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# USS Fiske Newsletter

Q1:2009

March 2009

USS Fiske (DD/DDR-842) Association Inc., 558 Westbrook Court, Paramus, NJ 07652

## President's Message November, 2009

What a wonderful time we had at beautiful Post Falls, Idaho! While it may have taken an extra bit of effort to get there, the rewards – a visit to a former navy boot camp, a sunset cruise down the Spokane River, a great dinner show and a visit to the Buck Knife factory made it all worth it. Kudos and a “Well Done” to Gil Beyer for putting this together.

One of the highlights of the weekend was our keynote speaker at the dinner, Rear Admiral (ret) Scott Logan, whose first sea-duty station as a brand new ensign in 1960 was, you guessed it, the Fiske.

The admiral began his speech by showing slides of the first Fiske (DE-143), a destroyer escort that was sunk by U- 804 in mid-Atlantic on 2 August 1944. The picture of this fine ship lying on its side with its back broken and sinking was breathtaking and tragic.

The admiral then reviewed the history of the second Fiske (DD/DDR 842) by showing slides of the ship from its commissioning in 1946, through the various modifications and up to her decommissioning in 1980. He even had several pictures of her as she served in the Turkish navy for almost two decades.

Lastly, he described the status of the present navy, including pictures of some of the newest ships in the fleet. It was an interesting and informative presentation.

Our next reunion in 2011 will be in Milwaukee, with Don Valentine as host. Be there or be square.

Fair winds and smooth seas,  
Jeff Kovite

## Report from the Secretary

The business meeting was held at 1500 hours on 26 September 2009 at Post Falls, Idaho. The following officers were elected:

President- Jeff Kovite

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Frank Nicastro

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Sandra Siciliano

Treasurer – James Rapson

Secretary – (Jim Hanner agreed to continue in that post until a replacement could be found). Any volunteers?

The president appointed the following as advisors to the organization and to the elected officers:

Chaplain - Frank Stancil

Master at Arms - John Degnan

Historian - Gil Beyer

Web Master – Steve Gibert

Newsletter Editor - Don & Diane Valentine

## **Report from the Secretary (Continued)**

There were a number of suggestions to locate the 2011 reunion. The membership voted to hold that reunion in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on 23-25 September. Don Valentine volunteered to be the reunion host.

Smooth sailing,  
Jim Hanner

## **Report from the Treasurer**

What is the measure of stability within any organization? In addition to dedicated leadership, it is the ability to be on a solid financial footing, both for current operations and for the future stability of the organization. We, the members of the USS Fiske (DD/DRR-842) Association, Inc. are extremely fortunate to be in that very position.

Our sources of income for operations are the \$10.00 per year dues asked of the membership and the support that they provide through their purchases at the Ship's Store. Collectively, they have been very profitable in not only bringing in direct dues payments but a generous offering to help offset those who may be unable to pay dues. Additionally, the Ship's Store Clerk, Sandie Siciliano, has been very successful in having members help offset the costs of shipping with the Ship's Store sales. It may not seem like a lot when you add a dollar or two to your order, but it goes a long way to keep the Association stable.

The end result is that we are able to pay the necessary bills of insurance, accounting, state charter fees, etc. without having to worry if we can do those things. Now the question is what your Association does with "excess" funds available to it. With a little creative thinking, a portion of the funds goes into a Certificate of Deposit to earn some extra income because idle funds in the checking account are just not a good idea. While bank rates are not fantastic, we were able to post an additional \$175.00 of interest income during 2008-2009. With the completion of the Reunion in Post Falls, a CD was again started for the same purpose in 2009-2010.

At the Reunion last September in Post Falls, it was voted by the membership to increase our charitable spending to include more organizations dedicated to the support of the history of destroyers and our service men and women. The donations are:

1. The Tin Can Sailors, Inc., The National Association of Destroyer Veterans in the amount of \$250.00.
2. The Thomas J. Peltin Destroyer Museum Grant Program in the amount of \$250.00.
3. A matching grant of up to \$250.00 to be added to the "Pass the Hat" at the Bi-Annual Banquet. At Post Falls, the "Pass the Hat" brought in an additional \$465.00 for a grand total of \$715.00. This was split between the Wounded Warrior Project that provides immediate personal items for returning wounded and to Charlie Thompson for his project of providing ".308 Pens" to our service men and women overseas.
4. In 2010 we will pick up a direct donation to the USS Joseph P. Kennedy (DD-850) that is part of the Battleship Cove exhibit in Fall River, MA in the amount of \$250.00. The Kennedy may be the sole surviving FRAM I destroyer very soon and needs to be preserved for the future.

The last part of the financial stability issue is the necessary reporting of monthly activity to the elected Officers and the Board of Directors. This is covered by a monthly report prepared by the Treasurer and is available to ANY member upon request. ALL records of the Association are available to all members for it is your Association and your monies that we are entrusted with.

May you have calm seas and following winds and we hope to see you in Milwaukee in 2011.

James R. Rapson, Treasurer

## News from the 2011 Reunion Committee Cont.

considered the jewel of Milwaukee's famous avenue of mansions called Grand Avenue and represented the epitome of America's Gilded Age Splendor in Milwaukee.

The Pabst Mansion is a testament to Pabst's success, his love of life and his German heritage. Boasting stunning interiors, elegant original furnishings, elaborate wall coverings, the finest wood craftsmanship, intricate ironwork, brilliant stained glass, and rare art, the Mansion helped make the 1890's the "Pabst Decade" in Milwaukee.

The Mansion was to be one of the very finest residences in the city. No cost or innovation would be spared in its design. Of many of its conveniences, the house was wired for electricity, then in its infancy, plumbed for nine full bathrooms, installed with a state-of-the-art heating system by the company now known as Johnson Controls which could regulate the heat in the Mansion with 16 thermostats and custom-built furniture for the majority of its rooms.

**Old World Wisconsin** - Journey back to the past at Old World Wisconsin, a vivid re-creation of the working farmsteads and settlements established by European immigrants in America's heartland.

Discover teams of oxen and horses working in the fields, the farm folk preparing hearty meals over wood-burning stoves, and the heirloom plants in well-tended gardens. Stroll through the Crossroads Village and chat with the town blacksmith or the keeper of the general store. Discover the true spirit of early Wisconsin.

The 1870s come alive in the re-creation of a rural village. You'll see the spirit of the residents in the Crossroads Village and understand the economic, social, religious and political fabric that bound this community together. European diversity is on display in the various professions throughout the village. See costumed interpreters portraying a Welsh shopkeeper, Irish laundress, Norwegian wagon maker and Bohemian shoemaker.

The true spirit of America is embodied in Old World Wisconsin's farmsteads. Waves of immigrants flocked to this land of opportunity, eager to seek out the freedoms and possibilities that no longer existed in their homelands. A site visit can include seeing authentic farm implements, like this horse-powered threshing machine, in operation. See technology demonstrated up-close and learn how it was used by early settlers.

**Milwaukee Art Museum** - The Milwaukee Art Museum collects and preserves art, presenting it to the community as a vital source of inspiration and education. It contains 20,000 works of art, 300,000+ visitors a year, 120 years of collecting art. From its roots in Milwaukee's first art gallery in 1888, the Museum has grown today to be an icon for Milwaukee and a resource for the entire state.

The 341,000-square-foot Museum includes the War Memorial Center (1957) designed by Finnish-American architect Eero Saarinen, the Kahler Building (1975) by David Kahler, and the Quadracci Pavilion (2001) created by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.

Four floors of over forty galleries of art are rotated regularly with works from antiquity to the present in the Museum's far-reaching Collection. Included in the Collection are 15th- to 20th-century European and 17th- to 20th-century American paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, decorative arts, photographs, and folk and self-taught art. Among the best in the nation are the Museum's holding of American decorative arts, German Expressionism, folk and Haitian art, and American art after 1960. The Museum also holds one of the largest collections of works by Wisconsin native Georgia O'Keeffe.

Important artists represented include Nardo di Cione, Francisco de Zurbarán, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Winslow Homer, Auguste Rodin, Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pablo Picasso, Jón Miro, Mark Rothko, Robert Gober, and Andy Warhol.

In addition to the works in the Museum's Collection galleries, there are a variety of changing exhibitions throughout the year, including the three major feature exhibitions in the Baker/Rowland Galleries of the Quadracci Pavilion.

## **Report from the Historian**

Here it is seven weeks after our gathering in Idaho and I just realized that only about 8 of you that attended the Reunion fulfilled my request to complete your 'Blue Books' with stories of your time onboard. Either I'm as dense as a post or I've had other things on my mind – your choice.

To those of you that did give me, or send in, your stories I am deeply indebted as you have given me some much needed details of the years you were onboard. Your stories have given texture and depth to the bare details of deck logs and operations reports.

I've also received a great DVD from Shipmate Lou Nigro (1956-1960) that he put together from his 8mm movie he took during his time onboard. Shipmate Ernie Starcher is shown working on a UHF antenna on the yardarm of the forward mast and dozens of other scenes of shipboard life and liberty ports. This is the type of material that gives life to our time onboard Fiske.

There is another DVD that I received from Shipmate Bernie Cobetto of the Fiske's first Around the World Cruise when she went to Korea in 1951 and crossed the Equator. There are some excellent scenes of King Neptune's initiation of the Pollywogs.

Dr. Cobetto was the Squadron Medical Officer during that cruise and treated the 13-14 Fiske crewmen that came down with polio after visiting one of several Far Eastern ports on the way back to Newport. Dr. Cobetto turned After Officers Quarters into a quarantine ward for those infected. The Fiske was denied access to Marseilles because of this infection and those shipmates infected were transported off the ship at Gibraltar to be airlifted to the States. Anecdotal information seems to indicate that all but one of these shipmates recovered completely – a not insignificant number in those days – with only one shipmate suffering permanent disability. Does anyone have any further information on this event?

All of these little vignettes are what give life and breathe to the Fiske. I want to preserve these stories and only you can help me do that. All of you that attended the Reunion received a 'Blue Book'. I ask that you complete the task I asked you to do at the Reunion – tell me a story. A story about anything that happened while you were onboard Fiske. Be it funny, sad, scary or simply one of the ways that we used to fill the hours and hours of boredom that was routine steaming.

I don't want to be too depressing but I'll say the same thing now that I've said previously – we aren't getting any younger and when we go these stories go with us if they aren't written down and filed somewhere. I have been in contact with the Navy Historical Foundation and they will happily receive and archive anything we choose to send them. I've already just about doubled their photo collection of the Fiske with copies from the Association files.

So as not to leave out any one that wasn't fortunate enough to attend the Reunion in Post Falls I have limited number of Blue Books available for those that wish to help me complete my quest to fill all the gaps and holes that currently exist in our history and maybe, just maybe, give me some material for the book that Sandie and I are trying to put together. Drop me a line or an email and I'll send out one of the books I have left for you to fill up with whatever you want.

Gil Beyer  
Association Historian

## **Report from the Newsletter Editor**

At the Officer's meeting this year, we agreed to limit the length of articles and leave some room for articles of general interest to all. If anyone has something to add to the newsletter, please send it to me. I want to thank all of the contributors to the newsletter for following the guidelines presented by the President of the Association. A few articles were a little long but overall much better than in the past.

As the Christmas season approaches, I hope that we all take in the joy of the season. I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

## News from the 2011 Reunion Committee

**EAA Museum** - Located in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, at the site of the world's largest aviation event the Museum is one of the most extensive aviation attractions in the world, a year-round destination for the entire family. Come and explore our world-class displays and galleries.

Marvel at aviation innovations in our collection of more than 250 historic airplanes. Spend time in one of our five movie theaters. Take a ride in a vintage airplane at Pioneer Airport—a real working aerodrome right out of the “golden age” of aviation. Witness a piece of history in the Eagle Hangar, our tribute to World War II aviation and get “hands on” in the Kid Venture Gallery, our exciting interactive gallery for kids of all ages!

The heart and soul of any good museum is its collection, and the EAA Air Venture Museum is no exception. Our collection of historic artifacts began in 1962 when Steve Wittman donated his famous air racer “Bonzo” and the EAA Air Museum was founded. Since then it has flowered into a magnificent assortment of over 20,000 historic aviation objects.

**Miller Brewing Company** - In 1855, German immigrant Fredrick Miller purchased the Plank Road Brewery. Surrounded by woods, the small brewing operation was no bigger than a Victorian house. Today, a replica of the Plank Road Brewery is just one of the historic highlights in Milwaukee's Miller Valley, the home of the nation's second largest brewer, Miller Brewing Company.

Walk outdoors and upstairs to Miller's packaging-center balcony. A blur of cans roars along conveyor belts that wind through wet machinery, packing up to 200,000 cases of beer daily.

The next stop is Miller's mammoth distribution center that covers the equivalent of five football fields. Typically, you can see half a million cases of beer.

In the brew house, Miller makes its beer, up to 8.5 million barrels annually in Milwaukee alone. Climb 56 stairs to look down on a row of towering, shiny brew kettles where “wort,” a grain extract, is boiled and combined with hops. Stroll through Miller's historic Caves, a restored portion of the original brewery where beer was stored before the invention of mechanical refrigeration.

Finish your tour at the Bavarian-style Miller Inn and sample a Miller beer or soft drink. Be sure also to take a few minutes to inspect the impressive collection of antique steins. In the summer, you can enjoy your beverage in an adjoining beer garden enlivened by music.

**Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory “The Domes”** - Experience a desert oasis, a tropical jungle and special floral gardens . . . all in one afternoon . . . and an amazing lighting display in the evening! The incredible diversity of plant life you will encounter reminds us all of the Earth's unique diversity of plant and animal species so very vital to our own survival.

Come to the deserts of Africa, Madagascar, South America and North America in the Arid Dome where one of the world's finest collections of cacti, succulents, shrubs and arid-land bulbs grow. An Oasis of Pampas Grass and desert palms beckons as paths lead you past many plant oddities with intriguing geometric forms, subtle coloration and unique adaptations to hot, dry habitats.

Stroll the jungle-like trails of the Tropical Dome and see a rich diversity of plants from the rainforests of five continents. Showy flowers, fruits, nuts, spices and a multitude of orchids and bromeliads surround you as you're drawn toward a rushing waterfall in this paradise. Be sure to look for the colorful birds that call the Tropical Dome their home.

Enter a themed floral exhibit filling the Floral Show Dome with gardens of color. Five seasonal displays each year will delight you with their beauty and will serve to inspire your own gardens.

**The Pabst Mansion** - In 1892, the Flemish Renaissance Revival Mansion of Captain Frederick Pabst, world famous beer baron, accomplished sea captain, real estate developer, philanthropist and patron of the arts, was completed. From the day the house was inhabited, it was

## Report from the WEB Master

Web hosting services everywhere are eliminating support for an old Microsoft web-publishing program called Front Page. I've been told to re-work the web site to take advantage of newer technologies. With a deadline of June 1st I began rebuilding the site about a month ago.

Today, May 1st, I've published a rework of the web site using these new techniques. Everything that was there before is there now. Only the presentation has changed.

Please provide your feedback.

There are some new things: on the History page is a porthole icon that takes you to a new picture gallery. And, on the same page is a movie put together by a shipmate.

These changes should work with all browsers. However, if the pages are a mess-please tell me so I can attempt a work-around. One of the culprits of a messy page is an old version of a browser. I would strongly recommend upgrading your Microsoft Internet Explorer to version 8. If you need help with this, let me know and I'll send instructions.

I think we should have the preceding recommendation in the newsletter as well.

Thanks,  
Steve Gilbert  
Webmaster

## *Storekeeper's News ....*

Sandra Ehlers Siciliano ETN2/USNR '75-'80



Dear Shipmates,

I am happy to tell you that sales from the Post Falls reunion actually exceeded those in Newport two years ago, with less attendees. My conclusion is twofold: First, we had more merchandise to offer, and second, we had more west coast attendees who had never attended a reunion. That said, I still have many items left to clear away at sale prices. While it is too late to stuff the stocking, you might want to consider a purchase for an upcoming birthday, or other spring holiday. Because newsletter space is at a premium, please email or call me for availability. There are also many exclusive Post Falls souvenirs to be had as well.

As 2009 comes to a close, we look forward to new beginnings, renewed health and peace of mind. Needless to say, these are difficult times. As you know, the revenue from Ship's Store is the only source of income the Association has other than the annual dues. When you purchase exclusive Fiske merchandise from Ship's Store, you are helping the Association to publish this newsletter, make charitable donations, and to run the bi-annual reunions. Your generosity to "Fair Share Shipping" has been overwhelming and much appreciated. Thank you so much!

Here's wishing you and yours the happiest of the holiday season, and good health in the coming year,  
Sandie Siciliano

### **A Note From Charlie Thompson**

I received the check from the USS Fiske Association for \$357.50 today for my Rifle Shell Pen project I am doing for our soldiers fight for our freedom in Iraq.

As I stated at the reunion, it cost a little over \$4.00 per pen and your help to assure my mission continues, I THANK YOU and the Association.

I wish had kept better records but I'm guessing that I have sent at least a 1000 pens to our troops. This will assure that about 80 more soldiers will receive pens compliments of the Fiske Association. Since the reunion I had one request for 28 pens and they were shipped out upon my return from the reunion. Then I had a First SGT request 50 pens for his soldiers and they were sent out and I just received word from him that they arrived and he will pass them out.

Since the reunion I have received word from two of our shipmates that they have rifle shell casings that they will be shipping to me. If any other shipmate has access to spent .308 rifle shells, I would really appreciate getting them. They can be sent to me at:

Charlie Thompson  
117 Park Place  
Panama City Beach, FL 32413

This past Thursday I had the opportunity to visit with a WWII soldier and I gave him one of my pens and he was truly touched by receiving it.

I will continue to make this rifle pens and ship to our soldiers who are currently fight for our freedom. This project will continue as long as I am physically able to do the work.

On behalf of our troops, I thank the USS Fiske Association for your contribution.

Charlie Thompson  
QM2, 1960-63

### **Excerpts from the Veteran's Corner** **VA Claims up 59% since 1999**

The number of claims processed by VA has increased some 59% since 1999, according to a Government accountability Office report released in July. Between 1999 and the end of fiscal year 2008, processed claims increased from 458,000 to about 729,000.

During the same time, the number of pending claims increased some 65% to about 343,000. To handle the growing number of claims, VA has increased its processing staff by about 58% since 2005.

### **President, VA Secretary Cite PTSD as Priority**

President Obama and Veterans' Affairs (VA) Secretary Eric Shinseki discussed a broad range of veterans' issues including the Administration's commitment to tackling the causes behind Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and providing resources to help those experiencing it. "There is a direct connection between the problems of PTSD and the pace of military operations," Obama told military reporters, adding that PTSD may be curbed by reducing "the amount of time service members spend in theater without a break." Steps taken to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps, the services most heavily stressed with deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, and plans to end policies that keep some service members in uniform beyond the terms of their enlistment contracts (stop-loss) are aimed at reducing stress and the incidence of PTSD.

### **New Initiatives for Female Veterans**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced new initiatives to support women veterans. The plans include comprehensive primary care and specialized medical care at every VA medical center; enhanced mental health care specifically for female vets; staffing every VA medical center with a women veterans' program manager; improving communication and outreach to women vets; and continuing the operation of organizations such as VA's Center for Women Veterans and the Women Veterans Health Strategic Healthcare group.

Earlier this year Penny Collins, FRA's director of membership development and coast Guard Veteran, participated in a House VA Committee discussion on the special needs of women veterans. The forum highlighted the need for increased training for VA staff, some of whom have misconceptions about the needs and contributions of women vets or fail to acknowledge that some issues impact female veterans differently than their male counterparts.

### **Mentors Ready to Help Vets Find Jobs**

A New York Based non-profit group announced in September that is had launched a program to match returning war veterans seeking employment with business executives willing to help. The executive director of Veterans across America says the Champion Mentor Program will provide veterans the tools they need to complete for quality employment, or start businesses.

"There is a tremendous need for this mentor program as unemployment and underemployment among veterans is rising daily," Dr. Ray Healey said. For more information about the program, contact Dr. Ray Healy or Wesley Poriotis at 212-684-1122.

## News from the 2011 Reunion Committee Cont

**Circus World Museum** - The Ringling Bros. Circus was founded in Baraboo, WI, in 1884 by five brothers: Al, Otto, Charles, John and Alf T. Ringling. Ringlingville was the name for the original Ringling Bros. Circus winter quarters in Baraboo. The buildings, standing along the north bank of the Baraboo River, date from 1897 through 1918 and are the largest surviving group of original circus structures in North America. There are also remains of a footbridge which employees took to cross the river in the winter.

The world-famous circus wintered in Baraboo for 34 years until 1918, the year before it merged with the Barnum & Bailey Show (which the Ringlings purchased in 1907) to become the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows.

The entire area has been declared a National Historic Landmark Site.

#	Questions	Time (Day)		Guys		Gals	
		1/2	Whole	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Would you come an extra day for an additional tour?		X				
2.	Tour of Great Lakes Training Center? (Friday) Only the first 100 can go to the Graduation Cerimony		X				
3.	Interested in a tour of the EAA Museum?		X				
4.	Interested in a Brewer's Baseball game (Evening Game)?	X					
5.	Would you be interested (Miller or Sprecher)?	X					
6.	Interested in Mitchell Park Conservatory (The Domes)?	X					
7.	Would you be interested in touring the Pabst Mansion?	X					
8.	Would you be interested in going to a Casino?	X					
9.	Tour Old World Wisconsin (600-acre, 1835 – 1910, living history museum)?		X				
10.	Would you like to tour the Art Museum?	X					
11.	Would you be interested in touring Circus World Museum?		X				
12.	Would you like to tour the Harley Davison Museum?	X					
13.							

We, the committee, have presented some ideas to the members for cosideration. Please think about these, talk it over with your spouse (I did put some tours that would be of more interest to them) and please contact us at:

Don Valentine  
 131 South James Street  
 Waukesha, WI 53186-6220  
 devalentine@ameritech.net

By doing this you will help us plan a better reunion for us all. In each newsletter, we will give you more details of the reunion as they unfold.

The 2011 Reunion Committee