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USS EMMONS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

December 2019

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FIRST TIME ATTENDEES BOLSTER JUMP IN EMMONS ASSOCIATION REUNION ATTENDANCE

The history and small town charm of Gettysburg, PA, and the opportunity to join in fellowship with their Emmons family, drew 67 shipmates, family and friends to south-central Pennsylvania for the 35th USS Emmons reunion September 26-29.

Among those in attendance along with shipmates Tony ESPOSITO, Armand JOLLY, George FLORY and Grover McMICHAEL were 16 Emmons family members attending their first reunion, including those representing shipmates Donald AYER, George BORDER, John DEVERS, Ross ELLIOTT, Jr., Ed HOFFMAN, Joseph POMYKALA, Thaddeus TENEROWICZ and Clyne VEAL.

The weekend's highlights included presentation of the Lt. Griffin/ USS Emmons memorial scholarship

awards and banquet keynote speaker Capt. Chris DeGREGORY, as well as Friday's visit to the Gettysburg battlefield, our memorial service at the National Cemetery and videos of the 2019 Emmons memorial dive and Armand JOLLY'S recent visit to the Normandy beaches.

Sunday morning's breakfast brought the festivities to a close with everyone exchanging good-byes while many of those attending their first reunion were heard saying this will not be their last (we hope not!).

Plans for the 2020 reunion are underway as we explore potential venues. We expect to have a time and place to announce in early 2020. Stay tuned..... In the meantime, visit our website's Reunion page for photos from the weekend.

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 ☆ **THE 2020 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION IS NOW AVAILABLE!! VISIT WWW.USSEMMONS.ORG FOR INFORMATION** ☆
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DEGREGORY RELATES COMMON BOND HELD WITH EMMONS LEGACY

The Emmons Association was proud and honored to have Capt. Chris DEGREGORY, grandson of shipmate Thaddeus TENEROWICZ, stateside and able to join us again at September's reunion.

Attending this year with his son, Jake, Chris last attended in 2012 after having completed a tour as Destroyer Captain on the *USS Bulkeley (DDG-84)*. Since then, among his other assignments, he served as Captain aboard the *USS Monterey (CG-61)* and currently serves as Chief of Staff for Commander Naval Surface Force, Atlantic at Naval Station Norfolk.

In his banquet keynote address, Chris shared the pride he holds for his connection to the *Emmons* and her crew and how the *Emmons* has followed him throughout his Naval career through Navy combat artist Dwight SHEPLER's Normandy invasion paintings *Battle for Fox Green Beach* and *Target of Opportunity*, first in his own house, then as they kept turning up on display at his various commands.

Chris closed with an overview of today's Navy and his pride that destroyers lead the way today, just as the *Emmons* and other destroyers did in WWII.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS HONORED AT REUNION BANQUET

Now in its 10th year, the Lt. John J. Griffin/USS Emmons Memorial Scholarship Program continues to introduce our next generation to the legacy forged by our Emmons crewmembers. This year's recipients, Lyuka DEVERS and Troy BIERMANN, took time from their studies to travel to Gettysburg to formally accept their awards and share their essays at the reunion banquet program.



Troy Biermann with brother Tyler and mother Cyndy

Lyuka, a freshman at Cal State, Long Beach, is the great-granddaughter of shipmate John DEVERS. Troy, grandson of shipmate Joseph POMYKALA, attends Northwestern University.

The Emmons Association is proud of Lyuka, Troy and all the applicants for their desire to honor their Emmons heroes through participation in the scholarship program.



Lyuka Devers with grandfather Mike Devers

SIGNED PHOTO, NAVY CROSS ENTRUSTED TO EMMONS ASSOCIATION

Two historically significant pieces of Emmons history have been entrusted to the USS Emmons Association by the families of two of our Emmons heroes lost at Okinawa.

First, the mystery has been solved regarding a photo of the Emmons signed by over 50 of her shipmates in 1943 (see photo on outside panel). A copy of the photo graces the cover of the Survivor Report booklet prepared years ago, but the whereabouts of the original photo and story behind it remained a mystery to many of us.

Karen MARLING, the niece of shipmate John P. MCCARTHY (KIA) contacted us recently regarding the photo. Karen explained John brought the photo home last time he was home.

As far back as she can remember, the photo hung on the wall



John P. McCarthy

of her aunt's house. With her aunt's passing, it was the family's wish to place the photo in our hands to be shared with all the Emmons family.

About the same time, Ross ELLIOTT, nephew of Ensign Ross T. ELLIOTT, Jr. (KIA), contacted us regarding his uncle's Navy Cross which he explained was framed and hung on the wall of his grandmother's home for years. Like John, Ensign Elliott made the ultimate sacrifice aboard the *Emmons* at Okinawa.

Capt. BILLINGSLEY's book, *The Emmons Saga*, details how Ensign Elliott sacrificed his own life during the Okinawa attack to allow several of his men to sur-

vive. For his actions, he was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross, the Navy's award for extraordinary heroism.

Upon contacting us, his nephew Ross asked if the Association would accept his uncle's Navy Cross "...in spirit of honoring all the lost and wounded crew



Ross T. Elliott, Jr. and his Navy Cross

members and the many whose bravery was unseen or unsung."

The Emmons Association humbly accepted the offers from the McCarthy and Elliott families.

(continued—see LEGACY, page 3)

Notes....from the Reunion Log

The Legacy Committee is excited to announce a record \$742 was raised by this year's raffle, all of which goes directly to the scholarship fund for future awards. Special thanks goes out to all who participated as well as those who graciously contributed prizes making this year's raffle a success.

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After missing the past several reunions, we were pleased to see the return of shipmates George FLORY, of Sarasota, FL, and Grover McMICHAEL, of Newnan, GA., and it appeared they too were happy to be back!

George was accompanied by children Mike FLORY and Susan FOX, while Grover introduced us to his close friend and our newest Emmons family member Mark PASS.

A highlight of the weekend was seeing George and Grover reunited with their shipmates Armand JOLLY and Tony ESPOSITO.

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Members were notified at the Saturday morning business meeting of the recent receipt of a \$1220 check representing funds raised for the scholarship program by Kurt REESE, Chuck DeCesari and all our Okinawa diver

friends. This brings the total scholarship funds raised by them to \$11,018 over the past 7 years.

Our "Okinawa Branch" of the Emmons Association continues its watch over the Emmons and we extend our sincere gratitude for their steadfast support of our efforts.

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Once again Kurt REESE's video of the 2019 memorial dive on the Emmons had its first public screening at the reunion and it did not disappoint. The video can be viewed on our website at www.ussemmons.org.

SURVIVOR REPORTS TO RECEIVE OVERHAUL

In the days following the Okinawa attack on the *Emmons* when many of the survivors were being evacuated aboard the USS Wayne, Lt. John GRIFFIN took it upon himself to have the survivors document in writing their accounts of what they experienced during the attack.

A compilation of those handwritten accounts was published in the early 1980's by the Emmons Association as a booklet, with copies given to the shipmates. The reports have proven to be a valuable resource of historical significance, aiding Capt. BILLINGSLEY in research for his book, *The*

Emmons Saga, and providing all of us insight into the thoughts and experiences of the crew that day.

With extra copies of the *Survivor Report* booklet no longer available and the difficulty in reading many of its handwritten accounts, Emmons family members Cheri YECKE and Kevin and Jody KING have taken the initiative to begin the tedious process of transcribing all the reports.

While we anticipate the project will take us well into next year, the goal is to publish a new edition of the *Survivor Reports*, making them available to all Emmons family members.

(LEGACY—continued from page 2)

Both the original photo of the Emmons with all its signatures, as well as Ensign Elliott's Navy Cross, including the original citation signed by Secretary of the Navy, James FORRESTAL, are in our possession to be proudly displayed at future reunions and shared with Emmons family for generations to come.

The USS Emmons Association extends its sincere appreciation to Karen, Ross and their families for the sacrifice they've endured and for their thoughtfulness in sharing these treasures with their extended Emmons family. Rest assured, they are in good hands.

SUPPORTING OUR YEAR-LONG EFFORTS

Show your support in helping us continue our work throughout the year through payment of your 2020 dues. Dues are \$25 or a discounted \$40 for couples and \$5 for junior members (18 years and under).

Checks payable to USS Emmons Association may be sent to Thomas Hoffman, Treasurer, 36078 Huntington St., Millville, DE 19967. Your support is greatly appreciated!

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USS Emmons (DD457-DMS22)

Visit us online at
www.ussemmons.org

**SINCERE WISHES FOR A WONDERFUL
HOLIDAY SEASON AND A HAPPY,
HEALTHFUL NEW YEAR**



After 76 years, an original photo, signed by over 60 Emmons shipmates in 1943, has been entrusted to the USS Emmons Association for safekeeping (see story, page 2).