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2018 REUNION

Sept. 20 –23

Saratoga, NY

More information
coming in
January!

BUFFALO PROVIDES BACKDROP FOR ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL REUNION

After 25 years, the Emmons family returned to the Niagara Falls area for our annual reunion, September 14-17, this time in downtown Buffalo. The Hyatt Regency was home base for the 75 in attendance, while beautiful fall weather greeted us for our entire stay.

Naval Park Visit

Friday morning's visit to the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park allowed us the opportunity to honor our lost Emmons shipmates and remember those Emmons family members lost this past year with our annual memorial service, followed by time to tour the USS Little Rock, USS The Sullivans and USS Croaker and share lunch together.

Back at the hotel, Friday afternoon's program included a video of a ceremony at the Punchbowl Cemetery in Hawaii honoring shipmate Donald L. Yecke through the reading of his eulogy (see story below).

Also, the Friday program was highlighted by a video presentation by Kevin King, retired naval aviator and PADI-certified diving instructor. Kevin and wife Jody also honored the Emmons shipmates more surprises before the afternoon was over (see story page 2.)

Friday's activities continued with a buffet dinner, after which many headed back to the hospitality room to continue their socializing.

Time to Explore

Following Saturday morning's business meeting, free time allowed everyone the opportunity to see the sites of Buffalo and surrounding areas, with many heading up to take in Niagara Falls.

Kevin King was our keynote speaker at the Saturday evening banquet and he didn't disappoint. He used the time to provide an entertaining, abridged version of the USS Emmons Specialty Dive
(Continued—see REUNION on page 2)

LOST SHIPMATE HONORED AT HAWAII'S PUNCHBOWL CEMETERY

The American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) recently honored Emmons shipmate Donald L. YECKE at a ceremony at the Punchbowl Cemetery in Hawaii. In the ABMC program, *Understanding Sacrifice*, selected fallen service members from WWII are eulogized by teachers as a way of helping to educate students about the sacrifices of these heroes. Crew member Donald YECKE, was selected this year to represent the state of Wisconsin.

George Mason University professor Christopher HAMMER read Donald's eulogy during that ceremony and Donald's brother, Dennis, was able to obtain a video of

the reading, which he shared with all of us at the Friday program.

The eulogy began with an outline of Donald's childhood in Sheboygan, WI, and his family's dealings with the Great Depression of the 1930's when Donald left school to go to work at a local bakery earning extra money for his family. Donald was eight years older than his brother Dennis, and was very close to his sister Gladys.

Christopher continued, explaining how Donald's dream to "see the world" led him to the U.S. Navy. Assigned to the *Emmons*, his bakery experience served him well as baker on the ship. "The Emmons crew was luckier

(Continued—see YECKE on page 2)

KEVIN/JODY KING APPEARANCE AMONG HIGHLIGHTS OF BUFFALO REUNION

We were excited to have Kevin & Jody King in attendance at the reunion. Kevin gave those in attendance at the Friday afternoon program an insightful video tour of the *Emmons*, compliments of Kurt Reese, which had everyone mesmerized for the nearly one hour tour. That was followed up with a viewing of Kurt's moving video of the April memorial dive at the Emmons site.

His talk started off by presenting President Jolly a \$250 check for the scholarship fund representing a portion of the tuition fees of the most recent graduates of his USS Emmons specialty dive program.

Kevin and wife Jody then presented the Association with a U.S Flag constructed of 1000 paper origami cranes, an ancient Japanese tradition signifying a prayer for peace. The crane in Japan is considered one of the mystical or holy creatures and is believed to live for a thousand years. That explains why 1000 cranes are made, one for each year.

Honoring our shipmates and Emmons family with this symbol of peace and healing was a deeply moving experience for everyone in



Kevin presents President Jolly with a scholarship fund contribution.

attendance. Not only does this gesture reflect the mutual respect now held by our two countries following that horrific war so many years ago, it also provides the opportunity to learn of the cultural significance of the ancient Japanese legend.

The origami presentation was followed with another check presented to the Association in the name of Sadie Swahoist, the wom-

an who folded and strung the 1000 cranes.

Kevin and Jody also unveiled their book, *"Diving the USS Emmons,"* a pictorial history of the *Emmons* and her crew. The first half of the 114 page book covers the history, while the second half concentrates on the ship today through underwater photographs.

Their love and respect for the *Emmons* was further demonstrated through their selfless offer to provide the book to those in attendance at below their cost. When this editor last checked, 45 books were ordered, 23 by Emmons family members.

REUNION (continued from page 1)

Certification program he established in Okinawa. The presentation was well received and humbled many of us as we found how little we knew about the *Emmons* and left some expressing interest in taking the complete course.

The banquet program concluded with recognition of the Griffin/Emmons 2017 scholarship award recipients Isaac Bird and Alexandra Stack, both of whom provided us with a reading of their essays. The essays can be read on our website.

A Sunday morning buffet breakfast was enjoyed together as everyone said their goodbyes for another year.

Visit our website reunion page at www.ussemmons.org to view photos of all the festivities.

NOW AVAILABLE!! 2018 Scholarship Application

\$4500 in Awards

Application available at
www.ussemmons.org
or email ussemmons@gmail.com

YECKE (continued from page 1)

than most, their baker was a pro, the envy of other ships." His cinnamon rolls, especially, were well known by all.

Donald's last visit home was Thanksgiving, 1945. He and sister Gladys never ended visits home with "Goodbye." Instead it was always "See you later."

Upon returning to the ship, the *Emmons* sailed for the Pacific and the Battle of Okinawa, where the *Emmons* courageously fought off the overwhelming Japanese kamikaze attacks until finally Donald and 59 of his shipmates made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Christopher went on to explain how it was several weeks until Donald's family received word of his death and how his little brother Dennis, having been told by the school principal to go home, walked home crying over the news he knew was coming.

The USS Emmons Association is grateful for the recognition given Donald and his family through the *Understanding Sacrifice* program. And we sincerely appreciate Dennis' willingness to share his brother's story with us to better help us understand the sacrifices made by our service members and their the families.

IN MEMORIAM

Joseph P. POMYKALA passed away December 6th. Joe, a Seaman 1c and long-time supporter of the Emmons Association, served aboard the *Emmons* from November, 1942, until he transferred with shipmates A. Robert READ and Jim DONOVAN to the Boston Navy Yard's last destroyer, the *USS Joseph P. LEARY*, in late 1943.

Joe was active in the *Leary's* latter-day association and reunions, accompanied by his daughter, Mary Kay MIKUSKA and husband John. Although Joe was not able to make the trip to Buffalo, the Emmons family was pleased to welcome Mary Kay and John to their first Emmons reunion this past year, what we hope is the first of many.

We received word from Susan LUDLOW that her companion of 50 years, shipmate **Richard E. KIDD** passed away November 5th, one month after his 94th birthday. Richard was a plank owner aboard the *Emmons*, serving as a Boatswain's Mate.

Susan tells us he was very proud of experience aboard the *Emmons* and would share the Emmons story with anyone willing to listen. Susan and Richard attended several reunions in the past and she expressed her blessing to have gotten to know many of the shipmates and their wives there.

Shipmate **Edwin J. KROM** passed away November 17th. Boarding the *Emmons* in April, 1944, and a survivor of the Battle of Okinawa, he served as a Seaman.

Ed was reunited with his Emmons shipmates when he attended

his first reunion in 2016 together with 12 of his family members. He topped that this year when 15 family members representing 4 generations were there to honor him.

Courtney SILVESTRE informed us of the October 25th passing of her grandfather, **David R. SHAUB, Jr.** David, a long-time supporter of the USS Emmons Association, was the nephew of shipmate John L. DONALDSON, who gave his life at Okinawa.

David attended past reunions and most recently joined the Emmons family at the 2015 memorial plaque dedication at the Navy Memorial Heritage Center in Washington, D.C.

Gerald R. FOX died unexpectedly September 4th at the age of 56. Gerald, with wife Susan, attended past reunions with Susan's father, shipmate George FLORY and wife Carol.

Gerald, a 9-year veteran of the U.S. Army, later joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard, which included a 2005 deployment to Iraq. He most recently served as Jackson County Wisconsin District Attorney since first elected in 2006.

We received word from brother Leon of the July 6th death of **Samuel HORWITZ**. Sam and Leon's brother, Lt. (jg) David HORWITZ, gave his life aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa.

Sam, along with brothers Leon and Gerald, have been avid supporters of the Association's efforts in preserving the Emmons legacy and the memory of the 60 shipmates who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

NOTES From the Reunion Log

While some regulars were sadly missed, the reunion's move to Buffalo rewarded us with 22 Emmons family members attending for their first time. A total of 75 were in attendance for Saturday's banquet, including 4 crew members and representatives from 11 other crew members' families.

Attending for the first time were family members of shipmates Joe POMYKALA, O'Neil INFANTO, Homer TITTLE and Ed KROM.

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The annual USS Emmons Association business meeting held Saturday morning addressed routine business matters, as well as appointments to fill two vacancies in our administration.

Pepper JAY, daughter of late shipmate Harold JAY, was approved by the membership to join the Board of Directors, while Mike ESPOSITO, son of Tony ESPOSITO, was also approved to fill the vacant Secretary position.

We're excited to have such dedicated

Emmons family members fill these important positions left vacant by the passing of Ed HOFFMAN last year.

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At Friday's program, President Armand JOLLY presented a plaque to Tom HOFFMAN honoring his "*dedication and commitment to preserving the Legacy of the USS Emmons.*" Tom is Treasurer of the Association, serves on the Board of Directors and is Chairman of the USS Emmons Legacy Committee.

Tom expressed his sincere gratitude for the honor and his intention to place the plaque on the wall at home alongside the plaque his late father, Ed HOFFMAN, received from his shipmates years ago.

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The tradition continued for the sixth consecutive year with a generous donation of personal care items for local veterans contributed by those in attendance at the reunion.

Tony ESPOSITO presented the items to

Eagle Star Housing, a Pembroke, NY, facility that provides transitional housing for homeless veterans, including meals and life skills training. The Emmons Association is proud to give back to the communities hosting our reunions each year. Thank you to all who participated.

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A valued addition to our archives, Jackson TITTLE, son of shipmate Homer TITTLE, presented the Association with a full-color world map providing a graphic representation of the Emmons' travels during her lifetime.

The map, complete with dates and ports of call, brings to light the *Emmons'* extensive service to our country. The Association is grateful for this contribution which obviously took much time and effort (and passion) to complete.

Visit our website REUNION page to see the full-color photos of Jackson TITTLE's map, the origami crane U.S. Flag presented by the KING's and all the photos from the Buffalo reunion.

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USS Emmons (DD457, DMS22)

**We're on the web at
www.ussemmons.org**

 **JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP
"USS EMMONS REUNION"
AND TELL YOUR KIDS AND GRANDKIDS!!**



Attending this year's reunion along with 71 family and friends were shipmates Warren Sparks, Tony Esposito, Armand Jolly and Ed Krom. See story, page 1.