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LEGER LINES

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Where will you be June 22-26, 2011? I know where I'll be—at the Navy Musicians Association annual reunion in Virginia Beach, Virginia. I'll be playing in a couple of the bands, sitting on my big butt in the bar, restaurant, or anywhere in the newly-renovated Holiday Inn, Virginia Beach, talking to my Navy MU buds, their spouses, their kids, and, in some cases, their grandkids. I want to see them again this year and every year that I am able. 26 years as a Navy Musician have blessed me with friendship of men and women, career and non-career MUSNs who sat in the clarinet section (yes, I said clarinet) with me from chiefs, officers, up to and including former leaders of the US Navy Band. We shared adventures, bands, incredible travels and experiences that have not been equaled before or since in my life. I'm going to the reunion! Come and share some of your experiences with me and your mates.

I would like to include a couple of reminders as we make our plans. When we are in a city with a large population of former and present MUs, there is a large turn out of members who want to play in one or more of our bands. Only registered members of the NMA are allowed to sit in with our dance bands, concert band, rock band, the jam sessions in the lounge, and all other groups. This is only fair to members who travel (some for great distances) and pay their share to participate.

The first thing you do when you arrive is: check into the hotel if you're staying there, go to the NMA office and see Debbie Holl (be nice to her) and register and get your name tag which allows you to fully participate in the reunion activities.

Remember that the NMA has a travel assistance fund available to members who may be having a financially difficult time handling the cost of the reunion. We do have a limited amount of money to help some of our shipmates come to the reunion. This fund has been started and supported by a member who wishes to remain anonymous. We extend our gratitude to that person.

This year we are having elections of our president and members of the board of directors. I plan to run for president once again, but if I am re-elected, this will be the last two year term that I will serve as your NMA representative and president. Some of the Board of Directors have indicated to me their desire to serve one other term and let someone else take over so that they may enjoy future reunions without the responsibilities of serving as a volunteer board member entails. We need some volunteers, folks! I'll be talking to some who have let it be known that they might be willing to serve in one capacity or another. There is no remuneration—its all volunteer but it is a terrifically rewarding experience running the Navy Musicians Association and charting a course for the future. Let's talk. We will have a discussion about the future at our members' meeting on Saturday morning at the reunion.

See you in June!

Terry Chesson

Attending a Navy Musicians Association for the first time is like reporting to your first ship; you're not quite sure what to do, where to go, who to ask. What you need is a Sea Daddy, that salty guy who's been around and knows the ropes.

Enter Frank Mullen with his dog-eared copy of

The First-timer's Guide to the NMA Reunion.

Arrival Time

While the reunion officially begins on Wednesday morning, some members can't come until later in the week. Don't worry, you will not be assigned extra duty if you arrive on Thursday or Friday.

Early is okay, too. Some of us arrive on Monday or Tuesday. It is not unusual for spontaneous jam sessions to erupt in the lounge the night before the reunion begins.

Reporting Aboard

You'll find someone to welcome you in the Registration Room, which serves as our quarter-deck, crew's lounge, coffee mess and small stores. The room often gets crowded, and Deb Holl sometimes wishes we wouldn't all hang out around her desk while she and her staff are trying to register new arrivals. She's been wishing this since 1995, which shows you what wishes are worth.

Rehearsals

Where two MUs are gathered, you will find three opinions about the proper tempo of a British march and the standard key of "Stella by Starlight." However, there's one thing we all agree on: there's never enough time at an NMA reunion. Our weekend performances are, at most, a few days away. Our rehearsal directors want to get the music started as soon as possible. At Wednesday's first concert band rehearsal, you won't likely hear director Wilbur Smith say, "Let's put this piece away until tomorrow when we'll have a fuller instrumentation." You're more likely to hear, "From the top, play all cues, first and second endings. Ready?"

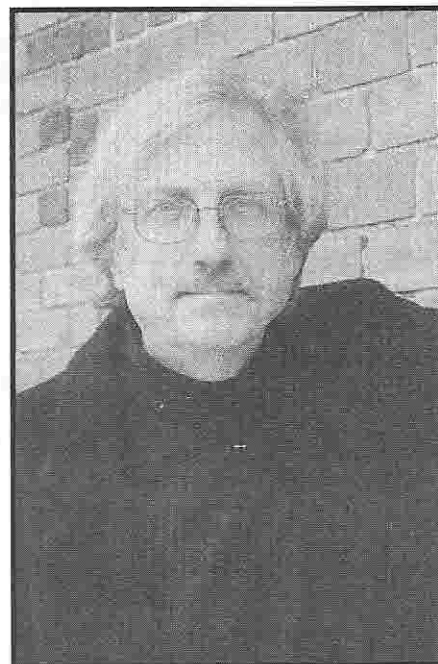
Our bands make impressive music, but, make no mistake, we're not aiming for perfection. Our goal is camaraderie, a bond that we express through music.

Schedule

The Rehearsal Board in the lobby shows the times and locations of rehearsals, performances and social events. This is our "Plan of the Day." You will recall from your days in crackerjacks that the POD is always subject to revision. Check the schedule frequently, and avoid the embarrassment of showing up at a dance band rehearsal with your oboe.

(Some readers may remember last year's abrupt scheduling glitch that caused an evening concert band rehearsal to be interrupted by a cocktail hour. Some may not remember. Wilbur Smith remembers.)

I GOTTA BE FRANK



I gotta be Frank *continued:*

Uniform of the Day

The NMA's daily routine does not begin with a personnel inspection. We dress for comfort, so casual attire is appropriate. If you wish, you can shop through an assortment of NMA shirts, caps and other garb in the Registration Room.

The Saturday night banquet is slightly different. Many of us choose to dress up for this occasion, although it's not required. In fact, for those who travel by air, toting along a coat and tie can be difficult. Be assured, there's no Saturday night dress code, and you'll see tropical t-shirts mingling with sport coats.

Membership Meeting

Saturday morning is devoted to the General Membership meeting. This is a members-only gathering, at which our Board of Directors delivers reports, announces plans and solicits input from the members. Putting a hundred or so MUs in one room is risky, but, so far, no fatalities have been reported.

The Spinning of Yarns

No specific time is allotted for lying, exaggerating and embroidering ancient truths. The telling of tales is a naval tradition and, thus, always in order. NMA reunions have been described as "four days of sea stories interrupted by occasional outbursts of 'Autumn Leaves.'"

Performances

Throughout the reunion, we play for the greatest of audiences: the Navy musician family.

Jam sessions are scheduled for evenings in the lounge, but they actually occur through spontaneous combustion. A bassist spots a drummer at the bar, an unwitting pianist stumbles in, and suddenly, horns fly out of cases and it's "A Night in Tunisia."

The Friday night concert and Saturday night banquet are the highlights of the week. Each is a celebration, for sure—we've worked and played hard and are proud of our musical accomplishments. But these are also times of remembrance. Through ceremony and music, we remember who we are, the country we have served, the shipmates who marched beside us and those for whom the parade has ended.

When military scheduling permits, the banquet opens with a performance by a ceremonial unit from an active duty Navy Band. We enjoy this performance like no other, for in those young, polished Navy professionals, we see ourselves.

The banquet is followed by dancing. After the last set, we pack up the music stands, stow the gear in the van and the reunion is over—well, almost. There's still time for friends to gather in the lounge for a last round of farewells, a discussion of plans for next year and a final chorus of "Round Midnight".

In Conclusion

We'll do whatever we can to make your first reunion a rewarding experience. In fact, the only thing we won't do is tell you to make yourself at home. We don't have to—you're already at home. You are surrounded by shipmates, some you remember from long ago, others you're meeting for the first time. But we've all shared the challenges and rewards of serving as United States Navy Musicians.

Welcome aboard, sailor. Stow your gear and haul your axe down to the ballroom; rehearsal is underway.



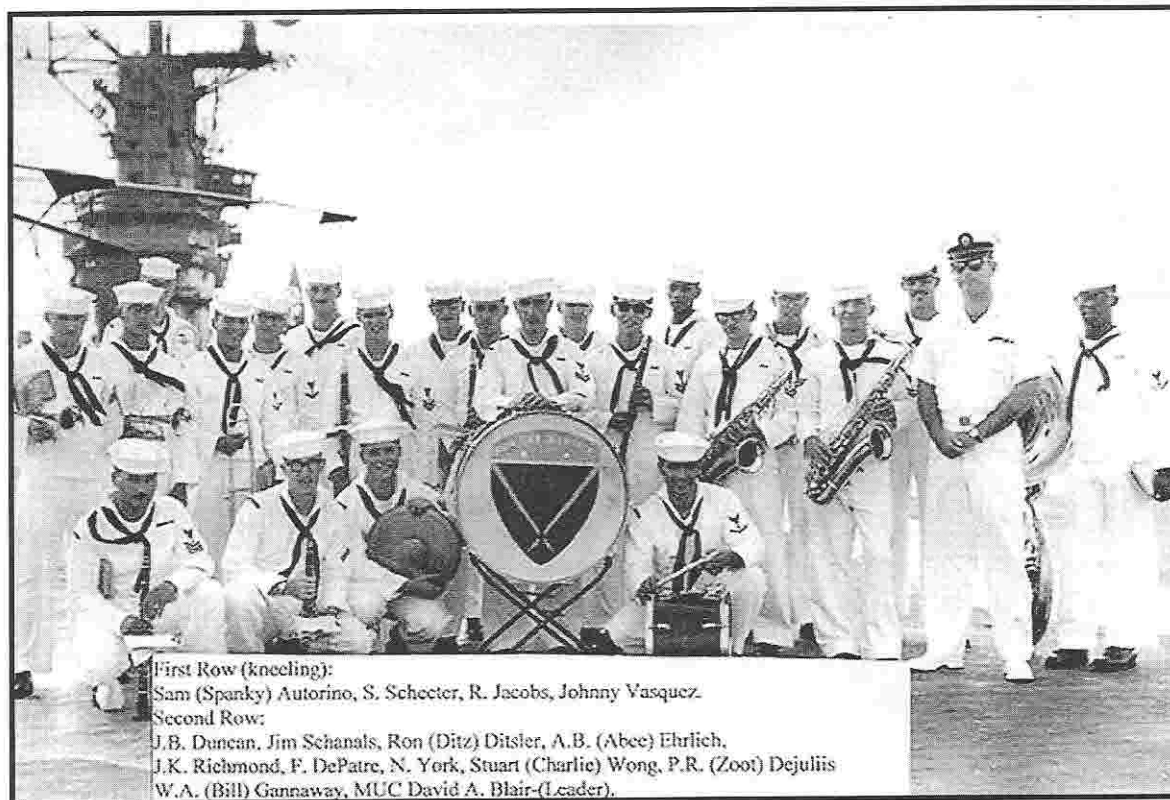
COMNAVPHIL Band, Subic Bay, Philippines 1975-78

Front Row: Bixler, Engman, Angkiko, Ronquillo, Orcino, Poblete

Second Row: Caughey, Goldsmith, Adkins, Martinez, Nicholson, Roeder, Babiera, Lobay, Costello

Back Row: Sudar, Beem, Pascua, Crabtree, Lerma

Desi Palompo directed this band from 1975-78 and submitted this picture. David Blakeley has more pictures of this band on the website



First Row (kneeling):

Sam (Spanky) Autorino, S. Schecter, R. Jacobs, Johnny Vasquez.

Second Row:

J.B. Duncan, Jim Schanals, Ron (Ditz) Ditsler, A.B. (Abee) Ehrlich,

J.K. Richmond, F. DePatre, N. York, Stuart (Charlie) Wong, P.R. (Zoot) Dejuliis

W.A. (Bill) Gannaway, MUC David A. Blair-(Leader).

Unit Band #193 COMCADDIV-6 (Middie Cruise) aboard CVA-38 USS Shangri-La
Replacements reporting — transfer orders not complete for Robert Havens, Thomas Elmer, Pat Mercer

Picture courtesy of Fritz Lyons

