

U.S.S. EMMONS

DD 457

DMS 22



Volume XXXVII, No. 2

USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

July/August 2025

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2025 REUNION

Lynchburg, VA
September 25 - 28

Registration information enclosed and available at our [Reunions Page](#) at www.ussemmons.org
DEADLINE AUGUST 31

REGISTRATION DEADLINE DRAWS CLOSE FOR LYNCHBURG REUNION; PLAN OF EVENTS IN PLACE

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

As we approach the halfway point of summer, we find ourselves only two months out from our fall reunion! Special focus this year, the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa, will be on the 60 lost sailors and their selfless sacrifice granting us the freedoms we enjoy today.

Friday's Activities

We'll honor those men with our annual memorial service when we visit the National D-Day Memorial on Friday. Following lunch together, we'll return for a special program back at the Hilton Garden Inn, our base of operations for the weekend. A buffet dinner followed by time together in the hospitality room will close out Friday's activities.

Free time Saturday afternoon will allow for shopping and a number of sightseeing options including the Appomattox

Court House, the site of the end of the Civil War, as well as the American Civil War Museum, the Bedford Boys Tribute Center and more.

Special Guest

We're excited to share that award-winning underwater photographer Brett ELDRIDGE will join us during the weekend. He will share his experience diving on and photographing the *Emmons* to create a 3D model of the ship in her final resting spot (see story, page 3).

As always, we'll hear from our Griffin/*Emmons* Memorial Scholarship recipient at the Saturday evening banquet.

If you haven't registered yet, it's not too late. Return the enclosed registration form and book your room at the reduced group rate before they're all gone and no later than August 31 if rooms still remain.

DIVER FRIENDS HONOR SHIP, LOST SHIPMATES WHILE SON CARRIES ON FATHER'S LEGACY OF HONOR AND RESPECT

"The seas were calm, the water was cold and the rain was....wet." So reported Kurt REESE regarding April's Memorial Dive at the *Emmons* site. This year's dive was held April 6th, exactly 80 years to the day since the kamikaze attack on the *Emmons*.

Kurt led 12 divers who honored the memory of the 60 shipmates lost on the *Emmons* 80 years ago. Included among the divers was Brandi EBACH who made a beautiful wreath placed alongside the memorial plaque on the ship. Check out the photos on our website's [Memorial Dives page](#). We anticipate Kurt will have a video of the dive to share with us at the upcoming reunion.

Chuck DeCesari, one of the leaders of the Memorial Dives the past 20 years, was missing from the solemn occasion after unexpectedly passing away last November. With Chuck having provided the transportation each year, his son, William, took the wheel this year, captaining the boat to make certain the annual memorial tradition continues.

The *Emmons* Association extends our heartfelt appreciation to all those involved in honoring the memory of the lost shipmates. We are grateful to Will for his desire to continue his father's legacy of honor and respect by transporting the divers to the *Emmons* site..

CRESSWELL BECOMES FIRST 4TH GENERATION EMMONS FAMILY MEMBER TO EARN SCHOLARSHIP

The Legacy Committee is pleased to announce James Walker CRESSWELL as this year's recipient of the \$2500 Lt. John J. Griffin, Jr. / USS *Emmons* Memorial Scholarship award.

Walker, as he is known, lives in Olive Branch, Mississippi, and will enter the University of Mississippi this fall as a freshman. He plans to enter a pre-med program majoring in English and Biology with his sights set on a career as an ophthalmologist.

William and Thomas McCONNELL, Walker's great-great uncles, were among the 60 shipmates who made the ultimate sacrifice aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa,

April 6, 1945. Those attending the 2023 reunion in Baltimore had the opportunity to meet Walker's grandparents, Valerie and Mack McCURRY.

With only one scholarship applicant this year, the committee found the lack of competition had no bearing on Walker earning the scholarship; after the past two years of eight and nine applicants, his essay score this year would have earned him a scholarship in both previous years. Well done Walker!

The Legacy Committee looks forward to introducing Walker and sharing his essay with everyone at the upcoming reunion.

"SAVE THE FLAG" INITIATIVE FOCUSES ON BATTLE-WORN EMMONS FLAG

Please consider contributing to help defray our cost of preserving *Emmons* Battle Flag, Pennant

As previously reported, the Ed (Skee) TOSTANOSKI family entrusted the Association with the battle flag and commissioning pennant retrieved from the *Emmons* the day of the kamikaze attack, April 6, 1945. It is the Association's goal to preserve and protect these historic artifacts, ensuring they will serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by the shipmates that day.

The fragile flag and pennant, appearing tattered from weather at sea and the events of that fateful day 80 years ago, are about to receive some tender loving care from conservator Virginia WHELAN of Merion Station, PA. The Board of Directors has contracted with Virginia to help us preserve these symbols of the *Emmons'* fighting spirit.

Virginia specializes in historic needlework and fine textiles. Her clients include cultural and educational institutions, historic museums and others. She has done significant work for, among others, the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, with some of her work



Virginia Whelan with the Battle Flag

including flags from the Revolutionary era, such as Washington's Headquarters flag, as well as his Valley Forge tent.

Virginia's work will include a gentle cleaning to remove 80 years of particulate soil from the surface without removing the provenance provided by the soot and staining from their time of service on the ship. A humidifying process will remove creases resulting from years of storage.

Ready for mounting, the flag and pennant will be stitched to a padded mount made of archival materials with the flag's frayed fly ends

untangled and secured with thread and special conservation stitching.

Finally, the mounted flag and pennant will be encased with a black frame and Museum Acrylic, providing 99% UV protection.

We look forward to having these valuable pieces of *Emmons* history on display at future reunions and preserved for generations to come with the potential they may someday reside in a museum sharing the *Emmons* story with others.

Contributions toward the cost of Virginia's work have already been received, leaving the Association with a balance of \$2,000.

If you're moved to be a part of this effort and wish to help preserve the battle flag and commissioning pennant from the April, 1945 attack, your contribution of any amount would be greatly appreciated. Send your check made payable to the USS *Emmons* Association with "Save the Flag" in the memo line to Thomas Hoffman, 36078 Huntington St., Millville, DE 19967, or via Venmo @ussemmons.

IN MEMORIAM

RONALD E. LaFLEUR Anne LaFleur notified us of the passing of her husband, Ron, on April 29, 2025, ten days following his 85th birthday. Ron was the nephew of shipmate Arsene "Leonard" LaJeunesse, who died at Okinawa.

Ron attended his first *Emmons* reunion in 2024 when he, wife Anne and son Michael made the trip from their home in nearby Ledyard, Connecticut, to join us at Battleship Cove.

Now HEAR This !

Our spring newsletter's "Call To Action" article resulted in two third-generation *Emmons* family members stepping up to offer their assistance, giving us further promise that our efforts will not fade away with time.

Paul DODD's granddaughter, Alaina SHORT, and Armand JOLLY's granddaughter, Amanda JOLLY, have answered our call.

We look forward to working Alaina and Amanda and ask that any other third-generation members interested in offering their time helping us keep the legacy alive to please email us at ussemmmons@gmail.com.

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This year marks the 80th anniversary of the attack on the USS *Emmons* at Okinawa. We extend our sin-

cere appreciation to the non-profit Tin Can Sailors organization for dedicating much of their spring edition of *Tin Can Sailor Magazine* to sharing the story of the *Emmons* with their members. TCS works to educate the public on the contribution made by destroyers and to promote and preserve destroyer history.

Special thanks to Donna JOLLY and Kurt REESE for their articles documenting the *Emmons'* history and the experiences of our diver friends, as well as Mike BORING who provided the magazine's cover photo and accompanying images. The articles and photos can be accessed at our website's [Media page](#). While there, consider supporting TCS' efforts with the membership application included.

PHOTOGRAPHER DRAWN TO EMMONS SITE

Award-winning photographer Brett ELDRIDGE recently put his passion for exploring and photographing historic underwater wrecks to work for the *Emmons* Association. In June, Brett reached out to the Association with plans to build a 3D model of the *Emmons* in her final resting place.

Accompanied by Kurt REESE, unusually calm seas allowed Brett to dive on the *Emmons* five consecutive days, taking 7385 photos of the ship. Using a technique called photogrammetry, a computer program was used to turn the photos into a 3D model.

Once completed, Brett provided us with a 3' x 6' poster of the model to

have on display at reunions. Also, we're excited to share that Brett has accepted our invitation to join us at the reunion and will address the group at our Saturday banquet.

Visit our website's [Media page](#) for links to a low resolution [on-line 3D model](#) of the *Emmons* and [Brett's blog](#) where he shares his experience creating the model.

We're grateful for Brett's work of increasing awareness of the *Emmons* story and sharing the result of his work with us, as well as Kurt's time in providing his guidance at the wreck site and Will DeCESARI for providing transportation to the site.

As 2025 dues remittances continue to arrive, the USS *Emmons* Association takes this opportunity to extend sincere appreciation to all who support our efforts through their membership dues.

As of this printing, shipmates honored by their families' and friends' 2025 dues remittances, as well as honorary members, are as follows:

Donald W. Ayer
Walter D. Blair
George C. Border
Edwin J. Cornetta
John H. Devers
Paul F. Dodd
John L. Donaldson
James A. Donnelly, Jr.
Ross T. Elliott, Jr.
Anthony S. Esposito
Stanley L. Fisher
George C. Flory
Eugene N. Foss, 2nd
Robert J. Glutting
Herbert K. Francis
Robert J. Glutting
Joseph A. Gocella
Edward E. Greenlaw
Douglas L. Gruber
Earl C. Hobart
Edwin L. Hoffman, Jr.
David Horwitz
Harold Jay
David Jensen
Armand J. Jolly
Charles L. Keller
James J. Korney
Edwin J. Krom
Arsene L. Lajeunesse
John S. Malloway
Thomas McConnell
William J. McConnell
Grover T. McMichael
John L. McMichael
Charles P. Melkunas
Thomas D. Orton, Jr.
Warren P. Otto
William R. Patton
George E. Serewa
John Sosenko
Warren G. Sparks
Homer C. Tittle
Edward N. Tostanoski
Robert C. Wagner
Donald L. Yecke

USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION

c/o T. Hoffman
36078 Huntington St.
Millville, DE 19967

Phone: (610) 417-5163

E-mail: ussemmons@gmail.com



USS Emmons (DD457-DMS22)

**Visit our website at
www.ussemmons.org**

Here's your summer
edition of the
USS Emmons Newsletter
along with the
2025 Reunion registration
information.



JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP
USS EMMONS DD457/DMS22
FAMILY & FRIENDS COMMUNITY

HAVE YOU REGISTERED YET?

EMMONS FAMILY REUNION

Lynchburg, Virginia

SEPTEMBER 25-28

Registration forms enclosed. As registrations continue to arrive, don't delay in booking your room before the block at the reduced group rate is gone!

USS *EMMONS* ASSOCIATION

www.ussemmons.org



Dear *Emmons* Family Members:

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa and the Japanese kamikaze attack on the *Emmons*. It's been 80 years since her final day of glory that saw 60 courageous shipmates make the ultimate sacrifice in defense of their ship and their shipmates. This coming September, join us as we come together for an 80th anniversary reunion weekend to celebrate their fighting spirit while honoring the memory of the lost shipmates.

We are pleased to invite you to the 2025 *Emmons* Family Reunion September 25-28 at the Hilton Garden Inn, 4025 Wards Rd., Lynchburg, Virginia. The hotel is conveniently located one mile from Lynchburg Regional Airport (sorry, no shuttle service), in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

A block of guest rooms has been set aside at a group rate of \$169 plus tax, including breakfast. **The rooms will be available at that rate until August 31st or until they are all gone, whichever comes first, so book early so as not to miss out on our group rate.** Reservations can be cancelled up to 24 hours prior.

Our Friday outing will be a visit to the National D-Day Memorial in nearby Bedford, where we'll enjoy a guided tour and honor the lost shipmates with our annual Memorial Service. There are plenty of options for your free time Saturday, including Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest retreat, the American Civil War Museum and the Appomattox Court House, site of General Robert E. Lee's surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant, ending the Civil War. And, of course, there's always shopping or just relaxing at the hotel.

And, as always, Saturday evening's banquet program will provide us the opportunity to meet and hear from our 2025 Lt. Griffin/*Emmons* Memorial Scholarship recipients.

Whether you attend one day or the entire weekend, we hope to see many of you there and we're always eager to meet and welcome new *Emmons* family members for what we expect will be another memorable weekend.

Sincerely,
Tom Hoffman
Email: ussemmons@gmail.com
Phone: 610-417-5163

There are two steps required to register:

- 1) Complete the enclosed registration form and return it to us by **August 31st** and
- 2) Reserve your hotel room at the \$169 group rate through one of two methods:
 - a. Call the hotel at 434-239-3006. Specify USS *Emmons* code **USS** to receive the group rate **or**
 - b. Reserve online at our website's [Reunions page](#).

Please note, you may extend your stay before/after at the group rate.

2025 USS *Emmons* Reunion Itinerary

PLEASE NOTE: ALL TIMES ARE TENTATIVE. FINAL ITINERARY WILL BE PROVIDED UPON ARRIVAL.

Hospitality Room – Liberty Room

Friday and Saturday Complimentary Breakfast – Hotel Restaurant (request vouchers when checking in)

Friday Buffet Dinner, Saturday Banquet and Sunday Breakfast – Lynchburg/CVCC Room

Contacts: Tom Hoffman 610-417-5163; Allison Guinan 215-287-0362

Request vouchers at check-in for Friday/Saturday breakfast.

Thursday, September 25:

Hospitality room opens at 4pm – Liberty Room

Family & friends are invited to recognize your crew member on our “Wall of Honor” in the hospitality room

6:00 – 8 p.m. – Hospitality room closed. Dinner “on your own” at our hotel’s Garden Inn & Bar or one of the many restaurants in the immediate area

8 p.m. – Hospitality room will be open until last person leaves

Friday, September 26:

Complimentary breakfast in hotel restaurant (voucher required)

8:30 a.m. - Board bus to travel to National D-Day Memorial, including guided tour & Memorial Service

11:45 a.m. - Board bus to travel to lunch at Olde Liberty Station (dine together at your expense)

1:45 p.m. - Board bus to return to hotel. Hospitality room will be open

4:30 p.m. - Program in Hospitality Room (Liberty Room)

6:00 p.m. - Buffet dinner (Lynchburg/CVCC Room)

Following dinner - Hospitality Room will remain open until last person leaves

Saturday, September 27:

Complimentary breakfast in hotel restaurant (voucher required)

9:00 a.m. - USS *Emmons* Association business meeting in hospitality room – all are invited

REMAINDER OF DAY IS FREE to visit local attractions, shopping and relaxation

6:30 p.m. - Cocktail hour (cash bar) (Lynchburg/CVCC Room)

7:00 p.m. - Banquet and program (Lynchburg/CVCC Room)

Following banquet – Hospitality Room will remain open until last person leaves

Sunday, September 28:

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. – Goodbye breakfast buffet (Lynchburg/CVCC Room)

Donations for Veterans Home

We will again collect items for a local Veterans Home. Personal items are needed such as: Toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant, combs, brushes, razors, socks, warm hats, scarves, etc. Please drop donations at the hospitality room by 6pm Saturday.

2025 USS *Emmons* Reunion Registration Form

RETURN FORM WITH PAYMENT BY AUGUST 31st

NAMES: _____

Primary email address and/or phone number: _____

Please indicate the number of people attending each event below:

_____ @ \$10 per person registration fee (required for each person attending) \$ _____

_____ @ \$30 per person – Friday Visit to National D-Day Memorial including tour,
Memorial Service, transportation \$ _____

_____ @ \$40 per person – Friday buffet dinner \$ _____

Saturday Evening Banquet – How many attending? _____ (indicate choices and totals below):

ENTRÉE CHOICES				
ENTRÉE	QUANTITY	MULTIPLY	PRICE	TOTAL
Chicken Cordon Bleu		x	\$60	
Oven Roasted Salmon		x	\$60	
Grilled Beef Sirloin		x	\$65	
Chicken Tenders/Fries (Children 12 and under)		x	\$15	

Enter Total Due for Entrée Choices \$ _____

_____ Sunday morning goodbye breakfast buffet no cost
(Indicate number attending. No charge for this meal, but a count is needed.)

AMOUNT REMITTED (make checks payable to USS *Emmons* Association) \$ _____

Include a note regarding any dietary restrictions and we'll see what accommodations can be made.

Send completed form with payments **by August 31st to:**

USS *Emmons* Association
36078 Huntington St.
Millville, DE 19967

REMEMBER TO MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATION AND SUBMIT THIS FORM BY AUGUST 31st !