
SBSA UPDATES



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Sunday, November 6, 2016

SAVE THE DATE



SBSA Reunion

It is that time again! The 2017 Reunion will be held in San Diego, April 26th – May 1st, 2017 at the Wyndham Bayside, San Diego. Registration will begin on Wednesday, April 26th, for early arrivals and the reunion will officially close on Monday, May 1st. There will be many opportunities to reminisce with shipmates as well as other activities to fill your days.

Activities include a tour on Thursday, April 27th to Balboa Park, Air & Space and the Auto Museum (\$40.00 including box lunch per person); Maritime Museum Tour, SBSA

Reception & Pizza on Friday (\$20.00 per person); Memorial on Saturday (\$32.00 per person transportation and box lunch - \$12.00 per person box lunch only); and the ever popular ride on PCF 816 (various times throughout the reunion.) More information is contained in the Registration Form, which will be available shortly. San Diego has a lot to offer to visitors so please take advantage of our beautiful host city!



Just Like A Swift Boat – NOT!

Commissioning of the USS Zumwalt

by Dave Wallace

About two years ago, I got a call from Joe Muharsky in Cleveland, OH, asking if I'd be interested in going to Bath, Maine, to witness the christening of the USS Zumwalt DDG-1000. Admittedly taken aback, I asked Joe for some details and tried to get my head fully engaged. It turned out that Joe's stayed in contact with the Zumwalt family since the Admiral's funeral at the Naval Academy and had, himself been invited to the christening. He patiently explained to me what this was all about and the traditions associated with the ceremony along with the activities before and after. I admit to being totally defeated by technology in not being able to answer him on the spot - I couldn't see the calendar in my "smart-phone" (not so smart operator).

Shortly after this call and my scurry into activity, I got another "interesting" call; this time from the PCO of the Zumwalt, Captain Jim Kirk. He invited me and any and all other Swifties to the christening and - perhaps - a ship visit. We talked about what the SBSA could do to be a part, he explained the masthead box tradition to me, and I offered several pieces of memorabilia to him, which he enthusiastically accepted over the phone!

At some point in this, I realized that my wife and I would be in charge of a couple grandkids (then 2 and 4) during the time of the christening. Joe Muharsky continued to push for more members to join in. He then commissioned a painting of the Admiral and Elmo IV that would be offered to be hung in the wardroom or Chiefs' Mess/Goat Locker. The SBSA supported this gift as well.

Some quick scurrying around with other board members and officers and we had a package on its way to the Zumwalt in her dry dock. It included a blue oval Swift pin (COSRON ONE) and a couple of challenge coins. Thanks the Terry Boone for the quick action on this project.



CF-2 Flight 484, Flyover off USS Zumwalt on October 17, 2016, w/ Major Rob Guyette as the pilot, returning to Norfolk Naval Station after being commissioned in Baltimore, MD.

The Zumwalt continued her progress with her remarkable, handpicked crew toward her eventual turnover to the Navy as a commissioned ship. Baltimore was selected as the city for the event and the local Navy League (think Annapolis and retired brass!) stepped into the harnesses. It was timed to coincide with two rather large events in Baltimore: the Navy Birthday and Baltimore's annual Fleet Week. Those of us attending found there was also an in town marathon which didn't ease the traffic one single bit.

Because the SBSA had made a generous donation to the Zumwalt's commissioning ceremony (ours was actually marked specifically to be used for "Crew Enhancements") we were awarded a handful of invitations to a reception on Thursday evening, a "gift session" with the crew on Saturday morning, and seats at the commissioning itself. Swifties Sue Edwards-Irvin, Don Hammer, Joe Muharsky, Bud Kittle, and I represented the association to our best abilities in all events.

The ceremony itself involved many, many dignitaries, Navy brass, and politicians. Each talked about the proud tradition sparked by our old boss, COMNAVFORV. The traditions he started and the ever-present quote from Time magazine, "He brought the US Navy kicking and screaming into the 20th Century!" Most interesting for us "old salts" were the comments and ceremonial aspects. The posting of the colors, the trilling of the bosun's pipe, the calling of orders, and breaking of the ensign

as a commissioned ship of the line. Ann Zumwalt-Coppola and Mouzetta Zumwalt-Weathers called the order to "Man our ship and bring her to life!" after all the kind words and encouraging thoughts were given. At that, the entire crew ran up the ladder onto the ship and manned the rail. Two small surface search radars (all that showed - the exterior of this ship is flat and plain) started turning, the gun mounts opened and barrels were raised, and finally SECNAV's pennant was broken out.



Capt. James Kirk with painting presented by the SBSA. This painting will remain aboard the USS Zumwalt.



C.O.A.L. CRUISE

Cast Off All Lines

July 12th - August 6th, 2016

By Fred Smallwood

I recently had the privilege of commanding a refurbished Vietnam-era SWIFT Boat, PCF-816, on a commemorative voyage along the California coast. I served in Vietnam in

1968 as Officer in Charge of such a boat, and was offered the opportunity to operate another on a cruise from the boat's home port of San Diego, California, to various ports along the coast. The boat's voyage plan called for her to sail from San Diego 12 July and make port calls at Oceanside, Newport Beach, Los Angeles, Port Hueneme and Santa Barbara before beginning the return trip to San Diego via other ports along the way. Since the boat is no longer an official Navy craft but is owned by the Maritime Museum of San Diego, she falls under commercial rules and a licensed Master was necessary. As a former "Swiftie" and holder of the appropriate license, I eagerly accepted the request to serve as the boat's Master for the first half of the voyage. Fortunately the boat's cruise was scheduled for a time when my services were not required by Captain Ed Higgins, New Orleans Chapter President and owner of Higgins Marine Services; my participation is frequently required by Higgins in the conduct of sea trials in new Navy and Coast Guard ships at Huntington-Ingalls' Shipyard at Pascagoula, Mississippi.

In the various ports, there were crew changes as relief former Swift Boat sailors came aboard and others returned ashore. As many as fourteen were onboard at any given time, the number limited by the boat's official Certificate of Inspection. The boat drew large crowds in the different ports and former Swifties enthusiastically showed off their boat and related their Swift experiences in Vietnam. Perhaps of greatest interest was the visit by two former Vietnamese officers who had served in Swift Boats after they were turned over to the South Vietnamese Navy. Both had relocated to the United States and both were visibly moved by seeing a craft similar to the one in which they had served.



American-manned Swift Boats served a vital role in Vietnam from 1965 until they were turned over to the South Vietnamese in the early seventies. The boats were initially assigned the task of coastal surveillance and interdiction along South Vietnam's coast, with orders to prevent the flow of arms and ammunition into South Vietnam from the north. Perhaps the Swifts did their job too well, since later in the war the path for arms from the north was shifted farther inland to the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail. When that became evident, other patrol assets in Vietnam, the boats known as PBRs, water-jet powered boats better suited for shallow water operations, were shifted farther inland along rivers and canals and the Swifts were sent up rivers as far as their 4.5 foot drafts would allow.



At one time, there were more than 85 Swift Boats in Vietnam. The 50-foot aluminum-hulled Swifts were built by Seward Seacraft near Morgan City, La.; their design was based on that of the proven crew supply boats used in the Gulf of Mexico. The boats were capable of speeds up to 30 knots and were equipped with sizable ordnance for their size. They mounted three .50 caliber machine guns, two in a trainable mount over the pilothouse and one aft, an 81 mm mortar capable of both

drop fire and trigger fire operation with a range of over two and a half miles. They also carried numerous small arms. The combat crew consisted of one officer, usually a Navy Lieutenant (junior grade) and five enlisted personnel with the required specialties: an engineman to take care of the twin 500 horsepower diesel engines, a gunner's mate to operate and maintain the boat's weapons, a radarman for operational matters, a quartermaster for navigation, and a boatswain's mate for topside seamanship duties. Swifts were formidable assets for their size.

The cruise of PCF 816, the only remaining operational Swift, provided a unique opportunity for former Swift Boat sailors to experience again the feel, sound, and even the smell of these boats and equally importantly it provided the chance to increase awareness of the important role these men and their boats played in the Vietnam War. It was impressive to observe the visitors onboard PCF 816 literally hanging on every word of the 70-year old Swift veterans as they vividly remembered and recounted their experiences in these boats.



In Memoriam...

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize and remember those we lost since the last reunion. May they have fair winds and following seas.

James Sunderlin

April 8, 2015

Larry McClintick

July 20, 2015

Neil Geis

July 20, 2015

John Wyatt

August 7, 2015

Jerry Sullivan

November 11, 2015

Woodrow "Bud" Wilson Dalahite

February 2, 2016

Mike Bernique

March 18, 2016

Patrick Sage

April 8, 2016

Toi Dang

April 28, 2016

John Hawkins

May 2, 2016

Ron Krushe

July 11, 2016

Ken Magnus

August 26, 2016

Joseph Nappa (P23)

September 5, 2016