

USS JOHN W WEEKS DD-701 ASSOCIATION

2023 FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER



President's Letter

By Fred Dalton

Hello USS John W Weeks family and friends. I hope this letter finds you all well and enjoying the autumn season. The John W Weeks just had a fantastic reunion in Warwick, Rhode Island, followed by a trip to the John W Weeks State Park and Museum. It was so wonderful for

several of our people to be together again. I deeply thank each of those, especially Phil Varner and David Connely for all their much work over several months planning, organizing, and getting this reunion together. I also thank all those who arrived early to help set up the reunion.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our next reunion in Dayton, Ohio in the middle of September 2024. Our next reunion will be a very special and exciting reunion that you certainly do not want to miss. We will be celebrating the 80th anniversary of the commissioning of the ship and the 55th anniversary of the Westpac cruise of the ship to Vietnam, which was the last deployment of the ship. Of course, all the other periods on the ship are important too and you will hear a lot of stories about them told at the next reunion.

This year Dave Kurtz stepped down from his position as a director of the association. I very much appreciate all the much work Dave and his wife Judy have done to help and to enhance the success of the association for the past several years. Dave has served as vice president, newsletter editor and director. We will very much miss the leadership and guidance Dave and Judy have given so freely. A big 'well done' to Dave and Judy. We now have the watch and look forward to seeing you both at future reunions. Dave, may you and Judy be blessed richly in the future.

Michael Vagianos volunteered and was elected to fill the vacant director position at the last business meeting in Warwick, Rhode Island. Michael reported aboard the USS John W Weeks in February 1968 and served on



Now Hear This!
**A REMINDER TO ALL
SHIPMATES RECEIVING
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DEADLINE FOR 2024
ANNUAL DUES PAYMENT IS
MARCH 31 2024**
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the ship as MM2 in M Division until the ship was decommissioned in August 1970. He was on the full deployment of the ship to Vietnam in 1969. We look forward to serving with Michael. He and his wife Diane will add a lot to our leadership team.

Aida and I wish everyone a very happy Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas. May God bless you all until we meet again. We are looking forward to seeing everyone in Dayton, Ohio.

2023 REUNION REVIEW

By Kathy Michaels

Because of last minute medical conditions, our numbers were down 5 the week before we met. Mike and Diane Parent, Phil and Lynn Varner, and I arrived on Monday, the 4th of September. On Tuesday, the 5th, the five of us visited Battleship Cove in Fall River Massachusetts. Had a nice lunch at a Portuguese Restaurant called The Chipper in Fall River Mass. Wednesday, Phil, Lynn, and I invaded the local BJ's Market Place. Bought various snacks for the Hospitality Room (HR). Rhode Island has restrictions on alcohol sales. We found the Liquor Warehouse. It worked to have beer, wine, and liquor all in one place. We returned to the HR and set it up for the arrival of the rest of the crew. Through the Armed Forces Reunion Committee, the hotel provided deli-sandwiches, chips, and soda for our dinner.

The hotel also served a breakfast buffet for us in the HR each morning of the reunion. That proved very convenient for us all. Kerry and her staff took great care of us. On Thursday, we headed to Mystic Connecticut. We had the option of exploring the Aquarium or the Mystic Seaport Historic Village. Six chose the Aquarium and the rest chose the Village. Many of us took an upriver boat ride. It lasted about a half-hour, and we all enjoyed the sights and the pleasant breeze on the hot day. Back to the hotel and the HR. Our Wednesday excursion to BJ's yielded 2 deli platters, which Phil and I picked up. Our thirsty crew required a second trip to the Liquor Warehouse. Our former clerk remarked that "They are back already." We have the responsibility to support the local economy.

Friday had us travel to the Subbase at Groton CT after breakfast. Groton is where many of the Weeks crew transferred to the USS Gehring, DD 710. We were afforded a guided tour by a well-informed Coastie. A tour of the submarine, The Nautilus, was also available to those who wished to go below her decks. We were taken to the Mohegan Native American Casino. Several of us took advantage of the gambling facilities and others gathered to eat lunch together. Or they did both. After our return to the hotel, we were on our own for dinner. Many took advantage of the local seafood fare.

Saturday, another breakfast, and our general meeting was held for all who wished to attend. The main topic of interest was where we go next year. Dayton was selected by the majority of the members. (Minutes available from Dave Connelly). Many decided on carpool trips to the mansions in Newport RI. Several of us gathered to set up the room where we held our memorial ceremony and the dinner. This year, I decided we should include the spouses in our remembrance ceremony. We honored four of the Weeks shipmates and four spouses. We used white roses for our shipmates and yellow roses for the spouses. As always, a red rose denoted the last sailor standing. The dinner was quite fun. And the food was terrific. After dinner, we assembled in the HR to break down the room. Several of us had early departure times.

That's the reunion from my point of view. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and were happy to spend the time together.

Providence RI 2023



Visit to Weeks State Park & John Wingate Weeks Historic Site

By Phil Varner

In September 2022, while at the Valley Forge Reunion, Dave Parent came up with a great way to end the 2023 reunion in Rhode Island. That on Sunday, following the reunion, we should form a caravan and drive up to the Weeks State Park in New Hampshire, and visit the Weeks Museum. It would only be a short 4 hour drive.



We contacted Rachel Bruce, she confirmed the Museum would still be open. That's when she started planning to welcome us with a tour on Monday morning.

Maybe it was the thought of another 4 hour drive, but by Sunday, September 10th, 2023 it was down to 3 cars. The Blakeley's, Parent's and Varner's. We all booked at the same motel and arrived in N.H. at about the same time.

Late Sunday evening, we were happy to find a pizza shop still open, we dined there.

Pictured left to right is Becky Moore, great granddaughter of John W. Weeks, Phil & Lynn Varner, Diane Parent, Rob Bast, great-great grandson of JWW, David Parent and Larry & Janie Blakey



On Monday, we arrived at the Weeks Museum around 10:00 am. Due to the fog, heavy mist and the large grey clouds hanging down we didn't tour outside. That was really disappointing to have traveled that distance and not being able to see the scenic views that we were expecting.



However, we were welcomed with really big smiles from Rachel and Joe, the caretaker. The museum was much larger than I had expected and very interesting. I learned quite a bit about the life of John Weeks. I was fascinated by the way he received his appointment to the US Naval Academy.

The Naval ship room has some nice displays; I remembered a few of the things from my days on the ship. The mannequin still stands proudly in his uniform. Apparently, he still remembers being assembled. To this day, they haven't been able to get the smile off his face.



After the tour, there was brief welcoming and then a short talk by Becky Moore who is a great granddaughter of JWW. Lunch was served by Rachel and Becky. Other guests attending were members of the WSPA board; Matt Flanders, the Director of the N.H. Bureau of Historic Sites, drove up from Concord. Rob Bast, a great-great grandson of JWW came over from VT. and a few local people. Lunch was very good and it was provided by a group of their friends. We finished lunch

with a really cool cake. The icing was very clever, a picture of DD701. We spent about another hour of chatting with all of the people there, then, it was time to say thank you and good-bye.

While having lunch, Rob Bast invited us to go see the big house and the farm that his Great grandfather Sinclair Weeks (JWW's son) owned until his death. Sinclair was Secretary of Commerce under President Eisenhower. The house, itself has a great history. It's only few miles down the mountain from the state park and is located on Weeks Road.

Lynn and I made a brief stop and enjoyed talking with a few friendly fellows at the John W. Weeks VFW. After a couple rounds of adult beverages, we bid farewell to Lancaster, NH and started home. All and all, it was a very memorable experience.

PAST—2023--FUTURE

By Phil Varner

Why would you want to go to one of these things? That was always my old outlook when I finished reading the latest Newsletter. Who were all of those old guys in the pictures? Well not much has changed. You still haven't gone to a reunion, so you look at the pictures and say to yourself, "who in the heck are all of these old guys"? OK Pal, look in the mirror and ask yourself, "would this body still fit in that 13 button tailor made uniform you so proudly wore on Liberty"? That's why we provide name tags. Your old shipmates will instantly remember you. Just think how many Sea Tales you have to share.

The first reunion I helped organize was in Buffalo, NY 2015. Assisting Dave Kurtz. Thank goodness the bus was able to turn around and return to the hotel. Somehow I had left Fred Dalton and family behind. Since then we use a check off list.

People often ask me why I spend so much time and effort working to get a reunion ready. It's a simple answer. The joy of watching a pair of old shipmates when they recognize each other after 40 some years apart. That makes it all worthwhile. Rhode Island 2023 reunion turned out to be special for me. It was a surprise when Ben & Audrey Wilcoxon drove down from Boston Saturday morning to take Lynn and me out for lunch. As it turned out, they joined us all for dinner Saturday night and then stayed overnight. I heard they had a good experience. Ben Wilcoxon BT2, Bob Frohnafel BT1 and I were in B division and the last time we were all together was May 1966, Norfolk, VA, 57 years ago. As I said earlier "That's what name tags are for."



I'm almost willing to bet my Old Flat Hat, that you're retired. So come join us at the next reunion being held in Dayton, Ohio. It's the home of the Wright Brothers. The two guys who built that airplane; it's now a National Monument on display in Dayton. You will be amazed how they controlled the throttle.

Do you like old cars? Visit the Packard Museum. Do you like airplanes? The History of Aviation is on display at the National Museum of the Air Force. There are planes from the earliest planes built to a Shelf bomber and everything built in-between. There are a few small airports that offer plane rides with open cockpits. Some have room for two passengers. Try going in a Bi Plane.

One last thing, Dayton is a smaller city and easier to drive in. We can do carpooling and won't need an expensive tour bus.

Reunion date and hotel to be determined. Tentative dates will be in late Sept. or early Oct.

SICK CALL

A week before our Providence Reunion, The Board was notified of cancelations of 5 expected attendees due to illness:

Ray and Harriett Goodmuth

John and Debbie Santopietro

Marianne Hethcox (Kathy's sister)

John and Donna Coughlin

Each was missed and are recovering or dealing with their individual ailments.

TAPS

James A. Cole-Thanks to the prompt posting of a death notice by Donna Coughlin, I was able to attend a visitation for James A. Cole. As chaplain, I generally learn of a death several days or weeks afterwards. Mr. Cole's family contacted Donna that he died on the 16th of September. The visitation was scheduled for Sunday, the 24th in Norfolk and the funeral set for the 25th. It was my honor to represent the USS John W. Weeks Association at Mr. Cole's visitation. Mr. Cole served on The Weeks upon graduation from Walled Lake High School, Michigan. He served as a Signal Man from 1960-1962. Included is Mr. Cole's obituary.

[Obituary information for James A. Cole \(hollomon-brown.com\)](http://hollomon-brown.com)

WEEKS CLOTHING

By Dave Parent

Week clothing can be purchased via the link below:

USS JOHN W WEEKS SHIPS STORE by *military gifts*.

You can order items through the *military gifts* website link below;

<https://www.redbubble.com/i/t-shirt/USS-JOHN-W-WEEKS-DD-701-SHIP-S-STORE-by-militarygifts/36378837.CW2C9>

[USS JOHN W. WEEKS \(DD-701\) SHIP'S STORE by militarygifts | Redbubble](#)

AGENT ORANGE BENEFITS

By Jim Dunker

My VSO (VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER) says that the VA has conceded that "IF" you have a Vietnam Service medal and it shows on your DD214, you are presumed to have been exposed to hazardous materials (Agent Orange). This means we are eligible to benefits related to Agent Orange. I'm still working with my VSO on my claim for this. Jim Dunker 704 796 9666 FTG2

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2024 DUES REQUEST FORM

AMOUNT DUE: \$25.00

DEADLINE: MARCH 31, 2024

NAME _____

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AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

REMIT CHECK MADE OUT TO *JOHN W. WEEKS ASSOCIATION* TO:

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