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USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

July/August 2024

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2024 REUNION

Warwick, Rhode Island
September 26 - 29

Registration information provided in the spring mailing can be accessed at our [Reunions Page](http://www.ussemmons.org) at www.ussemmons.org

DEADLINE AUGUST 25

ANTICIPATION AND REGISTRATIONS GROW AS SEPTEMBER REUNION DATE DRAWS NEAR

Book now before the group rate block of rooms is gone!

With summer now in full swing, fall will be here before we know it as we look forward to our time together at the upcoming 2024 *Emmons* Family Reunion in Warwick, Rhode Island. Registrations have been arriving in response to our spring information mailing.

Crowne Plaza Amenities

The reunion will run September 26-29 at Crowne Plaza Providence/Warwick (Airport). Conveniently located just off Interstate 95, the hotel offers a complimentary airport shuttle, parking and morning buffet breakfasts. A block of rooms has been set aside at a \$149/night group rate. Information regarding registration and booking your room was provided in the spring mailing and can be accessed at the [Reunions page of our website](http://www.ussemmons.org) at www.ussemmons.org.

The weekend's agenda begins with arrivals Thursday with the hospitality room opening at 4pm. Friday, we will tour the museum ships at Battleship Cove in Fall River, Massachusetts (see story, page 2), where we will also honor the 60 lost shipmates with our annual memorial service and enjoy lunch together. Back at the hotel, we'll gather for a special program and buffet dinner.

Following Saturday morning's annual Association business meeting, the day will be free for sightseeing. The weekend climax is Saturday evening's banquet and program, including hearing from our 2024 Griffin/*Emmons* Memorial Scholarship recipients.

Sunday's goodbye breakfast will bring the weekend to a close.

DIVER FRIENDS CONTINUE ANNUAL MEMORIAL TRADITION

One year shy of her 80th year resting at the bottom of the ocean, the *Emmons* was once again the site of our Okinawa diver friends' memorial dive in April, honoring the sacrifice of the 60 brave souls lost at Okinawa.

Along with Kurt REESE and Chuck DECESARI were, among others, active duty Service Members, Veterans and spouses. A high level of interest in honoring their memory continued again this year as Kurt reported that within 20 minutes of posting the charter, all seats were filled. Included were Jordan LEE (active duty Air Force), who placed the wreath, Marine Col Erick CLARK and his



Photo courtesy of Hiroyuki Tomura

wife Jean, who unfurled the Stars and Stripes, and Matt LEWIS of Tsunami Scuba, who placed the Navy Flag.

In addition to Chuck's donation of the use of his boat, the participants donated \$1200 for the Griffin/*Emmons* Memorial Scholarship Program.

Kurt's video documenting the ceremony will debut at our September reunion and will later be made available on our website.

The USS *Emmons* Association is forever grateful to all those who gave their time and resources to once again honor the memory of the courageous men who made the ultimate sacrifice 6 April 1945.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In our series featuring past Griffin/Emmons Memorial Scholarship recipients, we hear from 2016 & 2018 recipient, Alaina SHORT, granddaughter of shipmate Paul F. Dodd.

After being awarded her first scholarship as an undergraduate at Assumption College, followed by her second as a student at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences—School of Optometry, Alaina SHORT, completed an optional one-year residency at White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont where she provided care for medically underserved veterans.

Her work serving the medically underserved population continued when she took a position in Pikeville, Kentucky, with the Kentucky College of Optometry. It was there that she met her eventual husband, Alex. The two were married in 2023, at which time they moved to Chicago to explore other optometry opportunities.

This summer, Alaina and Alex move to Florida where they begin new jobs at Nova Southeastern University's School of Optometry. Alaina will not only be teaching,

but will also serve as Chief of Vision Rehabilitative Services. Her hope is to solidify her knowledge and expertise related to the ocular health and visual needs of the growing geriatric population before starting a family and establishing roots.

Asked what being awarded the scholarship means to her, Alaina explained with pride how she hung her scholarship certificates in her office. Done as a tribute to her grandfather and all who served aboard the *Emmons*, she found it to also serve as a means to share the *Emmons* story with inquiring coworkers and students.

To those applying for the scholarship, Alaina shares the following message:

"I hope you use the knowledge you acquire to positively shape your future. You will encounter many people who have had little to no interactions with veterans and have difficulty empathizing with the lasting pain that may come from their time in service. Therefore, it is our duty to help protect and advocate for those who, like our descendants, put their lives on the line in hopes for a better tomorrow."

BATTLESHIP COVE HIGHLIGHT OF WEEKEND'S REUNION ACTIVITIES

As we gather for the 2024 reunion, seeing old friends and meeting new ones, those in attendance will have the rare opportunity to tour the world's largest collection of historic U.S. naval vessels.

Battleship Cove, our Friday morning destination, is a non-profit maritime museum and war memorial located in Fall River, Massachusetts. First opened in 1965, it features the world's largest collection of WWII era naval vessels.

Among its exhibits are the battleship USS *Massachusetts* (BB-59) which fought alongside *Emmons* during Operation Torch in North Africa and later during the Battle of Okinawa. Other WWII exhibits include the submarine USS *Lionfish*,



two PT Boats and this editor's favorite, the USS *Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.* (DD-850), a Vietnam era Gearing Class destroyer very similar to the *Emmons*.

Launched in 1945, too late to actively participate in WWII, the *J.P. Kennedy* saw action in The Korean War, The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War.

The *J.P. Kennedy* is also home to the Admiral Arleigh Burke National Destroyer Museum and Memorial, which maintains a vast collection of cruise books, photos, and artifacts from the over 100 years of US Navy destroyer history. Within the museum are various murals, artifacts, interactive displays, and ship lists that portray the proud heritage of destroyer men and the U. S. Navy.

Having previously visited Battleship Cove during the 2013 reunion, we look forward to reuniting with long-time *Emmons* friend and supporter, Rich ANGELINI, who devotes much of his time serving as Restoration Chief for the USS *Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.*

SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE: The Legacy Committee is pleased to report eight scholarship applications were received this year from third- and fourth-generation *Emmons* Family members. As of this printing, the essay scoring is still in progress with applicants to be notified no later than July 31. Stay tuned....

LETTERS TO HOME FOUND TO PROVIDE VALUABLE INSIGHT INTO A SAILOR'S LIFE

Considered one of the most valued sources of historical importance, providing details not available elsewhere, letters written home during a sailor's time at sea tell of everyday life aboard ship in a very personal way.

That was the case for Matthew THORRENZ, Head Librarian at Moffat Library of Washingtonville (NY). Matt reached out to thank us for the information on our website as he conducted research on local resident and *Emmons* shipmate, Eugene C. AKERS, who gave his life at Okinawa.

His research into Eugene's life was based primarily on a collection of letters Eugene wrote, mostly to his mother, dating from August 1943 to March 1945. The library is in the process of transcribing the letters.

In the meantime, Matt recorded a talk outlining Eugene's life based on those letters, spanning the time from his early family life, to his enlistment and time at U.S. Naval Training Station, Samson, NY, to the Naval College at Purdue University, where he learned his Electrician's Mate specialty, to the Normandy invasion and finally his last letter home in March 1945, just weeks before he lost his life at Okinawa. We are working with the library to obtain permission to share the recording on our website.

"Although I never met him," Matt explained, "I feel like I got to know Gene through reading a few of his letters."

The USS *Emmons* Association extends its sincere appreciation to Matt for his time and effort put forth honoring Eugene and sharing the *Emmons* story.

EMMONS FAMILY GROWTH CONTINUES

We recently heard from and welcome five shipmate families with whom we had not previously had any contact.

Kiersten JACOBY reached out to us looking for information about her grandfather, Gunner's Mate Phillip JACOBY, a survivor of the Okinawa attack and *Emmons* Plank Owner, having served aboard the *Emmons* the ship's entire life.

Kiersten spoke of the many stories her grandfather would tell about his service time. She shared photos of Phillip and a certificate of his accomplishments that hangs on her wall, as well as his Bluenose and Shellback certificates earned when crossing the Arctic Circle and equator, respectively.

Another first was word received from a member of the family of shipmate Martin KISER, Chief Radio Technician on the *Emmons*, also a Battle of Okinawa survivor.

Terri SCOTT, widow of Martin's grandson, contacted us to purchase an *Emmons* survivor accounts book as she works to gather

information in hopes of sharing Martin's story with family through the generations.

The survivor accounts document how Martin, despite severe burns about the face, arms and back, selflessly continued to assist his fallen shipmates that day.

Along with some photos, Terri shared that Martin proudly told her how Admiral NIMITZ personally presented him with the Purple Heart while recovering in the hospital in Hawaii. The Admiral was, in fact, known to routinely visit hospitals throughout the Pacific to award the medals.

Most recently, Tracy and Cindy KELLER found us with the help of their daughter who came across the website and forwarded it to them. Tracy is the son of Charles KELLER, a Signalman on the *Emmons* and survivor of the Okinawa attack.

While Charles does not have an account in the *Emmons* survivor account book, we're told the family does have a typed copy prepared later that they plan to provide to us.

And finally, Drew WERTZ, great-grandson of Fireman Bernard J. HENRY, made contact through his purchase of a challenge coin, while Gene & Bob McLEAN, grandson and son of Seaman Burl D. McLEAN, a Plank Owner and Okinawa survivor, corresponded through their purchases of survivor account books.

Planning to attend the September reunion? Don't forget your shipmate photo(s) for the 'Wall of Honor' (service time or pre or post).

And as always, we'll be collecting personal items for the local Veterans' Home.

- As 2024 dues remittances continue to arrive, the USS *Emmons* Association takes this opportunity to extend its sincere appreciation to all those who support our efforts this year through their membership dues.
- As of this printing, shipmates honored by their families' and friends' 2024 dues remittances, as well as honorary members, are as follows:
- Donald W. Ayer
 - Walter D. Blair
 - George C. Border
 - Edwin J. Cornetta
 - Paul F. Dodd
 - John L. Donaldson
 - James A. Donnelly, Jr.
 - Ross T. Elliott, Jr.
 - George C. Flory
 - Eugene N. Foss, 2nd
 - Herbert K. Francis
 - Robert J. Glutting
 - Joseph A. Gocella
 - Edward E. Greenlaw
 - Douglas L. Gruber
 - Earl C. Hobart
 - Edwin L. Hoffman, Jr.
 - David Horwitz
 - Robert E. Hunter
 - Phillip A. Jacoby
 - David Jensen
 - Charles L. Keller
 - James J. Korney
 - Edwin J. Krom
 - John S. Malloway
 - Grover T. McMichael
 - Charles P. Melkunas
 - Thomas D. Orton, Jr.
 - Warren P. Otto
 - William R. Patton
 - Joseph P. Pomykala
 - Eugene L. Posey
 - Robert J. Schultz
 - John Sosenko
 - Warren G. Sparks
 - Thaddeus T. Tenerowicz
 - Homer D. Tittle
 - Edward N. Tostanoski
 - Clyne C. Veal
 - Robert C. Wagner
 - Donald L. Yecke

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USS Emmons (DD457-DMS22)

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JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP
USS EMMONS REUNION

**HAVE YOU REGISTERED YET?
EMMONS FAMILY REUNION
SEPTEMBER 26-29**

Join your Emmons Family as they carry on the tradition started by the shipmates and celebrate their selflessness, courage and love of country.

See story, page 1.