



John Geraghty
Ken Werth
President Emeriti

Ruth Geraghty
Secretary /Treasurer
18 E 37th St.

Bayonne, NJ 07002.
Phone: 201-339-5155

Email: rwgeraghty@verizon.net

Bill Kastens

President
1824 SW Village Dr.
Topeka, KS 66604

Phone: 785-272-2604

Email: bmk1930@sbcglobal.net

Bob "Willie" Williams
Vice-President

1829 Kathleen Ct.
Virginia Beach, VA 23464

Phone: 757-479-2733

Email: griswold5@verizon.net

DIRECTORS: Warren Hopkins, Kent Thomas, Ron Orszag, Jack Chesnick

NOVEMBER 2011 PIEDMONT NEWSLETTER

Piedmont Sailors—

We'll start off with a recap of our Norfolk, VA Reunion Oct. 12-16, 2011. Kent Thomas, Director and Recorder, has done a Yeoman job(YN 1949-52), as usual, in capturing the highlights of our reunion activities.

Sailors of the USS Piedmont traveled to history-rich Virginia for their 22nd annual reunion in Norfolk, Va. The Holiday Inn Select, near the Norfolk Airport, was the site for the reunion, and management and employees were extremely accommodating for the Wednesday-Sunday gathering. They even greeted us upon our return from the Friday, Oct. 14, daylong bus tour with a patriotic, flag-flying, hand-clapping lineup in the hotel lobby shouting their thanks for our service to the country. The hotel included free buffet breakfasts everyday, provided shuttle transportation to and from the airport, and other places, and donated several gift certificates for free lodging at our concluding raffle Saturday night.

The reunion started Wednesday, Oct. 12, with registration and reacquaintances in the hospitality room. Thursday and Friday daytimes were devoted to sightseeing tours by bus, and, except for Saturday night's concluding banquet, Saturday was an open day. Most of the shipmates and their guests left for home or other destinations on Sunday, Oct. 16.

The Shirley Plantation was visited on Thursday, Oct. 13. This Plantation was settled in 1613 and was the home of Anne Hill Carter, mother of General Robert E. Lee. It is the oldest plantation in Virginia and is still an operating farm owned by an 11th generation descendant of the Carter family. Originally 800 acres, the farm, on the banks of the James River, now contains 400 acres with rotating crops of tobacco, cotton, soybeans and corn. A Willow Oak tree on the plantation is an estimated 350 years old. There are 11 buildings in all, which were purposely erected separately from one another to limit damages in case of fire. The guide said that no fire damage has occurred to date.

In addition to the plantation stop, Thursday's bus tour took us to the Charles City Tavern for lunch, and then to the Yorktown Visitors Center, featuring a tour of the battlefields and a film of the Battle of Yorktown where the British surrendered to Gen. George Washington, giving America its independence. Next was the Mariner's Museum, the largest and most comprehensive maritime history museum and home of the USS Monitor exhibit (early iron-clad ship).

During Friday's activities, we took a whirlwind bus tour of the Norfolk Naval Station, the largest Naval installation in the world, home port for 78 ships. Next was a tour of Virginia Beach lighthouses and the landing at Cape Henry where British colonists first came ashore in 1607, eventually settling in Jamestown, our nation's first settlement.

An outstanding lunch awaited us at Lynnhaven Fish House on Chesapeake Bay. From there we visited the Military Aviation Museum at Virginia Beach airport, displaying one of the largest collections of World War II and Korean era airplanes and several aircraft dating to World War I.

Our last stop was at Doumar's, home of the world's first ice cream cone machine, and all were treated to an ice cream cone. Abe Doumar created the first ice cream cone at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.

At Friday's business meeting, Bill Kastens was reelected president of the Piedmont Reunion Association; also reelected were other officers and board members: Bob "Willie" Williams, vice president; Ruth Geraghty, secretary-treasurer; directors Jack Chesnick, Ron Orszag, Warren Hopkins and Kent Thomas (recorder). Kastens thanked Willie for doing the leg work in arranging the reunion, and recognized Ken Werth for his long service as president and immediate past president. Ken has handled sales of Piedmont clothing and other items for a number of years, and his daughter, Rebecca Wierschem, addressed the group and offered merchandise for reduced costs because neither Ken nor his wife is physically able to do this work any longer. Jack Chesnick took all leftover clothing items to his home in Raleigh, NC. As soon as he has accounted for the inventory, he will be the Piedmont apparel contact. Thanks, Jack, for taking on that project.

During the general discussion of future reunions, Omaha was favored by shipmates as the 2012 reunion site, provided satisfactory hotel rates and arrangements can be obtained. Dr. Van Vahle of Seward, NE., and a guest of Willis Bloyd, made the proposal regarding Omaha and pointed out the Chamber of Commerce there has an employee who specializes in military reunions. Vahle, who incidentally attended last year's Piedmont reunion in Atlanta as well, said there are plenty of attractions in Omaha and the airport is near downtown. Earlier plans to meet in New Orleans were put on hold due to uncertainties about hotel costs, airport shuttle and parking expenses, and lingering effects from hurricane Katrina. Warren Hopkins and Steve Hatfield are looking into a 2013 reunion site in the NW; Portland, Seattle, Bremerton, etc.

Kastens reviewed the treasurers' report, showing a balance of \$10,135 as of Sept. 30, with several obligations still to be paid. Ruth Geraghty was unable to attend but she recommended that annual dues remain at \$10, and members concurred.

A popular extra at the reunion was a three-hour dinner cruise Friday night on "The Spirit of Norfolk." About 55 of our group enjoyed a buffet dinner and after-dinner dancing aboard the three-deck ship in the Elizabeth River. A disc jockey and several competitions added to the fun of the cruise.

A total of 78 attended the Saturday night banquet, including guests, and were treated to a hardy and delicious buffet dinner at the hotel. Five PLANK owners attended and were recognized: Willis Bloyd of Seward, NE; Jim Link, Dumont, NJ; Bob Minick, Glendale, AZ; Joe Pietrosanti, Binghamton, NY; and Cecil Whitmer, Goodlettsville, TN. CDR Harold Henkel, 93, was the oldest Piedmont veteran in attendance, followed by Cecil Whitmer at 92. Joe Pietrosanti was cited for attending the most reunions--21. John Lenk of Vergennes, VT, served the longest time on the Piedmont--six years. There were two first-timers: Bruce MacAllister, Richmond, Va., and Tom Lambeth, Suffolk, VA; and Monica Kastens, Bill's wife, was the only woman present who served in the military. Monica was both a SPAR (Coast Guard) and WAVE (Navy).

Deceased shipmates or their wives were honored at the Saturday night "Missing Sailors Memorial"--

Dan Barlow, Plantation, FL., FP diver, 1954-55

John Burns, Alva., OK, ES, 1951-54

Wade Byars, Las Vegas, NV., SK, 1960-62

Harry Davis, Newark, OH, MR 1951-55

Jim Devlin, Midwest City, OK, MM, the 1960s
Bill Emery, Westville, IL, S, 1946
Fred III, Bronx, NY, SF, 1943-46 (Plank Sailor)
Louis Lacava, Youngstown, OH, SFP, 1956-57
Jerry Mallett, Salem, MA, FN, 1944-45 (Plank Sailor)
Marion Maynard, Gas City, IN, MM, 1952-56
Charles Mechling, Stockton, CA, TMC, 1946-52
William "Bill" Newbauer, Refrigeration Shop, FN, 1944-45
Dennis O'Brien, Waco, TX, CPO Metalsmith
Ed Ruese, Clarkdale, AZ., CDR Supply Officer, 1973-75
Harrison Shedd, San Diego, CA, CWO Rep. Elect., 1956-58
Robert Short, Trenton, MI, SN, 1951-53
Lou Vann, Port Hueneme, CA, CDR Supply Officer, 1972-73
Anna Bartholomeo, Norristown, PA., wife of John Bartholomeo
Eileen Minick, Glendale, AZ, wife of Bob Minick
Jack Chesnick and Bob Quandt conducted the ceremony and Jack's 12 year old grandson, Chris Chesnick, bugled taps impressively.

The guest speaker Saturday night was VICE ADM Ted Parker, who as a Navy Captain was commander of the Piedmont from 1973 to 1975. Interestingly, he took formal command at sea during a typhoon. He helped celebrate the Piedmont's 30th year of existence while sailing in the North Atlantic. Parker credited Piedmont crews for having an outstanding ship for many years. He was promoted to Vice Admiral in 1981 and retired from the Navy in 1989.

ADM Parker served with the Chief of Naval Operations and was on a study committee to develop new types of ships. He told about Turkey's interest in the Piedmont after the ship was decommissioned in September, 1982. Turkey officially bought the ship on Nov. 2, 1982. Incidentally, one of the Piedmont sailors at the reunion--Gene Wiesbeck of Humble, TX was aboard the ship during its decommissioning.

The admiral said he is concerned about the lack of leadership among today's youth, and during his civilian years he has been working to try to develop better leadership skills. "We have work to do to keep our country strong," he said. Thank you, ADM Ted and Anne Parker for your great contributions in word and deed at our reunion gathering.

Charles "Chuck" Burch, Fairfax, VA, JO2 61, video taped many of the reunion activities and had interviews with many of the attendees. DVD's will be available for purchase in the near future.

As usual, reunion attendees donated gifts for the two raffles, one held Thursday night and the other Saturday night. Pat Ruese, Clarkdale, AZ, (deceased Supply CDR Ed Ruese 73-75) donated several items that Ed had collected while on Piedmont. They were greatly appreciated, Pat. Jack & Marge Chesnick coordinated the raffles and they brought in \$332 net after covering all the hospitality room costs, awarding the hotel staff gratuities, and paying out \$225 for the 50/50 prize. The net amount will be placed in the Piedmont reunion fund.

Virtually all the shipmates agreed the Norfolk reunion was a good one, and one of the sailors suggested it was so outstanding he would favor having all future reunions in the same place. That won't happen, of course, in the interest of moving around the country to facilitate as many former shipmates as possible. It's the Midwest's turn in 2012 in New Orleans or probably Omaha, and as mentioned to the Pacific NW in 2013. As Piedmonter's scattered Sunday, their refrain was as usual: "Hope to see you next year"!

Here are updates to the Oct. 1, 2011 Roster:

BEIGEL, Sy; DC 52-56, Ret. CWO; E-Mail oldsygone@cox.net

CHERNICH, Ken; E-Mail bingoken@yahoo.com

LAMBETH, Tom; 5830 Old Myrtle Rd., Suffolk, VA 23434 757-235-5124 TMCM 73-76

O'DONNELL, Phillip; Oakhurst, NJ EMC 43-47 PLANK Sailor DECEASED 10/20/11

SCHLEIFER, William; 23886 Farmway Rd., Caldwell, ID 83607 208-455-6229

STUMBORG, Max; BM 50-54

WROTEN, Bruce; IC 50-54 Gyro Shop

Comments from Ruth Geraghty and sailors unable to attend reunion:

Richard Bellair; Toledo, OH MR 51-55 "Unable to attend, Betty had a full hip replacement in August. Hope to spend winter months in Florida".

Del Black; Wellington, CO MR 51-55 "Not able to attend reunion, had a double bypass and a new valve this year. Have cataract surgery for both eyes now scheduled".

Rex Burks; Newcastle, OK BT3 58-62 "Unable to attend this year, had recent surgery and it will take several weeks to recoup".

Charles Deisinger; Brookfield, WI M Eng. D 43-46 PLANK Sailor "Unable to attend this year as travelling is becoming more difficult. This will be first reunion to miss since they started".

Ed Friesen; Casper, WY SK1 46-49 "Sorry to miss reunion, celebrating 60th wedding anniversary that weekend. Ed went on Honor Flight to D.C. to see WW II memorials last March".

Ray Hauck; Depew, NY SH 52-56 "Unable to attend reunion due to medical reasons. We were looking forward to attending. My best regards to our shipmates".

Larry Miller; Albuquerque, NM MR 51-54 "Due to health problems will not be able to attend reunion this year. Have B cell lymphoma in bone marrow and need many blood transfusions".

Tom Sayles; Las Vegas, NV MR 57-59 "Won't make Norfolk as we have a cruise booked and another reunion month before".

Bob Wallace; Suffolk, VA Piedmont Repair Officer at decommissioning, Sept. 1982; stopped by the reunion Hotel and left several Piedmont Officer's Wardroom artifacts, many one-of-a-kind, that were removed at decommissioning and these were included in the raffle prizes.

Bill Walters; Forest Park, GA S 45-46 "Not able to attend reunion. In July 2010, broke my foot and it had to be reattached to my leg. In Feb. 2011, needed a 2nd operation to replace pins, rods, and a plate to keep my foot attached, slow process in healing. Then in August had infection in both legs and still trying to heal. Will miss everyone and regards to all".

Even though there were only 80 attendees at the Sat. night banquet, it was a great group and all seemed to enjoy the facilities and service. Bob "Willie" Williams will be checking out the suggestions in New Orleans and Omaha and it appears we will favor the Omaha location.

Monica and I will be checking out some of the locations in Omaha. We'll keep you posted as soon as we have anything signed and firm. Dr. Van Vahle, Seward, NE took many photos and we will try to get them posted on our Piedmont Facebook page when available. Thanks, Van, for all your efforts in recording our reunion activities.

Last minute notes: If anyone needs an updated Roster, please let me know.

Wayne Shively, Erie, KS AK 66-69, had out-patient rotator cuff arthroscopy recently. Dr. made a mini incision also. He is doing fine but a sling and wedge will be in use for six weeks, 24/7.

Bill Kastens, President

USS Piedmont Reunion Assoc.