

THE IRONMAN—A DOUBLE ENDER’S NEWSLETTER

Membership Scorebox

Current	45
Lifetime	14
Past Due	149
Snail Mail Ad- dresses Only	236
Email Address	516
Total Shipmates	4,161

Dues Notice!

Please be sure to check your mailing label or email notation. If it doesn't say Current or Life above your name at the top of the label, you should renew your annual dues. To reach the greatest number of shipmates, we will publish the complete Association newsletter to any valid email or snail mail address. Your dues payments make this possible.

Potential Providence Tours for 2018 USS Reeves (DLG-24/CG-24) Reunion

Here's a listing of the tours and events that the US Army Pleiku MP Reunion Group managed to accomplish during a couple of days during their Providence Reunion in 2015. This is just an idea of what is close to Providence. We will also be exploring attractions in Boston.

Submarine Force Museum, Home to the Historic Ship Nautilus

The Submarine Force Museum, located on the Thames River in Groton CT, maintains the world's finest collection of submarine artifacts. It is the only submarine museum operated by the US Navy, and as such is the primary repository for artifacts, documents, and photographs related to US Submarine Force history, from its beginnings at the turn of the century to the modern Navy. Inside the museum are working periscopes, an authentic submarine control room and extensive models depicting the development of the US Submarine Force. The USS Nautilus, now decommissioned, is open as a museum where you can walk through selected spaces. The museum's collections include more than 33,000 artifacts, 20,000 significant documents, and 30,000 photographs. With so many holdings, the displays change frequently so, even if you have been there, a return visit brings a new experience.

Mystic Seaport

We start with lunch at the River Room with plenty of time thereafter to explore Mystic Seaport, home to four National Historic Landmark vessels, including the 1841 *Charles W. Morgan*, the last wooden whaling ship in the world.

The *Morgan* has returned to her home after a triumphant 38th Voyage along the New England coast last summer. The re-created seafaring village is bustling with the sights and sounds of 19th century America. Musicians, role players and seaport educators can be found walking throughout the village. You can tour historic ships, take a horse and buggy ride, take a harbor cruise, and see demonstrations in newspaper printing, ship carving, open-hearth cooking, blacksmithing and boat building. You can visit the general store, chapel, school and drugstore to get insight into the joy and challenge of daily family life 100 years ago. The admission ticket is good for one return visit within a week.

Windshield tour of Newport, the "City by the Sea"

The city of Newport, Rhode Island, at the southern tip of Aquidneck Island, and is bounded by Middletown to the north and three bodies of water: Narragansett Bay to the west; Sakonnet River to the east; and Rhode Island Sound to the south. Home to spectacular coastal scenery, awe-inspiring architecture, a thriving waterfront downtown, and welcoming hospitality, Newport is considered by many to be a shining gem in the coastal crown of New England. We will pass by the famed Gilded Age mansions that were once the summer playground for socialite families with names like Astor and Vanderbilt, as well as the church where John Kennedy married Jacqueline Bouvier.

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The President’s Page



Greetings to The Reeves Association Family

By all standards, this has been a tough year. From just about every aspect of our lives, there has been a lot going on. The combination of politics, protests, weather, ship collisions, football, and mass shootings has us all wondering what’s going on.

For starters, there have been way too many Navy surface ship mishaps in the news this year, with an unprecedented loss of life for peace time conditions. It seems to touch even closer for us, as all these incidents involved 7th Fleet vessels operating in places we know well. Some of our own past-fears have come to pass for today’s sailors. Twice! Our thoughts and prayers go out to the crews and their families. We truly hope they can resolve this dangerous and heartbreaking trend.

Mother Nature stepped up next to reminded us, on several occasions, that she is still very much in the hurricane business. The calm of the last few Hurricane seasons caused everyone to relax, and our big weather expectations diminished. Well, we’ve been well reminded, and we still have a little more season to go. Again, our thoughts and prayers go out to Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and those that

are there to help with the recovery.

With all that’s going, it’s almost difficult to remember that we are lined up perfectly for our next reunion, with the start of our 2018 reunion exactly one year away. Up till now I’ve been sitting back waiting for the time to get the entertainment part of the reunion up and running. We settled the business part of the reunion a few months ago, when we signed the contract with the Crowne Plaza Hotel Providence in Warwick, Rhode Island. Since then it seems the only steps we have taken towards RI is to spread the initial word that we’re headed that way. Now we can get into figuring out just what our options are for road trips, site visits, and general touristy type of stuff.

We got some information from the Providence tourism bureau to consider, and we posted thumbnails of that information in the July newsletter. Now we must dig deeper to see what’s really out there, what’s popular, and most importantly.... what’s affordable for our group. We have also got some information from an unlikely source that will come in handy for our planning efforts. The source is the US Army Pleiku (Vietnam) MP Group that held their 2015 reunion at the same hotel, and toured a lot of the sites that would be of interest to us. My Brother-in-Law is a member of that group, and my (now favorite) Sister, Kathi, is the

reunion planner for the group. Kathi provided me with the itinerary they followed, complete with opinions on what was worth the trouble, what to avoid, and what not to miss. This will be very handy in the next few months as we look to develop our own plans.

I also had an opportunity this summer to visit the area on a business trip to East Haven, CT. As usual for business trips, there was not enough time to extensively check things out, but I did find a few hours to visit Mystic Connecticut. I got to take a quick lap around the town and got to check out the Mystic Seaport Maritime Museum. Both the town and the seaport museum were spectacular. I was really impressed with what I saw, and can’t wait to go back and spend more time to see what I missed. There’s plenty to see and do in the Providence area, and we’ll try to make sure we learn everything we can in the time we have left to plan. I’m sure we will be able to provide some great activity selections for our members to consider.

On to other reunion news, we received an offer from Nancy and Charles Elkins, who have been taking pictures at our reunions for years. Nancy and Charles proposed that we stop wasting money on commercial photography contractors that have been to several of our events. and in-

(Continued on page 4)

This newsletter is published by:

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All comments, suggestions, submissions and criticism are welcome. My email is always open..

Life Memberships

At the 2014 reunion in Portland, ship-mates voted for a Life Membership. After researching various Associations, it was decided that the US Navy Cruiser Sailor Association’s plan was best for the USS Reeves Association. Monies for life membership are placed in an interest-bearing account and not mixed with operating funds.

The schedule is simple:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Under 50	\$500
Under 60	\$400
Under 70	\$300
Under 80	\$200
80 or older	\$100

We already have 14 life members.

Emails, Etc.

From: John Armstrong
 <jwausn5888@hotmail.com>
Date: July 1, 2017 at 13:40:54
 MDT
To: Tom Bailey
 <aloha592@yahoo.com>
Subject: 2018 reunion

Tom, I've stayed at the Crown plaza Hotel before and they treated us very well. I can tell you flying into Providence is much better than flying into Boston. I think Tin Can Sailors association members (don't know about Cruiser Sailors association members) can get into Battleship Cove free, just show their membership card. Your, Shipmate,
 John
 Have Fun, Regardless

Agent Orange

I don't know if the research has been completed re the Reeves and Agent Orange but I'd like to add my story. I served on the Reeves from 1965-1967 and later its replacement USS Sterett DLG-31 from 1967-1969. In June 1969 while aboard the Sterett I suffered from pain in my ankles and was barely able to walk. Upon arrival back at Yokosuka, I was transferred to the Naval Hospital, where after numerous tests, minor surgery to remove a lymph node for biopsy and chest x-rays resulted in a diagnosis of pulmonary sarcoidosis for which I was given a 10% disability

which several years later was reduced to 0%.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarcoidosis#Bone.2C_joints.2C_and_muscles

Both the Reeves and the Sterett spent much of their time off the coast of North Vietnam.

The exact cause of sarcoidosis in general and my illness in particular has never been defined.

I have a theory that may or may not explain the cause of my illness.

While at sea off the coast of North Vietnam on our many deployment, I recall there always was a fine, faintly green dust covering the deck. I've always thought that what I was seeing was soil and foliage that was blown up into the air from the bombing activities. If it was, then areas that were sprayed with Agent Orange and then bombed might be the source of some of the "dust" and thus the source of mechanism of exposure.

As you might see in the Wikipedia article sarcoidosis can affect many parts of the body and is rarely diagnosed. Sarcoidosis is believed to be an autoimmune disease.

Studies has detected an association, for example, between sarcoidosis and carpal tunnel and trigger finger. I've has carpal tunnel surgery on both wrists and in 2 weeks am going in for trigger finger surgery on my 7th finger.

I think it's possible that "Blue Water" sailors could well have been exposed to Agent Orange via the mechanism I've described.

I'd be interested to have your comments.

regards
 Ronald H Bartlertt
 FTM1 S/N 698-44-49

**USS Reeves Association
 Lifetime Members:**

- HT2 Willie Avant
- BM3 Ronald A Brown
- RD1 Donald Carunchio
- MNSN John Castle
- RADM Bill Center
- RADM Ming Chang
- GMM1 Shane Gilbert
- PN1 Dennis Hogan
- EM3 Robert Ogbin
- RADM Daniel Richardson
- LCDR Michael Robertson
- EN2 Tommy Rottman
- RADM Mark Tidd
- FTM2 Robert Van Der Kamp

(Continued from page 1) (Tours)

Lunch at the Newport Naval Station Officer's Club

The OClub offers spectacular waterfront views and is located within a short stroll (up a paved hill) to the Naval War College Museum, one of fifteen official museums operated by the US Navy. The Naval War College Museum displays exhibits on three themes: the history of the Naval War College since 1884, the history of naval activities in the Narragansett Bay area since the Colonial period, and the history of the art and science of naval warfare since ancient times. Touring the Museum during lunch is optional.

The Breakers

The Breakers is the grandest of Newport's summer "cottages" and a symbol of the Vanderbilt family's social and financial preeminence in turn of the century America. It is the surviving jewel of the New York Central Railroad fortune, making a statement about the global sensibilities of the Vanderbilt family. The 70 room sum-

mer estate of Cornelius II includes a 2 1/2 story high Great Hall and a Morning Room adorned with platinum leaf panels. Its interiors feature rare marble, alabaster, and gilded woods throughout.

Behind the scene's bakery tour

Everyone's dream -- starting the day with dessert! In 1916, Luigi Scialo and his brother arrived from the Italian province of Pomigliano d'Arco and started Scialo Bros. Bakery in the heart of Federal Hill, Providence's famous Italian neighborhood. The Scialo Bakery tradition has been carried on by Luigi's daughters; all products are made from scratch and baked on the premises in brick ovens dating back to the 1920s. We'll have scrumptious and unique samplings served alongside fresh brewed coffee (and a few minutes to run next door to the Italian deli if you want to take something home).

Providence windshield tour

We'll see why Travel & Leisure magazine has featured Providence as ranking 4th for One of America's Favorite

Cities to visit. We'll have an hour long narrated tour of historical Providence, where we'll view famous architecture, magnificent historic homes, buildings and parks. We'll travel Benefit Street, known as the Mile of History, featuring the oldest concentration of colonial homes in America today.

Culinary Art Museum and Lunch

The Culinary Museum at Johnson & Wales is the premier museum devoted to the preservation of the history of the culinary and hospitality industry where we'll explore five centuries of culinary treasures, including a diner museum, stove museum, pantheon of chefs, kitchen gadgets, presidential menus, fine china, appliances and more. It's a fun trip down Memory Lane and you'll be amazed at how many items will trigger childhood memories. We'll be eating in the transported and re-assembled first diner ever built!

(Continued from page 2) (Presidents)

stead allow our own in-house resources to tackle the job instead. She's right about the photographers we've hired in the past, as they have, at times, left us disappointed. The Elkins' proposal to provide the same level of photo coverage we got from our previous contractors, and to do it at a far better price. Their initial information is contained elsewhere in the newsletter, and we'll keep you posted as we get closer to Providence.

The only thing remaining on my to-do list was to discuss membership.

We've included the membership metrics in this edition, and as you may notice, we have far more members behind on dues than we have current. It's understandable for a non-reunion year, but we have to get everyone thinking towards getting their membership dues up to speed, as we're getting ready to start spending some money on contracts and reservations for Providence '18. There's also the life-member thing, so please give that some thought.

That's all we have for now. We've begun the countdown to Providence, and I for one, am very happy to get

this show moving. If you live in the Providence area and can help with checking things out for us, please let me know. Your help would be appreciated.

Here's wishing you fair winds and following seas.

//tom

Tom Bailey BT2 (SW) 84-87

USS Reeves Shipmate selected as CO of Naval Support Facility Redzikowo, Poland.

NSF Redzikowo will be co-located with the Redzikowo Force Protection Battalion at the Redzikowo Military Base and will work jointly with the Polish forces to ensure the security and safety of the Aegis Ashore site. The base is located in Northern Poland, near the Baltic Sea, and approximately 60 miles (100 km) from the port city of Gdynia.

The site will consist of a command, control and communications suite. Separately, it will house several launch modules containing SM-3 missiles. Once complete, the Aegis Ashore site in Poland will host the upgraded SM-3 Block IIA. Technical capability of the AAMDS site in Poland is expected to be delivered in the 2018 timeframe.

NSF Redzikowo's operations enable the responsiveness of U.S. and allied forces in support of Navy Region Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia's (EURAFSWA) mission to provide services to the Fleet, Fighter, and Family.



Captain Rick Gilbert

Captain Gilbert enlisted in the U.S. Navy in June 1982, completing Basic Training at Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois followed by Boiler Technician Class A School. His first assignment after training was USS REEVES (CG 24)

home ported in Yokosuka Japan. In 1987, BT2(SW) Gilbert reported to Naval Station San Diego aboard USS FANNING (FF 1076) as the Fireroom LPO. In January 1990, BT1(SW) Gilbert reported to his first shore assignment at NETC Newport, Rhode Island teaching Steam Engineering to Division Officers, Department Heads and facilitating the Senior Officer Engineering Indoctrination Class.

He was awarded Instructor of the Year and received his Master Training Specialist Qualification. During this tour he was promoted to Chief Petty Officer in September 1991.

Chief Gilbert was selected for the Limited Duty Officer Program (Surface Engineering) and promoted to Ensign in November 1993. He returned to sea duty April 1994 at NWS Concord, CA where he deployed aboard USS KISKA (AE 35) as MPA. He received a promotion to Chief Engineer. He earned his Surface Warfare Officer Pin and Tactical Action Officer designation. In 1996 he returned overseas as part of the Forward Deployed Naval Forces (FDNF) aboard USS INDEPENDENCE (CV 62) as P-1 Materials Officer. Upon decommissioning the USS INDEPENDENCE (CV 62), LT Gilbert cross decked to the USS KITTYHAWK (CV 63) in October 1999 and served as P-1/2 Materials Officer. He transferred to COMNAVMARIANAS Guam in May 2000 as Materials and Supply Officer for Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Five. In July 2002 LCDR Gilbert returned to the FDNFs at CFAS Sasebo, Japan as the Chief Engineer on board the USS JUNEAU (LPD 10). In June of 2005 LCDR Gilbert was selected for conversion from Engineering to Security and immediately volunteered for assignment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as Executive Officer for Naval Expeditionary Guard Battalion (NEGB) performing Detainee Opera-

tions. In June 2006, he reported to NAS Sigonella, Sicily as the Installation Security Officer. In October 2008, he was promoted to Commander. In June 2010 he served as the Security Officer, Naval Submarine Base, Kings Bay, GA where he completed a 10-month IA as Deputy Commander for Rule of Law/NATO Rule of Law – Afghanistan. In 2013, Commander Gilbert reported to USFFC where he was promoted to Captain and served as Navy Security Force Community Sponsor.

His education includes a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Excelsior College. Captain Gilbert has been awarded the Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and Meritorious Service Medal with two stars, Navy Commendation Medal with eight stars, Navy Achievement Medal with two stars, and various other personal unit and service awards.

Note:

Mary and Tom Bailey recently got a chance to catch-up with Rick Gilbert, and his charming wife Miki, when they were in Colorado Springs for a series of meetings. We went out to dinner and had a chance to compare notes on the last 33 years. I presented Rick with a USS Reeves Association challenge coin, and got one of his in return. It was great to see these guys after so long an absence. There's just no telling where making steam on the Reeves may take you.....



2017 Financials

2017 Operating P&L To Date

Income

Dues	\$560
Donations	\$140
Ship’s Store	\$46
Misc	\$6
Cost of Goods	-\$24
Total Income	\$728

Expense

Advertising	\$83
Bank Service Charges	\$354
Newsletters	\$2
Postage/Delivery	\$57
Reunion Expenses	\$500
Total Expense	\$996
Net Loss	-\$268

Charitable/Educational Objectives

The USS Reeves Association is an educational, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization registered with the Internal Revenue Service, FEIN 86-1163983. For that purpose at the 2010 business meeting, it was recommended that future excess funds be used for donations and scholarships as determined at business meetings starting in 2012.

Shift Colors

To receive the Navy’s Shift Colors newsletter via email send the following information to Mill_ShiftColors@navy.mil -- First name; Last name; E-mail address; Title (Mr., Mrs., rank, etc.); and Military affiliation (retiree, surviving spouse, veteran, other). There is no longer any funding for hard copies to be printed and mailed. To receive Shift Colors it does not matter whether or not you’re retired, active duty, a veteran, a surviving spouse, or just someone who’s interested in receiving the newsletter.

VA Flu Shots Update 05 ► No Cost Shots at Walgreens

Flu Season is here! Veterans protect yourselves and get a NO COST flu shot! The cold and flu season is upon us and the Department of Veterans Affairs has once again teamed up with Walgreens Pharmacies nationwide to allow all veterans who are currently enrolled in the VA healthcare system to be able walk into any of the over 8000 Walgreens nationally (and the Duane Reade pharmacies in the New York metropolitan area) to receive a vaccination at no cost. Vaccinations will be available through March 31, 2018.

Veterans wishing to receive the no cost vaccination simply need to present a Veterans Identification Card and a photo ID, at any participating Walgreens to receive the vaccination. The Group ID is: VAFLU In addition, after the Walgreens pharmacist administers the vaccine Walgreens will transmit that information securely to VA where it becomes

part of the patient’s electronic medical record. VA is committed to keeping Veteran patients healthy, and during this flu season, vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of flu. No matter where you live, visit your local VA clinic or Walgreens to get a no cost flu shot.

To find your local VA, visit www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp. To locate a Walgreens store near you, call 800-WALGREENS (800-925-4733), or go to www.com/findastore. To learn more about the partnership visit <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/immunization.asp> or call 1-877-771-8537. To get more information on flu and flu vaccine, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/flu or www.cdc.gov/flu. [Source: eBenefits Online Application | September 26, 2017 ++]

VAMC Spokane WA Update 02 ► Missing Computer

Veterans Affairs officials in Spokane are notifying 3,275 veterans that their health information may be compromised because of a missing laptop computer. An equipment inventory failed to find a vendor-issued laptop from the Mann-Grandstaff VAMC Lab. It was used to interface with a hematology analyzer between April 2013 and May 2016. An extensive search of the VA grounds did not locate the laptop. In a news release outlining the issue, VA officials said they were uncertain what information was

stored on the laptop. As a precaution, VA officials said they are alerting every veteran who may have had a blood sample processed on the analyzer. At risk would be the names, dates of birth, and social security numbers of the veterans. The VA said it would notify affected veterans with a letter about the situation and information regarding a year of free credit monitoring by Experian. [Source: The Spokesman-Review | September 19, 2017 ++]

Ship's Store

Ships Photos (\$10) + s/h



1968— Entering Sydney Harbor



1985—Yokosuka from Australia



1975—Departing Pearl Harbor



1992—Seattle Sea Fair Festival

Challenge Coins (\$14) + s/h



Ball caps (\$12 each) + s/h

2009—San Diego

2010—Chicago

2012—Charleston

2016—San Antonio



Golf Shirts—all sizes (\$20) + s/h (2XL/3XL-add \$2)

T-Shirts—allsizes (\$15) + s/h XL/3XL-add \$2)

Mousepads (\$10) + s/h



Ship—DLG 24

Ship—CG 24



USS Reeves Association – Ship's Store Order Form

Price	S/H	Total	Description
		Total	

Shipping and handling:
Shipping is via USPS Priority or Fedex. Please add the following for each item to cover the Association's packaging and postage costs:

- Photos: \$2 per photo
- Ball caps: \$4 each
- Mousepads: \$3 each
- Challenge Coins: \$2 for 1, \$.50 for each additional coin
- Shirts: \$5 per shirt

Shipping Label

To: _____

Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

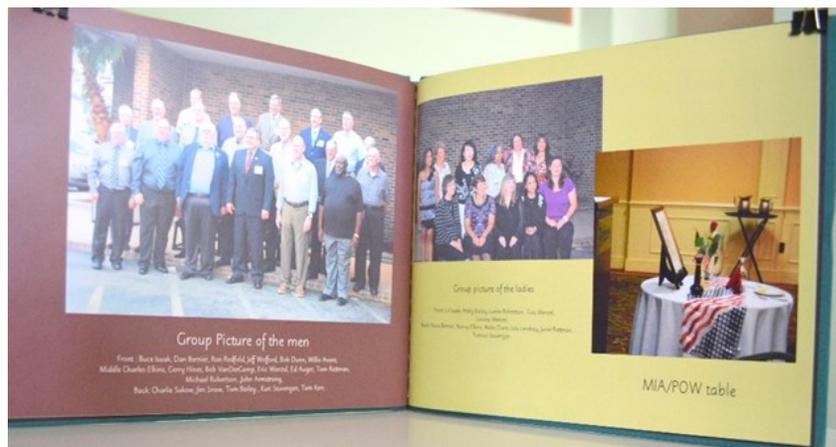
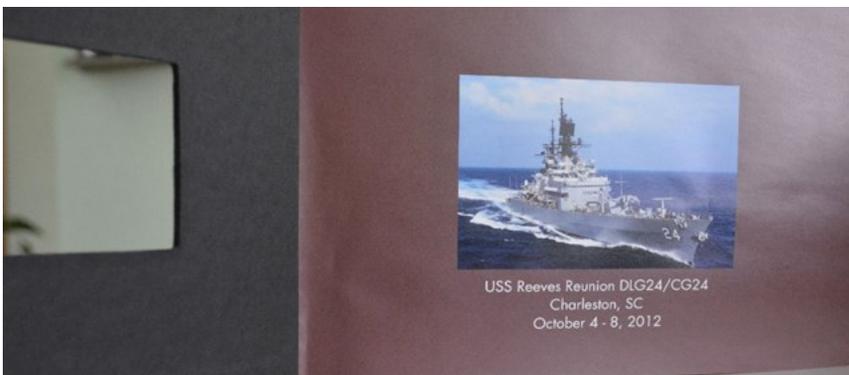
Send order to: USS Reeves Association
c/o Michael Robertson
15709 N Sycamore St
Mead, WA 99021



Photography for our 2018 USS Reeves DLG-24/CG-24 Reunion

Shipmate Charles and his wife, Nancy Elkins will be handling the photography for our reunion in Providence, RI. We will provide the group pictures, individual pictures, candid shots and a memory book of the reunion.

- As in the past, we will take snap shots from the different excursions which include the shipmates and spouses.
- Random pictures will be taken at the various functions like the sign-in, reception and banquet.
- At the banquet, we will take the individual pictures. We can take the formal pictures of the couples/individual, but also we want to take pictures for the identification. Having these identification pictures have been invaluable in the past because it helps us to know the couples.
- We will take the group pictures of the shipmates and spouses/sufficient other.
- If you want to receive any of the pictures electronically, there will be no charge. However, if you want printed copies there will be minimal charge to cover printing, packaging and shipping.
- **MEMORY BOOK.** We had created a memory book from the Charleston, SC 2012 reunion. To give you an idea what this book looks like here are a few pictures of the pages from



(Continued from page 8) (Photography)

this book. We will have this at the reunion.

We will add captions for these pictures about where we are and the people in each picture. Currently, the price for the 8x11 memory book is \$24.99. However, they are always running specials, so that cost could change. In order for this book to be a success, we **STRONGLY** recommend that eve-

ryone provide any pictures that they want included. We will need to know how they want them captioned. (Please electronically only).

The number of photos selected will be based upon duplications and the limit for the book. We will need to receive these either at the reunion or no longer that two weeks afterwards.

A form will be included in your newsletter to place an order for this

book. In order to know how many we will have it would be best to send that information to us. We will have a final price at the reunion and you can pay us then.

See everyone in Providence, RI October 2018. Looking forward to seeing all shipmates and renewing friendships.

Charles and Nancy Elkins

VA Photo ID Cards for All Veterans Coming in November

All honorably discharged veterans of every era will be able to get a photo identification card from the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) starting in November due to a law passed in 2015.

The law, known as the [Veterans Identification Card Act 2015](#), orders the VA to issue a hard-copy photo ID to any honorably discharged veteran who applies. The card must contain the veteran's name, photo and a non-Social Security identification number, the law states.

A VA official on Wednesday confirmed the cards are on track to be available nationwide starting in November. Veterans may apply for the card online, but a timeline for how long it will take to receive a card after application has not been finalized, the official said.

No details were released on when that application process will open,

what information veterans will need when applying or the web address they will use.

Although the law states that the VA may charge a fee for the card, the official said no fee is planned.

The change comes as the military exchange stores prepare to open online shopping to [all honorably discharged veterans](#) starting Nov. 11. Veterans who wish to use that new benefit must be verified through [VetVerify.org](#).

Congress passed the ID law as a way to help veterans prove their service without showing a copy of their DD-214.

"Goods, services and promotional activities are often offered by public and private institutions to veterans who demonstrate proof of service in the military, but it is impractical for a veteran to always carry Department of Defense form

DD-214 discharge papers to demonstrate such proof," the law states.

Some veterans already carry such proof of service.

Those who receive health care from the VA or have a disability rating can get a photo ID VA health card, also known as a Veteran Health Identification Card. Military retirees also hold an ID card issued by the Defense Department. Veterans are also able to get a proof of service letter through the VA's [ebenefits](#) website. And some states will include a veteran designation on driver's licenses if requested.

[Source: Military.Com| Amy Bushatz | Oct 4, 2017 ++]

Exchange Online Shopping Update 12 ► Registration Required

More than 95,000 people visited the military exchanges' VetVerify.org website in its first month, seeking to register for the new veterans online shopping benefit that starts 11 NOV, officials said. All honorably discharged veterans will have access to the online exchanges as of that date. VetVerify is the first step in the eligibility process. Some veterans will be chosen as "beta testers" and will have access to the online stores before 11 NOV; the earlier veterans complete the verification process, the better their chances of becoming beta testers, according to officials with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service, which administers the verification for all the military exchange services. Veterans who register through VetVerify.org will receive notification of their acceptance as eligible online shoppers or, if their records are incomplete, will receive guidance on the steps they can take to update those records.

Officials were not able to provide information about how many of the 95,000 verification attempts have been successful. About 13 percent of the site's visitors have been chosen as beta testers, AAFES spokesman Chris Ward said, and others who registered for verification already were eligible to shop. Officials started the verification process early in preparation for at least 13 million people who will be newly eligible to shop online at the exchange. Until now, online military exchange shopping was available only to active-duty, reserve and National Guard members; retirees; 100 percent disabled veterans; the dependent fami-

ly members of those individuals; and certain others. Online pricing can be seen only by those who are authorized to shop at the exchange websites:

- www.shopmyexchange.com;
- www.shopcgx.com;
- www.mymcx.com; and
- www.mynavyexchange.com.

Military Times and the exchanges continue to get questions about the VetVerify website and the new shopping benefit. Here are a few frequently asked questions, and some answers, supplied by AAFES:

Q. Is this site a phishing scam?

A. No. VetVerify.org is a shared service for all the military exchanges with the sole purpose of supporting the newly approved veterans online shopping benefit. VetVerify.org uses data from Defense Manpower Data Center, which holds the most comprehensive dataset on veterans, to verify eligibility.

Q. Do I qualify if I served for four years, or if I was in the reserves, or if I'm on disability?

A. All honorably discharged veterans and those with a general (under honorable) discharge can shop their military exchanges, through the veterans online shopping benefit, beginning on Veterans Day.

Q. Can my spouse (or other family member) shop?

A. No. The new benefit is specific to veterans with honorable and general (under honorable conditions) discharges.

Q. Does the veterans online shopping benefit extend to shopping at the commissary?

A. No.

Q. What if my service can't be verified?

A. There may be further information needed, so you will need to submit a digital copy of your discharge paperwork to be reviewed for eligibility. After you submit your verification form through VetVerify.org, you will be prompted to upload the necessary paperwork.

Q. Who should I call if I have problems with the verification process?

A. The VetVerify.org customer call center, toll-free, at 844-868-8672.

Q. Why does VetVerify ask for my entire Social Security number?

A. VetVerify is required to obtain the last four digits of your Social Security number, date of birth and last name in order to validate and authenticate shoppers. If a match is not found with the minimum information, then the Social Security number is requested for a more detailed search. Social Security number is the unique identifier by Defense Manpower Data Center data. When customers visit the website of their favorite online exchanges for the first time, however, they will create a new username to be used as the unique identifier with the exchange. VetVerify has taken appropriate measures to safeguard your personal information.

[Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 10, 2017 ++]

VA Vet Choice Update 60 ► Emergency Funding May Not Be Enough

Weeks after a veterans' health initiative received \$2.1 billion in emergency funding, the Trump administration says the private-sector Veterans Choice health care program may need additional money as early as December to avoid a disruption of care for hundreds of thousands of veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs said in a statement 26 SEP that it hoped to move quickly on a proposed long-term legislative fix that would give veterans even wider access to private doctors. The proposal, under review by the White House Office of Management and Budget, would seek money to keep Choice running for much of next year as VA implements wider changes.

On Capitol Hill, the House Veterans Affairs Committee was already anticipating that the emergency funding approved in August may not last the full six months, according to spokespeople for both Republican and Democratic members on the panel. They cited the VA's past problems in estimating Choice program cost. That committee and the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee said they were closely monitoring the situation. "It's disheartening," said Carlos Fuentes, legislative director of Veterans of Foreign Wars, citing his group's continuing conversations with VA about Choice funding. "Imagine if a veteran has to cease chemotherapy treatment during Christmas." Garry Augustine, executive director of Disabled American Veterans' Washington headquarters, said recent discussions with VA also gave him little confidence. "It's always a concern," Augustine said. "Legislative action needs to be done sooner rather than later."

In its statement to The Associated Press, VA said it could not say for certain when Choice funds would be depleted, but acknowledged that it could be as early as December or as late as

March. Earlier this year, the VA began limiting referrals to outside doctors as money began to run low and veterans reported delays in care. The VA proposal for a long-term fix is expected to be released in the coming weeks. "We have a long agenda, a lot more to do," VA Secretary David Shulkin told veterans last week at an event near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. "This fall, our major legislative focus is getting the Choice program working right."

The latest funding woes come amid political disagreement over the future direction of VA and its troubled Choice program, which was passed by Congress in 2014 in response to a wait-time scandal at the Phoenix VA medical center that spread nationwide. Some veterans died while waiting months for appointments as VA employees manipulated records to hide delays. The controversy spurred Congress to establish Choice as a pilot program designed to relieve pressure at VA hospitals. Choice currently allows veterans to receive outside care if they must wait 30 days or more for an appointment or drive more than 40 miles to a VA facility. But the program has encountered long delays of its own.

In a sign of a political divide, the left-leaning VoteVets ran a \$400,000 ad campaign earlier this month in 13 states that warned viewers, "Don't let Trump privatize my VA." The American Federation of Government Employees has been staging rallies to bring attention to VA job vacancies left unfilled. The VA said it remains committed to filling VA positions even as it finalizes plans to revamp Choice. VA said it had about 34,000 vacancies, which they attributed in part to a shortage of health professionals. Legislative proposals to fix VA have run the gamut, including one backed by the conservative Concerned Veterans for America that would give veterans al-

most complete freedom to see an outside doctor. Another plan could create a presidential commission to review closing some VA medical centers.

"Congress can either double-down on the failed VA policies of the past or they can go in a different direction and empower veterans with more choice over their health care," said Dan Caldwell, policy director of Concerned Veterans for America. During the presidential campaign, Trump repeatedly pledged to fix the VA by bringing accountability and expanding access to private doctors, criticizing the department as "the most corrupt." At an Ohio event in July, Trump promised to triple the number of veterans "seeing the doctor of their choice." More than 30 percent of VA appointments are made in the private sector.

Carrie Farmer, senior policy researcher for the RAND Corp., said the Choice debate raises broader questions about the role of government-run health care in treating veterans. To many former troops, the VA health system is a "medical home" where patients feel more understood by doctors specially trained to treat battlefield injury, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Significantly expanding Choice could upend that government role as caretaker, she said. "The big question is ultimately who will be responsible for our veterans' care?" Farmer said. [Source: Associated Press | Hope Yen | September 27, 2017 ++]



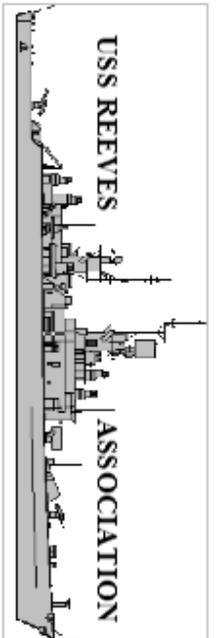
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