

DD 457

U.S.S. EMMONS

DMS 22



Volume XXXVII, No. 3

USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

November/December 2025

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2026 REUNION

Information Coming
in the Spring!

Watch our website
for updates

at

www.ussemmons.org

VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS PROVIDE SCENIC BACKDROP FOR *EMMONS* FAMILY REUNION

The 2025 *Emmons* Family Reunion, held September 25—28 in Lynchburg, Virginia, is in the books. Some drove by car over 800 miles while others flew in to share together the special bond the shipmates created many years ago and to honor the lost shipmates.

D-Day Memorial Visit

With guests having arrived throughout the day Thursday, the weekend's activities were underway Friday with a visit to the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia. Local ROTC students presented the colors as our annual memorial service honored the 60 fallen sailors. A guided tour of the memorial followed.

Next was a short bus ride to enjoy lunch together at Liberty Station, a converted train station dating back to 1852. The group then returned to the hotel for an afternoon program featuring presentation of rubbings of the names of lost shipmates from the Okinawa Peace Park (see story, page 2) and a showing of Kurt REESE's video of April's Memorial Dive. Then it was on to a buffet dinner and time together in the hospitality room.

Saturday's Association business meeting included the re-election of all officers and Board of Directors members.

Despite the rain, everyone took advantage of Saturday's free time to take in attractions the area had to offer, including Appomattox Court House, the National Civil War Museum, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest Retreat and The Bedford Boys Tribute Center, honoring the memory of the 21 boys from Bedford, VA, who died on the first day of the Normandy Invasion.

Banquet Highlights

Saturday's banquet program provided everyone the opportunity to meet this year's scholarship recipient, Walker CRESSWELL, as he shared a reading of his essay. To close out the program, guest speaker Brett ELDRIDGE engaged everyone in attendance as he recounted his experience creating the 3D model of the *Emmons* and his other adventures (see story below).

Visit the website's [Reunions page](#) for photos and the [Memorial Dive page](#) to view the video of April's Memorial Dive.

UNDERWATER EXPLORER SHARES EXPERIENCE DIVING ON THE *EMMONS*

Our keynote speaker at the reunion banquet, underwater explorer Brett ELDRIDGE, shared his experience of diving on historic wrecks and creating a 3D model of the *Emmons* in her final resting spot.

Brett, who lives in Southern California, talked of his passion for diving and photographing wrecks and the history behind them. He told of his time diving on and

photographing the HMHS Britannic, which operated as a hospital ship during WWI and sunk after hitting a German mine, and his discovery of a WWII F8F Bearcat fighter aircraft off the coast of California.

Brett provided great insight into what's involved in diving on wrecks such as the *Emmons*, including the

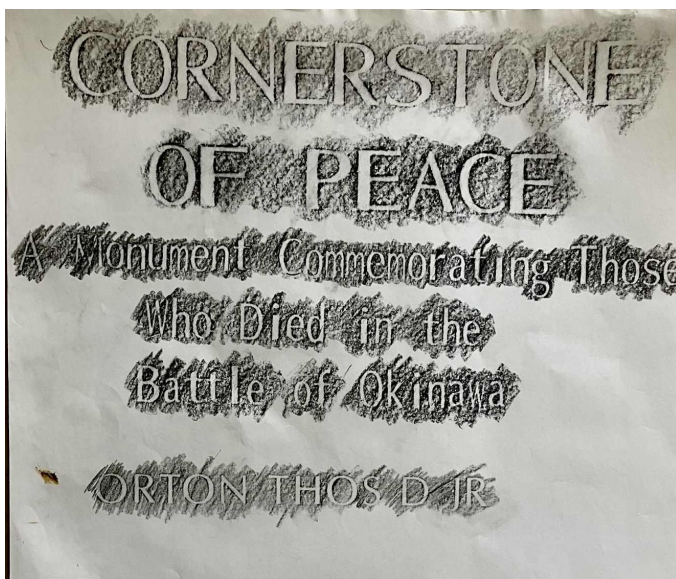
(Continued...See ELDRIDGE on page 2)

RUBBINGS PROVIDE TANGIBLE PIECE OF MEMORIAL

In June, Steph PAWELSKI, who delves deeply into WW2 history in Okinawa, reached out to us regarding the island's Cornerstone of Peace Memorial. The black granite monuments located there contain the etchings of the nearly 250,000 who gave their lives during the Battle of Okinawa.

Included among those names are the 60 *Emmons* shipmates who gave their lives. Realizing most of us are unable to make the trip to Okinawa, Steph offered to provide us with a rubbing of the shipmates' names.

Rubbing art is a technique where a piece of paper is placed over the



Thomas Orton Rubbing Created for the Orton Family.

engraved name and charcoal, or something similar, is rubbed across the paper to transfer the name. In this case, she provided us a rubbing of all 60 men's names which was on

display at the reunion.

Steph then took it a step further, graciously offering to provide, to families of the lost shipmates, personal rubbings of their loved ones. Expressing their appreciation, several families accepted, thus providing a tangible, piece of the monument to honor their loved ones.

The *Emmons* Association is grateful for the honor and respect shown for the shipmates through Steph's offer to provide the rubbings.

Also, check out Steph's compelling Facebook group, *Okinawa Battle Sites*, where she visits and shares her experiences at battle sites throughout Okinawa.

(ELDRIDGE....Continued from page 1)

need to go through mandatory decompression and the value of rebreathers which recirculate exhaled air, thus allowing for longer dives.

He proceeded to explain his interest in the *Emmons* and his love for destroyers. The *Emmons*, he said, is the only destroyer in diveable depths that served in both the Atlantic and Pacific. As a history buff, that, and the ship's impressive service history, placed the *Emmons* high on his bucket list.

So Brett coordinated with Kurt and made the trip to Okinawa, diving on the *Emmons* for five consecutive days, taking over 7400 photos. He explained to create the 3D model, he used a process called photogrammetry which involved a computer program that ran for 35 hours

combining the 7400 photos into a final 3D model. A link allowing you to view the model is available on our website's [Media page](#).

Brett explained one benefit of creating these 3D models is that it better assists in identification of the craft when discovered which often can result in notification of the families. In addition, Naval History and Heritage Command in Washington is also provided with all documentation, data and models for their use in updating their records.

Brett was presented with a copy of *The Emmons Saga* with an inscription from the Association expressing our appreciation for sharing the result of his work with us and increasing awareness of the *Emmons* story with others in his community of explorers.

REUNION BRINGS NEW FRIENDS

We were excited to welcome several *Emmons* family members to their first reunion!

Shipmate Ralph MERRILL's daughter Ann BOWMAN and husband Will made the trip from New Bern, NC, and shipmate George BORDER's great-grandniece, Stephanie JACKSON and her children, Kayleigh & Christian were with us from Charlotte, NC. And, of course, this year's scholarship recipient, Walker CRESSWELL, great-grandnephew of William and Thomas McCONNELL.

Unfortunately, Ron CARYE, whose father often talked of his childhood friend, William CHADSEY, who died at Okinawa, was not able to arrive until the final day, but at least we got to meet him and hope to see Ron, as well as the Bowmans and Jacksons, next time!

THE 2026 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION IS NOW AVAILABLE. Those eligible include descendants of *Emmons* shipmates and descendants of siblings of shipmates lost at Okinawa. Access it at our website's [Scholarship Page](#).

Notes....from the Reunion Log

As part of the reunion's Friday program, attendees were able to experience the April Memorial Dive held at the *Emmons* site through a viewing of a video provided by Kurt REESE. Following the showing, it was shared that Kurt had recently forwarded a generous \$2,400 donation from our diver friends to the Griffin/*Emmons* Scholarship Fund.

The Association is deeply grateful for the continued support of Kurt and all our friends in Okinawa. With this latest contribution, their total donations over the years have reached an incredible \$23,500!

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Once again, the Association collected donations in support of a local veterans' center. This year, reunion attendees showed an outpouring of generosity for the soon-to-open Puller Veterans Care Center in Warrenton, Virginia—a new facility operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

Following the reunion, Mary TIETJEN, the center's Director of Admissions & Marketing, accepted the donations and expressed her sincere appreciation on behalf of the center.

Contributions included playing cards, board games, puzzles, and similar items designed to help veterans stay socially engaged and connected.

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The *Emmons* Association extends heartfelt thanks to the Legacy Committee for organizing another successful *Emmons* Family reunion.

Special appreciation goes to Spencer OTTO and Ed & Regina HOFFMAN for generously donating prizes for the reunion raffle. We also thank the MIKUSKA and GUINAN families for providing the banquet favors, along

with the beautiful centerpieces and the USS *Emmons* cake—graciously arranged by Allison GUINAN and provided by Susan SLOCUM.

Additionally, thanks to Mike and Spencer OTTO for capturing the weekend's memories with their cameras, and to Ed and Regina HOFFMAN, who ensured the hospitality room was always fully stocked and welcoming.

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The Saturday morning business meeting resulted in the re-election of the officers and members of the board of directors whose terms were expiring.

Eleanor YATES was elected to another two-year term as president of the *Emmons* Association. Eleanor has served as president of the Association since 2021.

Regarding the board of directors, the following eight current members were re-elected: Mike ESPOSITO, Allison GUINAN, Tom HOFFMAN, Pepper JAY, Jim KORNEY, Anne Marie PATTON, Eleanor YATES and Dennis J. YECKE.

BATTLE FLAG PRESERVATION

Contributions are still being accepted toward the cost of preserving the *Emmons* battle flag retrieved by Ed Tostanoski from the ship the day of the kamikaze attack. The balance still due is \$1160.

Checks payable to USS *Emmons* Association may be sent to Treasurer Tom Hoffman at:
36078 Huntington St., Millville DE 19967 or via Venmo @USSEmmons.

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
William C. Copeland
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
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
Joseph P. Pomykala
Robert J. Schultz
George E. Serewa
John Sosenko
Warren G. Sparks
Homer C. Tittle
Edward N. Tostanoski
Robert C. Wagner
Donald L. Yecke

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USS Emmons (DD457-DMS22)

Visit our website at
www.ussemmons.org

Here's your electronic
version of the latest
USS EMMONS Association
Newsletter!



JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP
USS Emmons DD457/DMS22
Family & Friends Community

The Emmons Family gathered in Lynchburg, Virginia, for the 2025 Reunion.



SINCERE WISHES FOR A HAPPY, HEALTHY HOLIDAY SEASON!

