



T H E

BRIGHT PENNY

January - March 2020

A NEWSLETTER FOR MEMBERS OF THE USS BERKELEY (DDG-15)

Happy New Year 2020!!!

Director's Update

Hope you and your family enjoyed the holidays, and that you are entering the New Year in good health!



We are less than ten months away from our next reunion in Portland, Maine, and the planning for the reunion is pretty much complete. Reunion information and registration forms are available at the web site, and there is also a registration form on the last page of this newsletter. You can also find reunion information in the July and October, 2019 newsletters.

This edition of the newsletter includes some updates on "Getting On Base for Commissary Access", "Enhanced VA Loan Benefit", and the latest news regarding the Blue Water Navy Bill. We hope that you find these updates informative and useful.

As we enter 2020 the Association is doing well, and has just a couple of priorities to address. First, is our annual campaign to add new members and renew 2019 memberships. We are off to a good start for renewing 2019 memberships, and thank those that have already submitted their 2020 dues. For those who would like to support the Association, but haven't yet paid 2020 dues, you can send a check or money order

for \$40 made out to the USS Berkeley Association. Please send payments to the following address.

USS Berkeley Association
c/o Gerry Hansen
6318 S. 20th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53221

Our 2nd priority is to fill two vacant Regional Chairmen positions for the South Central and Northwest sectors. Regional chairmen assist in Association decisions, and help plan our reunions. These positions only require a few hours of assistance per year, and are a valuable resource for the Association. Please contact Al Meier at ddg15@ussberkeley.com if you would like to assist the Association or have questions.

We will be sending out copies of the 2020 USS Berkeley Master Roster to paid members in April. Please update any changes to your contact information by filling out the form on the Quarterdeck page at the web site.

Enhanced VA Loan Benefit

Beginning January 1, 2020 the VA will not cap the size of a loan a veteran can get with no down payment. Qualified borrowers can buy or refinance as low as \$0 down, can refinance without requalifying, never pay PMI, and will now get financing without cap limits.

File Blue Water Navy Claims

After nearly twenty years of waiting, the Blue Water Vietnam War veterans will finally get their benefits. These Navy vets that served off the coast of Vietnam, and were exposed to Agent Orange.

The VA which stripped disability benefits from those vets in 2002, begins re-issuing disability ratings for Agent Orange exposure to blue water Navy vets this month. This reversal of policy is the result of the VFW and other veterans advocates' hard work to get the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 passed into law on June 25, 2019.

For free assistance filing a VA disability claim, find a VFW service officer at vfw.org/NVS or call 1-800-VFW-1899. The assistance is always free, and has no VFW membership requirements attached. An accredited VFW service officer will advise you about the VA claims process, tell you what type of paperwork you will need to document your service, and what type of information you will need from your doctor or medical history.

Information for this article was taken from the January 2020 VFW magazine.

USS BERKELEY ASSOCIATION

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Annual Dues: \$40.00

Director: Al Meier

Asst. Director: Dale Johnson

Secretary: Pat Clark & Tammy Meier



Al Meier

Treasurer: Gerald Hansen

Membership Committee

Chairman: Al Meier

Regional Chairmen:

Northeast: Francis Almeida

Southeast: Francis Sholly

North Central: Larry Norris

South Central: **Vacant**

Northwest: **Vacant**

Southwest: Todd Frazier

Ship's Store Mgr: Gerald Hansen

Bright Penny Editor & Publisher: Al Meier

Webmaster: Gerald Hansen

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Berkeley History January 2020

50 Year Ago, 1970

01 – 11 Inport Long Beach
12 – 17 COMPUTEX 5-70
18 – 25 Upkeep Long Beach
26 – 31 POM, TAV

40 Years Ago, 1980

01 – 23 U/W ops in Indian Ocean with USS Kitty Hawk Battle Group
24 – 31 U/W – transit to Subic Bay, R.P. from Indian Ocean

30 Years Ago, 1990

01 Underway/Deployed as part of Battle Group Foxtrot commanded by RADM J. C. Strasser in company with USS Enterprise, Long Beach, Hewitt, Rathburn, Bagley, Wichita, Mount Hood and Carrier Airwing. Eleven. Entered the Royal Domain of Neptunus Rex.

02 – 04 Underway
05 – 06 Inport Diego Garcia
07 – 19 Underway
20 – 23 Inport Muscat, Oman
24 – 31 Underway

20 Years Ago, 2000

In service with the Hellenic Navy of Greece as the H.S. Themistokles

exchanges. They were also to be able to use some amenities such as golf courses and bowling alleys.

Congress extended that access as part of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. Before shoppers can start using the stores and services, the Defense Dept. needs a plan for getting them onto secure military installations.

The DoD announced early last year that part of its plan relies on letting veterans who hold a Veterans Health Identification Card to use it as their base ID card. Officials also said that they plan to issue access cards to veterans and caregivers who don't have that form of ID. Users will be able to receive those cards by presenting a letter of eligibility from the VA. However, neither officials with the VA nor the DoD were able to provide access details by early November 2019.

Although DoD officials said they anticipated a policy in place by November 2019 on when and where veterans and caregivers can begin applying for the access cards, that rollout has been delayed. VA officials were unable to say how or when veterans who had received a disability rating through the VA system and caregivers enrolled in the VA's program would be able to access verification letters.

We hope to update this issue in one of the next newsletters.

Applying for VA Healthcare Benefits

You can visit your local VA medical care facility for assistance with your application. You can also visit your county Office of Veterans Affairs. These offices are run by the state or your local county, and are not directly affiliated with the VA. However, they have trained benefits counselors who can assist you free of charge.

Finally, you can contact a Veterans Service Organization such as the DAV, AMVETS, American Legion, VFW, and similar organizations. These organizations offer free benefits claims assistance, and often have local offices.

After you have **enrolled in the VA health care system**, you can visit your local VA clinic or medical facility to obtain an ID card. You will need to bring a primary form of identification, such as a state-issued driver's licenses or ID card, a passport, or a similar form of ID with photo identification.

Getting On Base for Commissary Access

How the Defense Department will allow approximately 3.5 million veterans and their caregivers to get on base to use commissaries, exchanges and some recreation resources is still largely unanswered. Beginning January 1, 2020, all service-connected disabled veterans, caregivers (enrolled in the Department of Veteran Affairs' Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers program), and former prisoners of war were to be able to shop at on-base grocery stores and

2020 Portland Reunion Registration Form

Name(s): _____

Contact email or phone: _____

Staying at the Best Western Merry Manor Inn? Yes ___ No ___

Reunion (all events including Banquet) 10/15 – 10/18 \$80x _____ = \$ _____

Non-member \$90x _____ = \$ _____

Banquet Only Saturday 10/17 \$65x _____ = \$ _____

Non-member \$75x _____ = \$ _____

Dinner Entrée: (please insert quantity for selections)

Crew Member: New York Sirloin ___ Chicken Cordon Bleu ___ Salmon ___ Vegetarian Lasagna ___

Guest: New York Sirloin ___ Chicken Cordon Bleu ___ Salmon ___ Vegetarian Lasagna ___

Ladies Tea (Saturday afternoon) Yes ___ No ___

Members are those who have paid 2020 dues. If you have paid 2020 dues, both you and one guest will pay the member prices.

2020 Portland Reunion Tour Order Form

Name(s): _____

Contact email or phone: _____

Tours:
Maine Maritime Museum & LL Bean Tour Friday 10/16 \$55 x _____ = \$ _____
See details in the January 2020 newsletter

Total enclosed (check or money order payable to the USS Berkeley Association) \$ _____

Please mail payment to:
USS Berkeley Association
C/o Gerry Hansen
6318 S 20th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53221

All Payments for the reunion and tours must be received by September 15, 2020