

USS ALBACORE (AGSS 569)
NEWSLETTER # 38
January 2012

Dear Shipmate,

On Saturday, 21 January, a roast was conducted to recognize the many contributions of Russ Van Billiard. Russ was a long serving member of the original group who got Albacore to Portsmouth and who, for many years, almost single-handedly kept the Park going after the death of Joe Sawtelle. Russ was honored for his service to Albacore and Albacore Park at a luncheon at Warren's Lobster House in Kittery. Russ was kept in the dark about the party and, as he drove in to the parking lot, wondered why Warren's was so busy on a snowy Saturday. What follows is the schedule of events and a list of those who spoke at the ceremony.

ALBACORE RECOGNITION CEREMONY FOR RUSS VAN BILLIARD

1200 – Guests arrive

1215 – Russ and Barbara arrive and are greeted and seated

1230 – Announcement - Order lunch and start salad bar

1330+/- Open the Ceremony

Welcome Russ and Barbara, his family, PPMMA Board members, FOA Members, work acquaintances, Albacore co-workers, past Board members, Ann Allmendinger (a very special guest) and the many friends of Russ' from all walks of life who have all chosen to join us for this very special occasion.

Presenters:

PAUL MCEACHERN

Paul is native of Portsmouth who first encountered the USS the Albacore as an apprentice ship fitter in 1955 at the Portsmouth Navy Yard. At that time Shop 11 was working on one of several stern cones that would be fitted to the Albacore. Paul is also a Navy veteran of 4 years as a guided Missileman. In the early 1980's, Paul was enlisted by Bill Keefe and Joe Sawtelle in the effort to bring the Albacore back to Portsmouth. Paul has served on the Board of Directors since the return of the Albacore in 1985.

CAPTAIN BILL MCDONOUGH

Capt. McDonough is another well-known local personality He served as Shipyard Commander (1974-1979). After retirement, Capt McDonough worked with the Seacoast Shipyard Association/SOS as a representative of the organization. He was very active in the successful efforts to save the Shipyard in 2005. He has known Russ for a long time as well, not just from the perspective of Albacore, but through the many associations he had with him in other venues.

GARY HILDRETH - Presently a Shipyard Public Affairs specialist, Gary has a military background. He served as the Command Master Chief at Portsmouth until his retirement. He is a past commander of Thresher Base and presently a trustee of that organization. He has worked with Russ on many Albacore related operations that needed shipyard support. Despite a thresher Base meeting that takes place today, Gary agreed to set a priority and help us recognize Russ's achievements.

KEN HERRICK – Presently a co-chair of the Board. Ken has been our representative as a stakeholder in the Memorial and Sarah Mildred Long Bridge planning stages and has advocated strong positions for Albacore Park. Ken presented Russ with a letter of appreciation from the PPMMA Board.

JIM WAKEFIELD – A board member and the Albacore's "caretaker". He is probably the envy of other historical naval ships as Albacore has been brought to a point where the last annual inspection did not turn up any significant deficiencies. Jim presented Russ with a letter of recognition from NAVSEA.

BUTCH JORDAN – Member of Albacore crew, Butch is a retired Naval Officer, and is an extremely active member and leader of Friends of Albacore, a group of retired Albacore crew, retired Submariners and interested persons. The Friends lend very strong pro-active support; working with volunteer groups on Park maintenance and financially supporting a number of projects such as the Audio tour system. Butch gave Russ gift certificates for two of Russ' favorite local restaurants in addition to the following: "Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of his many years of dedicated service to ALBACORE PARK. It was his patience, determination, unflinching persistence and indomitable will over the span of many lean years that ensured the continued operation of the Park and the preservation of the historic ship USS ALBACORE (AGSS 569) as a landmark and local attraction. It was Russ' spirit of cooperation that enabled the Friends Committee to assume a role in assisting the Port of Portsmouth Maritime Museum Association in the continuing presentation of the vessel that had such a significant impact on submarine design, operation and technology."

JOHN MAIER - Newly appointed Executive director of Albacore Park, John has already established an enviable record of firsts with enhanced gift shop sales, updated financial accounting system and setting in place this summer's 25th anniversary celebration of Albacore's opening. John gave Russ an Albacore Park winter jacket with Russ' name embroidered under the Park seal.

GERRY SEDOR – a board member, maintains a liaison with UNH on a current study for the Albacore basin problem and is our official photographer. Gerry gave Russ a photo montage of old and new pictures of Albacore.

Comments from the audience, as time/weather permits

NORM BOWER - a PPMMA Board member and a Friends Committee member who served on Albacore for 9 ½ years, many of those as Chief of the Boat. Norm gave the toast to Russ at the end of the ceremony.

Comments from Russ

Cake and end of the ceremony

Alan Neel's home address is 9040 NE Country Woods Lane, not 9020, his home phone is (360) 638-2976 and the cell phone number listed is no longer valid. Jack Snodgrass' has moved to 10260 Strome Ave, Apt #206, Raleigh, NC 27617 with a new phone number of (919) 745-7434. His email is unchanged. Don Engle can be found at 7204 SE 172nd Hazelwood Loop, The Villages, FL 32162, telephone (352) 753-1654. John Conlin's new email is "johnconlin21@yahoo.com".

The Park will be in its winter shutdown mode from 22 January thru 17 February. This is the annual maintenance period to catch up with tasks that were deferred during the higher tourist traffic time. With no heat onboard in the winter, visitation drops off severely and thus it becomes a time to do all those little (and some big) things that couldn't be done with visitors streaming through the boat.

If you are receiving this newsletter via Uncle Sam's postal service, it is because we do not have an e-mail address for you. We would prefer to be GREEN and deliver the newsletters electronically to save on paper and stamps. So, if you have recently gotten on-line, or had a change of address, telephone number, e-mail provider or if you just have something you would like to submit for posting on the website, please pass that information along to Jack Hunter at one of the below addresses.

Until next time, shipmate,

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