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USS Emmons (DD457-DMS22)

Visit our website at
www.ussemmons.org

HERE'S YOUR NOVEMBER/DECEMBER EDITION OF THE USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER!



JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP
USS EMMONS REUNION



USS Emmons Association president Eleanor Yates presents the 2023 scholarship awards to Emma Gillanders and Dennis Yecke, accepting on behalf of daughter Tiffany Brooks (story page 1).



SINCEREST WISHES FOR A HAPPY, HEALTHFUL NEW YEAR!



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USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

November\December 2023

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2023 REUNION BRINGS TOGETHER FRIENDS OLD & NEW

Among the 43 *Emmons* family members who gathered in Baltimore for September's annual reunion were 16 enjoying the first time with their *Emmons* family, making for many new friendships forged over the weekend and another successful time honoring the legacy of our *Emmons* shipmates.

The Sheraton BWI Airport served as home base and, despite threatening skies, the weather was perfect for Friday's visit to the USS *Constellation* at Baltimore's historic Inner Harbor.

Honoring Departed Shipmates

Friday's tour of the *Constellation* began on the ship's stern with a memorial service in tribute to the shipmates lost at Okinawa and those we lost the past year. Following the tour and free time to visit the other historic ships, attendees enjoyed lunch together at Phillips Seafood Restaurant, a culinary tradition of Maryland's Eastern Shore,

Back at the hotel, Friday afternoon's program featured a return of the Wall of Honor, allowing family members and friends to recognize and share memories of their beloved *Emmons* shipmates.

The program closed with a moving

video provided by Kurt REESE of the April Memorial Dive when eight Marines and Airmen came together to honor the lost shipmates. The video and photos are available on our website's [Memorial Dives page](#).

Many took advantage of their free time Saturday to, among other things, enjoy the National Aquarium, tour Fort McHenry, the birthplace of "The Star-Spangled Banner," or to simply relax.

Banquet Highlights

The weekend's events climaxed with the *Emmons* Family Banquet Saturday night. Those in attendance had the opportunity to meet and hear from this year's Griffin/*Emmons* Scholarship recipients as they shared a reading of their essays. And special guest, Darlene FONG, addressed the crowd sharing her experiences diving on the *Emmons* and her participation in a number of memorial dives (see story, page 2).

The weekend came to a close with Sunday morning's breakfast buffet allowing for one last time together before sharing goodbyes until next year.

Visit our website's [Reunions page](#) for photos of the weekend's activities.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆
 ☆ THE 2024 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION IS NOW AVAILABLE!
 ☆ \$5000 IN AWARDS!
 ☆ VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT USSEMMONS.ORG FOR INFORMATION
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GILLANDERS, BROOKS AWARDED 2024 SCHOLARSHIPS

The Legacy Committee most competitive yet in *Emmons'* role in sup-ported the allied landings and the sacrifice of those who perished that day. Emma GILLANDERS and Tiffany BROOKS as this year's Lt. John J. Griffin, Jr./USS *Emmons* Memorial Scholarship recipients.

With nine applicants, this year proved to be the

most competitive yet in *Emmons'* role in sup-ported the allied landings and the sacrifice of those who perished that day. Emma GILLANDERS and Tiffany BROOKS as this year's Lt. John J. Griffin, Jr./USS *Emmons* Memorial Scholarship recipients.

This year's essay prompt dealt with the Normandy Invasion, the

most competitive yet in *Emmons'* role in sup-ported the allied landings and the sacrifice of those who perished that day.

Emma is the great-granddaughter of shipmate Walter D. BLAIR, and Tiffany is the granddaugh- (See *SCHOLARSHIP* - page 3)

2024 REUNION

We're still in the planning stage.

Visit our website for updates.

EMMONS FAMILY WELCOMES LONG-TIME FRIEND

“Meeting you all has impacted and completed my experience of having this relationship with the Emmons.”

—Darlene FONG, long-time participant of the annual Okinawa Memorial Dives, shared those words as she addressed those in attendance at the reunion’s Saturday banquet.

Having visited the *Emmons* on 131 dives, including many of the memorial dives with Kurt REESE, Chuck DeCESARI and others, we were honored to have Darlene and husband Mike RELYEA join us at this year’s reunion.

As she addressed the group, Darlene spoke of Kurt and Chuck as the true *“Guardians of the Emmons”* and that she was always happy to support them and the memorial dives in honoring the lost shipmates’ sacrifice.

She talked of how diving on the ship was like diving on a time capsule...how she could touch the hel-



Mike Esposito presents Darlene with a copy of *“The Emmons Saga.”*

mets and shoes, look through portholes to see disheveled cots that tumbled as the ship made its final landing and the sinks where the young men washed their hands. *“It was a very surreal moment and affects everyone who dives on the Emmons.”*

Darlene shared how she enjoyed inviting other divers on their first experience in getting to know the *Emmons* and how she felt honored to experience it and wished it was something we, too, could experience.

As a token of appreciation for her years of honor and respect shown the *Emmons* and her crew, Mike ESPOSITO presented Darlene with a copy of *“The Emmons Saga”* containing a special inscription and signed by those in attendance.

Following her 2022 retirement, Darlene and Mike are back in the states and now live just outside Spokane, Washington.

(SCHOLARSHIP continued from page 2)

ter of Dennis E. YECKE, brother of shipmate Donald L. YECKE, who gave his life aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa, April 6, 1945.

Emma began her freshman year at the University of Tampa in Tampa, Florida. She is majoring in Business Marketing and has her sights on a career in fashion merchandising. Emma lives in Parkland, Florida.

Tiffany is working on her Master of Arts in Spiritual Formation at the Portland Seminary at George Fox University, Portland, Oregon. She lives in Norman, Oklahoma.

The essays and photos of our recipients, as well as the 2024 scholarship application are available on our website’s [Scholarship page](#).

INTERVIEW DETAILS OKINAWA ATTACK

A recently discovered audio recording of an interview with *Emmons* shipmate Lafayette EASTON, a survivor of the Okinawa attack, provides a fascinating account of that fateful day aboard the *Emmons*. Visit the National Museum of the Pacific War’s oral histories to hear his interview at pacificwarmuseum.org.

LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY HONORING YOUR LOVED ONES IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Digital memorials have emerged as a way of honoring and remembering our loved ones. Thank you to Kevin KING who brought to our attention several ways you can create a tribute to your USS *Emmons* veteran that will reach across generations, helping to preserve the memory of his service to our country.

The U.S. Navy Memorial offers an opportunity to display a photo-engraved plaque, both in its Washington Visitor Center and online. The USS *Emmons* currently has a plaque there honoring the 60 lost shipmates.

The Navy Memorial also maintains a *“Navy Log”* where you can post a tribute to your *Emmons* shipmate. The log is available online and allows you to post a photo and list

ships he served on and other duty stations, as well as significant awards (i.e. medals).

Likewise, the National WWII Memorial on the Mall in Washington, DC, has a searchable online registry where you may also upload a photo.

The National Museum of the Pacific War, located in Fredericksburg, TX, has an extensive digital archive of interview recordings and transcripts you may submit. The *Emmons* Association is currently working with them to submit our shipmate interviews that can currently be found on our website’s [Shipmate Interviews page](#).

Visit the [Leave a Legacy page](#) of our website for information and links to these sites.

