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# U.S.S. EMMONS

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USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

March/April 2024

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## DATE AND LOCATION SET FOR REUNION'S RETURN TO NEW ENGLAND

The Legacy Committee is excited to announce our reunion's return back north following five years in Pennsylvania and Maryland and two Zoom get togethers. The 2024 site will be the Crowne Plaza Providence/Warwick, located in Warwick, Rhode Island, September 26-29. A block of rooms has been set aside at a \$149/night group rate. Included are a complimentary airport shuttle, parking and morning buffet breakfasts.

### Visit to Battleship Cove

As the *Emmons* Family members gather to enjoy the annual get-together, we'll enjoy time together at Battleship Cove in nearby Fall River, Massachusetts. While there, we'll honor the lost *Emmons* shipmates with our annual memorial service.

Battleship Cove is home to five U.S. naval ships that are designated National Historic Landmarks. The mission of the museum is to preserve naval history and honor war veterans who defended our country.

Friday afternoon we'll gather for a program and time to visit in the hospi-

tality room, followed by a buffet dinner. Free time is afforded following Saturday morning's business meeting. With over 30 miles of coastline to enjoy, the Warwick area is typical New England, home to historic villages and plentiful shopping. And nearby is the famed Mystic Seaport, as well as Newport, once a summer destination for some of the country's wealthiest residents. For those of you feeling lucky, you'll find casinos within an hour's drive.

As always, our Saturday evening banquet program will feature the opportunity to hear from our 2024 Lt. Griffin/*Emmons* Scholarship recipients.

Each year we welcome new *Emmons* Family members attending their first reunion; it's our hope the trend continues this year!

Registration information is included with this newsletter and available on our website's Reunions page. Register today and book your hotel room before all rooms in the group rate block are gone. Guest room reservations may be cancelled up to 24 hours in advance.

## 2024 REUNION

Warwick, Rhode Island  
September 26 - 29

Registration information  
enclosed  
and available on  
our website at:

[www.ussemmons.org](http://www.ussemmons.org)

## 'On A Mission' - OUR OKINAWA GUARDIAN ANGELS IN ACTION

For more than 20 years, a memorial plaque listing the names of the 60 lost shipmates has been affixed to the hull of the *Emmons* wreck, placed there at the direction of the *Emmons* shipmates as a memorial to their lost comrades. More recently, it has been joined by a replica of the ship's builder's plaque.

Time spent on the ocean floor results in the plaques becoming encrusted in hard marine growth, making them

illegible. Without a routine cleaning, others diving on the *Emmons* would see it only as another ship wreck and not the final resting place of 60 brave sailors who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

That's where our Okinawa friends enter the picture. As was done several times before, this past January Kurt REESE, Matt LEWIS, Jordan LEE and Chuck DeCESARI

(see *MISSION* continued on page 2)

## ASSOCIATION ENTRUSTED WITH EMMONS' STEAMING COLORS

With the abandon ship order given as he continued to assist his injured shipmates, Ed TOSTANOSKI (Skee) somehow retrieved the ship's 'steaming colors,' the term used to identify the U.S. Flag flown while under way at sea.

57 years later, Skee proudly displayed the colors at a 2002 memorial service for the lost shipmates held above the site of the ship's sinking, providing a solemn feeling of the ship's presence. Shipmates in attendance with him were Bob CHAROUX and Joe WOODNICK.

With Skee having passed away several years ago, sons John and Ed Jr., who also attended that ceremony, recently informed the *Emmons* Association that they wish to honor their father's intention to place the flag



*Skee unfurls the 'steaming colors' at the 2002 memorial ceremony of the of the ship's sinking.*

and pennant in our care.

With great respect and honor, the *Emmons* Association accepted possession of these USS *Emmons* historical treasures. The colors, appearing tattered from weather at sea years ago, will, for generations to come, serve as a reminder of the sacrifices made by his lost shipmates that fateful day, April 6, 1945..

*(MISSION Continued from page 1)*

retrieved the plaques, removed the marine growth, and returned them to the ship.

Sounds like a simple operation, right? Think again.

To begin with, the plaques and stainless steel backing weigh in excess of 100 lbs., requiring planning, teamwork and patience to accomplish the task.

The first diver descends with bolt cutters to cut the chains that secure the plaques to the ship. The second diver holds the plaques upright allowing a third diver to secure a harness around the plaques (Kurt had the harness custom made for the *Emmons*).

Lift bags tied to the harness are then inflated to neutral buoyancy. As they slowly ascend with the plaques, they maintain a constant state of neutral buoyancy by dumping the expanding air until reaching the surface.

Once back to port, the plaques are soaked in 50/50 vinegar/and water over several days to kill off any marine growth.

To return the plaques, they are lowered from Chuck's boat to a depth of about 100 feet where attached lift bags are inflated to achieve neutral buoyancy, allowing the divers to maneuver them in place above the ship where the air is dumped as they gently lower the plaques to the hull.

With that, the plaques are once again back in place serving the purpose intended by the survivors years ago.....honoring the memory of their lost shipmates and allowing all who visit the site to fully understand the sacrifices made that fateful day, April 6, 1945.

Visit our website's [Media Page](#) to view a video of the actual plaque recovery.

## MEMORIAL PLAQUE FINDS A NEW HOME

As previously reported, the memorial plaque placed on the *Emmons* wreck in 2003 at the direction of the shipmates was replaced in 2020 with an exact replica to remove it from the dangers of the rapidly deteriorating ship.

We're pleased to report the original plaque continues to share the *Emmons* story as it is now on loan in its own place of honor, displayed at Tsunami Scuba, an Okinawa dive shop frequented by those who dive on the *Emmons*.

Placed in its new home by Matt LEWIS, with an assist from Kurt REESE, in addition to making others aware of the sacrifice of the lost shipmates, it will now help promote Matt's revival of the *Emmons* specialty dive certification program started in 2016 by Kevin KING, who has since returned to the states.

The certification program promotes the historical importance and impact of the *Emmons* and the bravery and sacrifices of her crew, and educates divers on specifics of the wreck during guided tours, emphasizing preservation and respect for the wreck site. A portion of the fee goes to support the scholarship program.

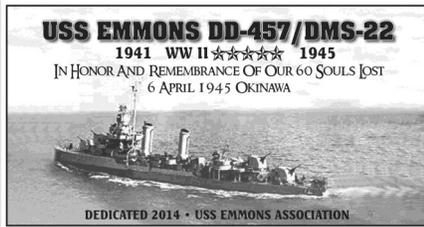
We thank Matt for seeing that the plaque continues to share the *Emmons* story and wish him the best as he moves forward with the certification program.

### APPLICATION DEADLINE DRAWS NEAR FOR GRIFFIN/EMMONS SCHOLARSHIP

A minimum of \$5000 in academic scholarships will be awarded for the 2024-25 academic year. The application deadline is May 31st. Visit our website at [www.ussemmons.org](http://www.ussemmons.org) for information.

# PLAQUE RETURNS TO NAVY MEMORIAL

In 2022, Cindy WAGNER, daughter of late shipmate Robert WAGNER, during a visit to the Naval History and Heritage Command



in Washington, noticed our *Emmons* plaque, placed there by the USS *Emmons* Association in 2015, was missing. Inquiries revealed it, along with others, was damaged during some

construction work being done.

Repeated inquiries over the past two years assured us it would be replaced. Finally, this past January, we were notified a new plaque was fabricated and the Navy Memorial's Commemorative Plaque Wall has been restored to its original state.

## Now HEAR This !

In attendance at our 2023 reunion were U.S. Army Major Robert and Dawn BOURGEAU who had recently moved back to the states from Okinawa. At the reunion, we learned the Soldier's Medal had been awarded to Major BOURGEAU recognizing his heroism in rescuing a man and young girl from severe riptides at a popular snorkeling spot in Okinawa.

What we didn't know at the time was the connection BOURGEAU, a dive instructor, had with one of our *Emmons* family members. At the rescue site, he had with him two students, Nathan FEURA, great-grandnephew of shipmate Joe GOCELLA, and his army wife, Capt. Neda OTHMAN. They were there planning to make deepwater dives with their instructor. In fact, Nathan participated in the rescue.

Nathan, a student at Western Governors University, is working toward his Masters in Data Analytics. His great-granduncle, Joe GOCELLA, gave his life aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa.

As the number of WWII veterans still with us continues to dwindle, the importance of oral history interviews continues to rise. The family of shipmate Ed CORNETTA realized the significance and years ago recorded such an interview with their father.

Recent contact with son Robert, niece Laurie and, most recently daughter Nancy EISELE, yielded, among other things, the audio recording of the interview with their father providing a narrative of his time in the service. The full interview is available at our website's [Shipmate Interviews](#) page.

\* \* \* \* \*

Nancy also provided us photos of her dad, as did Debbie SHERIDAN of her father, shipmate Earl HOBART. Our website's shipmate photo archive continues to grow as we previously had no photos of either shipmate. Photos of all the shipmates and more can be accessed on our website's [Media](#) page.

**2024 MEMBERSHIP DUES:** Dues remittances continue to arrive. If you haven't yet had an opportunity to submit yours, it's not too late. \$25 individual/\$40 for couples/\$5 junior membership (18 yrs. + under). Checks payable to the USS *Emmons* Association may be sent to USS *Emmons* Association, 36078 Huntington St., Millville, DE 19967. You may also remit membership dues online at our website's [Membership](#) page.

Annual dues are the lifeblood of our organization without which we could not survive. As dues remittances continue to arrive, the USS *Emmons* Association takes this opportunity to extend its sincere appreciation to all those who support our efforts through their membership dues. As of this printing, shipmates honored by their families' and friends' 2024 dues remittances, as well as our honorary members, are as follows:

- Donald W. Ayer
- Walter D. Blair
- George C. Border
- Edwin J. Cornetta
- Paul F. Dodd
- John L. Donaldson
- James A. Donnelly, Jr.
- Ross T. Elliott, Jr.
- George C. Flory
- Eugene N. Foss, 2nd
- Robert J. Glutting
- Joseph A. Gocella
- Edward E. Greenlaw
- Douglas L. Gruber
- Earl C. Hobart
- Edwin L. Hoffman, Jr.
- David Horwitz
- David Jensen
- James J. Korney
- John S. Malloway
- Grover T. McMichael
- Charles P. Melkunas
- Thomas D. Orton, Jr.
- Warren P. Otto
- William R. Patton
- Joseph P. Pomykala
- Eugene L. Posey
- Robert J. Schultz
- John Sosenko
- Warren G. Sparks
- Thaddeus T. Tenerowicz
- Homer D. Tittle
- Edward N. Tostanoski
- Clyne C. Veal
- Robert C. Wagner
- Donald L. Yecke

**USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION**

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*USS Emmons (DD457-DMS22)*

**Visit our website at  
[www.ussemmons.org](http://www.ussemmons.org)**

**HERE'S THE LATEST  
FROM  
THE USS *EMMONS*  
ASSOCIATION!**



JOIN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP  
USS EMMONS REUNION

***EMMONS FAMILY REUNION***  
***WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND***  
***SEPTEMBER 26-29***  
***REGISTRATION INFORMATION***  
***ENCLOSED!***

*Come join your Emmons Family as we celebrate that special bond of friendship, love & experiences forged by the shipmates.*

# USS *EMMONS* ASSOCIATION

www.ussemmons.org



Dear *Emmons* Family Members:

We are pleased to invite you to the 2024 *Emmons* Family Reunion! This year's reunion will be held September 26-29 at the Crowne Plaza Providence-Warwick (Airport), 801 Greenwich Ave., Warwick, Rhode Island. The hotel is conveniently located just off Interstate 95 and four miles from T.F. Green International Airport. The hotel offers complimentary airport shuttle service.

A block of guest rooms has been set aside at a group rate of \$149 plus tax. **The rooms will be available at that rate until August 25<sup>th</sup> or until they are all gone, whichever comes first, so book early as explained below so as not to miss out on our group rate.** You may extend your stay a few days before or after at that same rate! Reservations can be cancelled up to 24 hours prior.

Warwick is a charming coastal town situated in central Rhode Island offering historic sites, beautiful beaches and a variety of retail and specialty shops. Nearby is Battleship Cove, the world's largest collection of historic U.S. military naval vessels and our destination for Friday's outing where we'll tour the historic WWII ships, honor the lost shipmates with our annual memorial service and enjoy lunch together.

Another highlight of every reunion occurs at Saturday evening's banquet program when we'll have the opportunity to meet and hear from our 2024 Lt. Griffin/*Emmons* Memorial Scholarship recipients.

We hope to see many of you there and we're always anxious to meet and welcome new *Emmons* family members for what we expect will be another memorable weekend.

Sincerely,

Tom Hoffman

Email: [ussemmons@gmail.com](mailto: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 25<sup>th</sup>** and
- 2) Reserve your hotel room at the \$149 group rate through one of two methods:
  - a. Call the hotel at 401-732-6000. Specify USS *Emmons* group code **UER**.
  - or
  - b. Reserve online by visiting the **Reunions Page of our website at [www.ussemmons.org](http://www.ussemmons.org)**. Please note, if you wish to extend your stay a few days before/after the reunion, you may do so at the same group rate by calling the hotel directly.

# **2024 USS *Emmons* Reunion Itinerary**

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

Hospitality Room – Tiverton Room

Morning Breakfast Buffets – Tiverton Room

Friday Evening Buffet – Rotunda Room

Saturday Banquet – Bristol Room

Contacts: Tom Hoffman 610-417-5163; Donna Jolly 860-916-1496

## **Thursday, September 26:**

Hospitality room opens at 4pm (Tiverton Room).

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

6:30 – 8 p.m. – Hospitality room closed. Dinner ‘on your own’ at our hotel’s Crossings Restaurant (20% discount for our group) or one of the many restaurants in the area

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

## **Friday, September 27:**

Complimentary breakfast buffet in hospitality room (Tiverton Room)

8:45 a.m. - Board bus to travel to Battleship Cove, including museum ship tours, Memorial Service and lunch at Battleship Cove

1:30 p.m. - Board bus to return to hotel. Hospitality room will be open

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

6:00 p.m. - Buffet dinner (Rotunda Room)

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

## **Saturday, September 28:**

Complimentary breakfast buffet in hospitality room (Tiverton Room)

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) in Bristol Room

7:00 p.m. - Banquet and program in Bristol Room

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

## **Sunday, September 29:**

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. – Goodbye breakfast buffet in hospitality room (Tiverton 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 5pm Saturday.

# 2024 USS Emmons Reunion Registration Form

RETURN FORM WITH PAYMENT BY AUGUST 25<sup>th</sup>

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) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$50 per person – Friday Visit to Battleship Cove including lunch,  
tour, Memorial Service, transportation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$20 per person – Friday buffet dinner \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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

ENTRÉE CHOICES				
ENTRÉE	QUANTITY	MULTIPLY	PRICE	TOTAL
Sauteed Chicken Francaise		x	\$50	
Baked New England Scrod		x	\$50	
Petite Sirloin		x	\$55	
Vegetarian - Mushroom Ravioli		x	\$50	
Chicken Fingers/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 25<sup>th</sup> to:**

USS Emmons Association  
36078 Huntington St.  
Millville, DE 19967

**REMEMBER TO MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATION AND SUBMIT THIS FORM BY AUGUST 25<sup>th</sup>!**