed in early November
this year will be icing on the cake for our Association.Eric
and Melba Andersen were my mentors and leaders on this
lengthy process of establishing “Carrier Row” and stocking
the display cases with a lot of memorabilia. I’m going to
miss your piping, Eric and Melba, I’m speechless and in
awe of all you do for the Association. Thank you! Rebecca
Best, you stepped up and delivered during a difficult time
when our webmaster, Berl Meyer, resigned. Berl was a hard
act to follow as he was a great webmaster. I know it has
been hard and demanding. Please know how much I
appreciate you and your efforts, you are the Best. Carol
Tambasco, you were so brave to step up and take on the role
of ship’s store advocate. You did a wonderful job and I
thank you for being there for me as VP for four years. You
are the Best. Also, congratulations for accepting the role as
Chaplain, your prior experience will serve you well. Jean
and Doyle Gilliam, you are going to excel in your new job
as StarScope Editors, and I know you will get us back on
track with quarterly publications. The Schuts resigned as
editors due to health issues. Everyone looks forward to your
success, thank you. Dave Martin, thank you for taking on
the Master at Arms position. Now, according to the
Association by-laws, the President of the Association,
Rafael Rivas, will be asking you in 2019 if the hall is
secured for the General Meeting to begin. I feel much safer
now. Your predecessor, Robert Francois, resigned due to
health issues. I must also share with you how important it is
to document the Association’s historical leadership. So, I
presented a beautiful plaque detailing each president’s dates
of tenure, suitable for hanging on a wall. We have had
seven presidents lead the Association and luckily they are all
still living today. Four of the seen presidents attended this
reunion and were recognized and honored. President
number one, Rich Romero, gave a short endearing speech on
how the Association began. Please see ussconstellation.org
and look under tab “more” and choose President History to
see details. My greatest and most loving thank you goes to
my first lady, Dinah! She always makes me look good (and
I love it). She has been so creative and supporting during
our tenure of leadership and ultimately brought together the
wives of the Association who tire easily from listening to the
same old war stories which have new twisted endings every
year. She provided them an escape through art work. I
loved last year when several of the ladies colored beautiful
postcards not knowing they would become treasured pieces
of art when we mailed them to members unable to attend as
“thinking of you” or “get well” cards. They were well
received. I also remember her teaching the ladies how to
make coffee filter flowers that were used to decorate our
hospitality room and other rooms in San Antonio. I cannot
give her enough praise and thanks to fill her heart. I am
truly Blessed to have her and this Association’s friendship
in my life. Carpe Diem and I love you all. Farewell, Fair
Winds and Smooth Seas,
Gayland Rushing, 7th President, 2014-2018
USS Constellation CVA/CV64 Association

El Paso Reunion

Hello my Connie Family! I’m sorry I didn’t have the needed
information for you on our Rhode Island meeting for the El Paso
Reunion. I had made a 5-minute video on El Paso and a 3-minute
PowerPoint on the hotel, but due to circumstances beyond my
control, I was unable to show them to you.

The dates are Monday, October 21st to Saturday, October 26th,
2019. It will be held at the Best Western Plus El Paso Airport
(Previously the Holiday Inn). It is 1 1/2 miles from the airport
and right of I-10 at 6655 Gateway West. The rate is $96.00 per
night plus tax and includes a hot breakfast. More details will be
supplied later by Ray (Military Reunion Planners) as time
nears.

There is a free shuttle to and from the airport and any other place
within 3 miles from the hotel.

We have over 8 places to eat within walking distance from the
hotel and plenty of free parking. There are also two shopping
centers less than 2 miles from the hotel and other fine places to
eat, including my favorite, Hooters (great wings) and Twins. A Walk
over Border crossing into Mexico is less than 5 miles. I will see
what I can do for those who would like to walk over one day and
check out the place (yes, we are that close!) Don’t worry, they are not
shooting people at random, just tourists, (LOL, just kidding!!)
It is pretty safe during the day, the homicides are mainly between
drug cartels and for the most part, the citizenry is pretty safe. I was
born and raised here and since the violence started I can’t recall a
tourist ever being shot. There is a walking tour that lasts about 3
hours, but you must walk about 3 miles total. There are also bus
tours, so let me know if you think you would be interested in a
Juaez tour and I will look into it, depending how many people
show an interest. While at the hospitality room, some of you
showed and interest in going into Mexico, so I will do what I can to
give you that opportunity. Like I said in Rhode Island, we are one of
the safest Cities in the Nation.

I will keep you informed in future newsletters, thanks to Doyle and
Jean Gilliam who are now taking over the StarScope (or should I
say Sta-cycle). Any questions or special needs or requests, e-mail
me or call me
El Camacho, (915)843-6889 or Email: ccam_acho@yahoo.com
We would like to let you know that we will try to do our best with the StarScope newsletters. We had to change the layout this time, as we could not get the scanned pages to work correctly—we just decided to do what we could this newsletter and hopefully figure it out by March 2019 newsletter.

We truly look forward to being able to do our part for the Association. Please, if you have anything to contribute, such as articles, jokes, trivia, games, ideas, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact us. We need to have anything you contribute by the first week in February, if at all possible. Thank you for giving us this opportunity!

Doyle & Jean Gilliam
(352) 406-7650 or e-mail: jndgilliam@aol.com

We wish all of you a very wonderful New Year!

Garden of Eden
After the fall in the Garden of Eden, Adam was walking with his sons, Cain and Abel. As they passed the ruins of the Garden of Eden, one of the boys asked, “What’s that?” Adam replied, “Boys, that’s where your mother ate us out of house and home.”

Did you know?
The Navy’s bell-bottom trousers are commonly believed to be introduced in 1817 to permit men to roll them above the knee when washing down the decks and to make it easier to remove them in a hurry when forced to abandon ship or when washed overboard. In addition, the trousers may be used as a life preserver by knotting the legs and swinging them over your head to fill the legs with air.