



# NEWSLETTER

2nd Issue 24th Year

01 March 2016

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Association's Web Site:  
[www.greatsitkin.org](http://www.greatsitkin.org)

## From Our President:

Please see page 3 for the President's Report.

**New find:** William J. Ratteree, SN ('68 - '69)

Welcome aboard, Shipmate!

## Ron Zimmerman, President

### Vice President's Words of Wisdom:

I GOT NOTHING! Here I sit trying to write another newsletter article and nothing!

Oh, sure! I could put the same old stuff in here as usual, and I will. George will be getting material together for his grand announcement on the New York/New Jersey reunion shortly, and I can rest until September before I need to run around gathering things for our reunion in Buffalo, NY - 2017.

Joy and I renewed our passports for a Canadian visit the next time we head to Buffalo. Yes! Passport renewals are 110 bucks apiece! Oh well! They are good for 10 years.

The Grandkids are in way too many sports! They are tennis, volleyball, basketball, cross-country; and if that's not bad enough, it's Girl Scout cookie season again! We wouldn't miss any of their sports, and yes, I have a stack of cookies before me. Yum!

Getting down to business: We have had several possible new members inquire about joining the Association. Yet, we have not received any membership dues from them. Our current paid member numbers stand at 73. I have 221 on my spreadsheet. The odds on that being correct could be +/- 15 either way, but leaning toward minus. Therefore, I will bid you adieu until my next report is due in June.

## Jim Dunno, VP & Membership Chairman

**Secretary Report:** Reporting from the West Coast, the weather has been appropriate for winter. We had rain and snow, which helps us with the drought. I know other parts of the country have been receiving severe weather. I hope all of you, my shipmates, are doing much better this winter than those who have suffered from the impacts of severe weather from last winter. I am looking forward to seeing everybody back East in the New York area in September. Now, getting down to business:

Nominations for the Executive Board positions are now open. All positions are up for reelection every year. Reelection of present officers is acceptable. Only active members who have annual dues current are eligible to serve. The Association's Secretary must receive all nominations for office no later than August 25, 2016.

Nominations must be in writing sent either by postal service or E-mail. Nominees will be contacted by the Secretary to insure their acceptance of the nomination and their willingness to serve. If you have any questions concerning nominations or serving, please feel free to contact me.

A vote taken at the September business meeting passed to continue the USS Great Sitkin Association at this time. The vote was unanimous.

## Joe Rios, Secretary

**Greetings from Repair 3.** Before I get to the details of the Bayonne reunion, I need to set the stage a little. A few years back, I did a kind of memory walking tour of the ship. I'd like to revisit that a little. I use the title "Repair 3" for my newsletter articles because, as a Damage Controlman, I have the responsibility to maintain this repair locker, one of four repair stations, which are on the ship. Forward Repair 2 is located on the mess decks. Its area of responsibility is the forward part of the ship. "After Repair 3" is located in the stern. Also back here is the after emergency diesel generator, the sail locker, and the brig. Engineering Repair 5 is on the welding flats, back by the reefers. It is equipped to handle emergencies, damage, and fires in the main space. We also have a Rescue and Assistance locker on the port side 01 level.

Okay! Now that the stage is set, I direct your attention to the picture of a group of Sitkin Sailors in their best battle damage gear (bottom of 2nd page.) We are sitting by the hatch cover for 5 hold, starboard side. We are geared up for helo (helicopter) detail. See anyone there you recognize? I can say this, out of those in the picture; only two are regulars at our annual reunions. I think two are members, one is deceased, and the rest are MIA's. All this - just to lead into my information on our 2016 reunion.

We are headlining this reunion as a "Back to Bayonne" year. While our hotel is in Iselin, NJ, we will be saying we are in "Bayonne."

**Reunion dates are September 14 - 18, 2016.**

Our venues will be:

Thursday, September 15: We will be going to Manhattan to the World Trade Center 9/11 Memorial Museum. Admission to the 9/11 Museum is going to be \$69. It is a three-hour tour. I know this is pricey, so it will be an option for you. The bus is going to stop at the World Trade Center. If you choose not to go to the museum, you will be on your own for those three hours.

Lunch will be at the South Street Seaport on the Lower East Side. Then we will go uptown to FDNY Ladder 11/Engine 28. Ladder 11 is where our Shipmate, Richard Kelly, worked. We will have a short memorial service there. After that, we will fight our way back to the hotel.

Friday, September 16: We will go to The Military Ocean Terminal at Bayonne (MOTBY). We will have our annual memorial service at the Struggle Against World Terrorism memorial. This is located at the end of MOTBY, right where the Great Sitkin was moored. To appreciate this monument, check out the following Website:

<http://www.911monument.com/>

A little current events MOTBY trivia: The cruise ship, *Anthem of the Seas*, that received so much press a few weeks back after encountering rough seas, moors starboard side to the exact spot of where the Great Sitkin was tied up. After we are done at MOTBY, we will go to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

For your "free time" days, there is much to do. The train station near the hotel has service directly to Penn Station in Manhattan. From there you can get to many of the attractions. We will have details on all of this at the hospitality room.

Now, how about some hotel details? We will be staying at the Renaissance Woodbridge Hotel. Try:

<http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/ewrwd-renaissance-woodbridge-hotel/>

It is a long address, but if you look it up, you will find it is a very nice hotel. Room prices are \$119 per night. This rate includes a 10% discount on meals in the restaurant. Reservations can be made at any time. The reservation number is: **1-877-901-2082**. Be sure to mention USS Great Sitkin Reunion to make reservations inside the block. The hotel is

going to try putting as many shipmates as possible in the same area of the hotel. You need to make your reservations as soon as possible. Any questions, you can E-mail me, [dcckaiser@juno.com](mailto:dcckaiser@juno.com) or call me at 610-237-1652 (evenings only please).

There are at least 30 restaurants in the immediate area. The hotel provides shuttle service to the restaurants, similar to the way this was done in Tampa last year.

*This is a brief snapshot of the 2016 reunion. Your reunion registration information will be sent out in a separate mailing by April 1.*

I began this with an overview of what we did in the way of emergency preparedness on the Great Sitkin. However, as with anything on a ship, it wasn't done without good Sailors to do the job!

Time is marching on. Each year the list of good Sailors grows of those departed Shipmates. Someday, in the hopefully distant future, our reunions will be no more. How about making this year, 2016, the one you attend.

The picture below is of eight Sailors who were ready to do battle with any emergency that might happen during a helo detail, as much a Band of Brothers as any battlefield Soldier. There are two of us in the picture I know who will be in Bayonne: Doc Kleinbeck and me. How about you?

**George Kaiser, Treasurer**

**The Chaplain's Corner:** "Good Day to all of you."

I am sitting here looking out my window at the snow and thinking about spring. It has been a very cold winter here in Ohio. I feel sorry for all you folks who live in warmer climates with no subzero temperatures and snow, but spring is around the corner. The beauty and color of the spring flowers is so uplifting. It

won't be long, and we will be getting our gardens ready to plant. Cannot wait to pick some fresh tomatoes and eat corn on the cob again!

The beauty of the four seasons that God created is so amazing. Each one has its special attributes.

***Nehemiah 9:6 said, "Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee".***

The 2016 Reunion looks to be a good one. George and Mary Kaiser are working hard to make it "one to remember." I am hoping some of you Shipmates on the east coast will make plans on coming. It would be nice to see you fellows!

It is time to say good-bye for now. Let us keep those families in our prayers that have lost a loved one who sailed aboard the Great Sitkin.

May the Lord bless and Keep You.

**Honor Roll Update:**

**Howard F. Bell, SN '51 - '52**  
**Douglas O. Hinson, MM2 '57 - '58**

**Spouse Honor Roll:**

**May Franke**, (wife of deceased husband, Carl T. Franke, SKSN, '51 - '53)

**Mark Rucker, Chaplain**

**Website Report:**

I'm working with Ron on the Sitkin Website maintenance. There are a few issues with the site format, but they are being worked out.

Thank you for your patience.

**Tom Stachelski, Webmaster**



**Comments from the Editor:** Many of you have mentioned how much you enjoy the newsletter. If not for those of you who have helped me by providing stories, bios and photos, the newsletter would not be very interesting. [Please send more!](#) You may send via E-mail (scan or attachment) or USPS. I'll return your photos.

I was excited about the November issue because we had photos of the Sitkin commissioning in 1945. Wow! Where would we have gotten those photos if not for Ed & Dorothy Carman? Actually, the photos belonged to Ed, but it was his wife, Dorothy, who did the work of having them copied and sending them to me. How about the letter from Captain English about the bent screw incident provided by Fred Gallagher? He also contributed "A Sailor's Poem." "Bios," a suggestion from Jim Perko, provides wonderful stories about the ship and careers of the Sitkin Sailors. Each bio brings us closer to the Sailor writing his story. A big **thank you** to Tom Dever, Ed Wesolowski, John Snyder, Gene McNeill, Walter Carlson and Domenick Indelicato for the many photos provided; Jay Bryant for his touching poems, the reunion chairmen for reunion material, the officers for their input and **especially** Ron Zimmerman for teaching me how to do a Naval newsletter.

Ron retires as President at the September business meeting. We owe Ron a great deal for setting up the Association in Y2000, appointing officers to run it, and for his guidance in keeping it and all of us together. He will continue as a member of the Association and will enjoy the reunions along with the rest of us. I am sure we all agree: **RON! Thank you! A job well done!**

**Dorothy Hodnichak, Editor**



## President's Report

First, let me say that everything is good on my end. I finished my radiation treatments, and it looks like I am back in remission. I will know more in two months when they do a follow-up CT scan to make sure. If you have been trying to reach me by E-mail, I had to shut down my E-mail address as I was having some major problems with imbedded viruses and about 50 Spam messages a day. Please contact Jim Dunno, Vice President, for any Association business that needs to be addressed.

Dorothy has been after me to write my bio, so here goes:

**28 February 1990 - With Sally and assembled Shipmates at the conclusion of the "Piping Ashore" ceremony.**



**Ron Zimmerman, Sr. SK3**

**Date Entered Service: June 1969 - Date Retired US Navy: 28 February 1990**

I joined the USS Navy in June 1969, just before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, as I didn't want to wait and be drafted. I had a first cousin who was in the Marine Corps and spent '67 & '68 in Vietnam as a tunnel rat. In no uncertain words, he told me if I waited to get drafted, I wouldn't be going to Boot Camp by Bus, Train or Plane, but by him kicking my ass all the way there. I took my Induction Physical and swearing-in at the AFEES Station in Cleveland, OH and left for sunny San Diego, CA for Navy Recruit Training.

After boot camp, I attended SK "A" School training in San Diego. Upon graduation, I received orders with all sorts of funny acronyms on the orders of where I was going. When I asked my 1<sup>st</sup> Class Petty Officer what they meant, he said, "**Son, you are going to Vietnam**"..... Before I left, I attended heavy forklift school at the Seabee Base in Port Hueneme, CA and Counter Insurgency/Survival, Evasion, Resistance & Escape training in Coronado & Camp Pendleton, CA.

My first duty in Vietnam was in Da Nang. After a few months there, I was transferred to Saigon and then to a U.S. Naval Advanced Tactical Support Base in the southern tip of Vietnam. We were so far south of all the other bases, we were in "Indian Territory!" After Vietnam, I was transferred to a U.S. Naval Communications Station in Morocco, where I was assigned to the Special Services Department. I ended up managing the riding stables because I was the only one in the department that knew how to saddle a horse. I married Sally in July 1971 and took her with me to Morocco. Yep! She has put up with me for 45 years this year.....

I left Morocco and was transferred to the USS Great Sitkin in 1972, where I ended my first enlistment in June 1973. I got out of the Navy at that time and went back into the civilian labor force and entered college. It soon became apparent to me that being a Vietnam Combat Veteran at that point in time and trying to go to college just wasn't conducive to staying out of fights. I quit college and reenlisted in February 1974 in the TAR program (fully active Naval Reservist). I was stationed at the Naval Reserve Center, Great Lakes, Illinois, on staff.

In the fall of 1977, I left Great Lakes for Portland, Maine, where I was stationed on the USS Affray (MSO-511) until spring 1980 when I was transferred to the USS Fearless (MSO-442), in Charleston, SC. I left the Fearless in spring of 1982 for the Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center, Louisville, KY, until the fall of 1985 when I was transferred to the staff of Craft of Opportunity, Mine Squadron 11, Seattle, WA. I retired from the Navy on 28 February 1990.

I had a great time (for the most part) during my 20 years active duty. The things I experienced, I never could have had, had I not joined the Navy. I was able to see a lot of my country and the world. I met a lot of wonderful people over the years and formed a lot of lasting friendships, including my wife. Sally is not only my wife, but my best friend who has stood beside me through thick and thin over the years.

After retirement, I went into real estate and ended up specializing in Property Management and ultimately owned my own business until I retired (again) and moved to Port Saint Lucie, FL in July 2005. During this time, I was "found" by George Kaiser who passed my name along to Glenn Frankenbach in 1999. Frank contacted me, and I joined the Association. At the Y2000 annual reunion in Cleveland, OH, Glenn roped me into becoming the Association President. Since then I couldn't "give" the position away. (That's okay! George Kaiser was at the same reunion and while he was laughing at me getting roped in, I got him voted in as Treasurer).

The last 16 years have been a lot of fun, but it is now time to relinquish the reins of the Association to someone else. I hope the group supports the next President as well as you have supported me over the years.

**Ron Zimmerman, President**



**Domenick J. Indelicato, EMFN - Aboard USS Great Sitkin - Nov. '51 - June '55**  
Company 174 1st Regiment July - August, 1951

As I was growing up, I always had the love of the sea. I guess it was in my blood. My father served in the Italian Navy during World War I. My grandfather was a mariner also.

My first encounter with the U.S. Naval Training Center, Bainbridge, located in Port Deposit, MD, was about 11:00 p.m. on the evening of July 5, 1951. Future recruit mates and I had just arrived after a long bus ride from New York City. At last, I was going to be part of the U.S. Navy. I was very excited and looking forward to my first day as a seaman recruit.

Bainbridge had recently been reopened. It was closed after World War II. Company 174 was assigned to the 1st Regiment. Captain Frederick Wolsieffer was the Commanding Officer at that time. He later was my Commanding Officer aboard the USS Great Sitkin (small world).

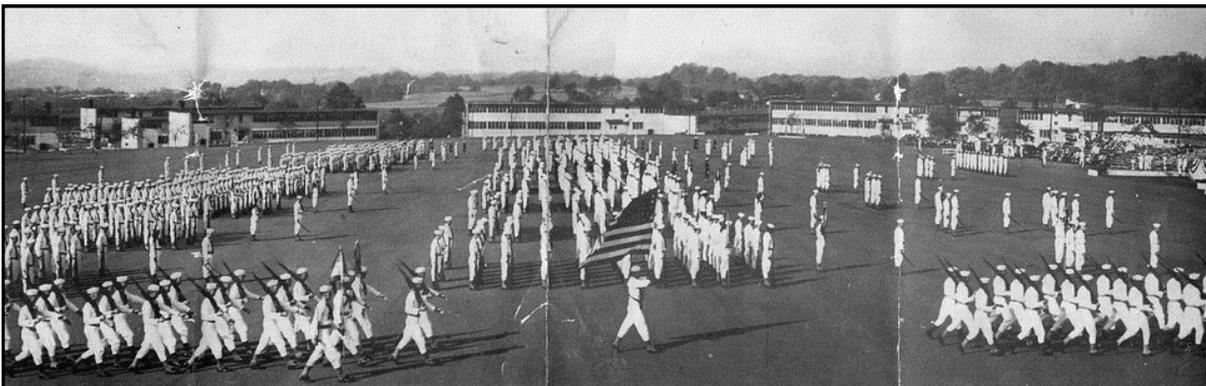
My first day in boot camp was my greatest thrill. I could not believe I was in the United States Navy. When I was handed my first blue uniform, I was happy beyond belief. The training was tedious and sometimes very hard, but I loved every minute of it. I knew from the first day this was what I wanted to do. We did a lot of marching. First week in August, we were given a Cinderella Liberty (back by midnight). The first town I visited was Lancaster, PA. The next time I went on liberty, it was to Baltimore, MD. I loved the sea and looked forward to the day when boot camp ended, and we were transferred to a ship. At the end of August, we were assigned to our next duty stations. I went in as a young lad. Two months later, I left boot camp a competent young man.

My first tour of duty was service aboard an ammunition ship, the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17). Her homeport was Pier 26 in New York City. At first, I was disappointed I was not assigned to a destroyer or battleship. Later on, I realized I had the best duty as a "dungaree" Sailor. I will never forget the first time I saw her moored to a pier in Leonardo, New Jersey. As I walked up to the gangway, I was awe-struck by her size. She was to be my home for the next three and a half years. I served first as a Seaman, then as an Electrician's Mate. It took a while for me to get used to Navy chow. We had a great bunch of cooks aboard who fed us very well. In general, I served with a great crew.

My first bad experience aboard ship was the Crow's Nest watch at sea. I had to climb 80 feet up a ladder while the ship was rolling. I had always been afraid of heights. It took me about 15 minutes to make it to the top. I was scared, but I conquered my fear. During my tour of duty, we visited many ports in Europe, Asia and Africa. Many foreign Sailors disliked us. Every time the U.S. Navy came into port, the prices would go up for everything. And I mean everything!!

Last August, I visited what was left of the 1st Division area at Bainbridge. A friend who was in charge of the facility gave me a private tour. As I contemplated what I was looking at, my thoughts went back 65 years. I have to admit, I got very teary eyed. A few old buildings were still standing with poison ivy growing on and around them.

In closing, I just want to say I am very proud to have served aboard a great ship with the greatest Navy the world has ever known, the United States Navy! My Navy career was the best years of my life, and I am proud to have served my country!



USNTC Bainbridge seaman recruits performing final graduation exercises



Capt. F. Wolsieffer

**USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association Active Membership:** Active Member status in the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association is open to all crew members. Dues are \$20.00 per year and are used to cover the cost of the newsletters, Website hosting, domain name, administrative and other expenses. The membership year is 1 January through 31 December. Membership cards will be issued to all crew members paying dues and will identify the individual by name, expiration date and number of years of Active Membership.

Payment of dues is not required to participate in any official function of the Association but is required for being an Active Member. Notices pertaining to dues will be posted on the Website and in the newsletters. Active Members must have their dues paid prior to the annual meeting each year in order to retain their status and eligibility to vote.

To become an Active Member of the USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association, please complete the application form below and send it along with a check made payable to the:

**USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association, c/o Jim Dunno, 272 Stone Hedge Dr., Johnstown, OH 43031**

***USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association Active Member Application & Renewal Form***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates Served Aboard: \_\_\_\_\_ Application Date: \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] New [ ] Renewal

Amount Submitted: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] 2016 YR (\$20.00) [ ] 2017 YR (\$20.00) [ ] 2018 YR (\$20.00)

[ ] Please send me a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_



**Photo contributed by Domenick J. Indelicato, EMFN '51 - '55**

USS Great Sitkin & Crew - 1947 - 1950's



USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) At Anchor - 1957



F1c Charles Fridinger '47



GMM3 George Mitchell '51



DCC Robert H. Coggins



RMSN Julius Winkler being highline-transferred '53



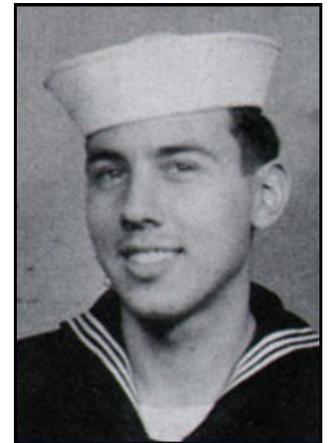
Deck of the USS Great Sitkin



Bizerte, Tunisia, North Africa



LTJG Adelmo Costantini - '53



SA Pat Pasquarella  
Company 013 - 1952  
Bainbridge US Naval Training



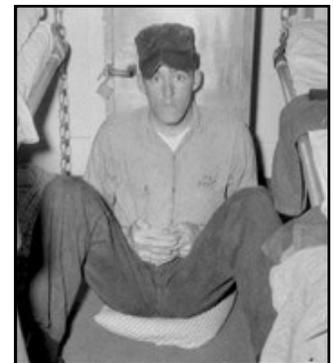
Over the side painting - '52



EMFN Domenick J. Indelicato



BT3 Richard Patch &  
BT3 Keith Wiese, Sr. - 50s



MM2 Robert Pratt - '57

# USS Great Sitkin & Crew - 1960's



Departing for Med Cruise in 1961



Crew Members



LT. Ken Carlson & CO Capt. Esler on bridge wing. Underway, Fall '65



LTJG Theodore Clausen - '67



XO - LCDR William Yuengling & CO - Capt. E.H. English, Jr. Bridge Wing underway - '65



USS Mount McKinley (GC - 7) Coming alongside - Dec. '61



SN Dan Drakula & CS3 Joe Biancardi



YN2 Mike Weeks & SA Kellie Howard NYC - USO cir '69



Deck loading 500 lb. bombs Prep for Carrier rearming



At anchor in Valencia, Spain Winter of 1965



Pier side Bayonne prep for WestPac Cruise '68



Aft lookout watch heading into storm - January 1966



Ship to ship personnel transfer USS Rich (DD 820)



LTJG Buddy Love Gunnery at Sea Detail - '65



Anchored at Barcelona, Spain 1960s



SN Anthony Sealy, SN Fred Gallagher, SN Larry Royster, SA Ed Martin Jimmy's Bar - Palma, Mallorca '65

# USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association - Ship's Store Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## Ball Caps:

Note: Where sizes are indicated, please circle the size/sizes you want.

USS Great Sitkin Ball Caps (solid back)	\$15.00 ea.	Blue	Quantity: _____
USS Great Sitkin AE17 Ball Caps (solid back)	\$15.00 ea.	Blue	Quantity: _____
USS Ship Name & Silhouette Caps (mesh back only)	\$15.00 ea.	Blue	Quantity: _____

## Shirts:

## Sizes

USS Great Sitkin Polo Shirts - Blue	\$25.00 ea.	M L XL XXL	Quantity: _____
USS Great Sitkin Polo Shirts - Gray	\$25.00 ea.	M L XL XXL	Quantity: _____
USS Great Sitkin Polo Shirts - Pink	\$25.00 ea.	S M L XL	Quantity: _____
USS Great Sitkin Ship's Picture T-Shirt	\$18.00 ea.	S M L XL XXL	Quantity: _____
USS Great Sitkin Ship's Picture Sweatshirt	\$25.00 ea.	L XL XXL	Quantity: _____

## Jacket/Hoodie:

USS Great Sitkin All Weather Hooded Zip-Front Jacket - Blue  
 (Note: Jackets are on special order) \$45.00 ea. M L XL XXL Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_

Aluminum water bottles: \$10.00 ea. Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_

All prices include postage.

All orders should be sent to:

Please make check or money order out to **USS Great Sitkin (AE-17) Association**

**USS Great Sitkin Association**

Note: **DO NOT** include your "Dues" payment in with your Ship Store Order  
 They need to be separate checks or money orders.

c/o George Kaiser

311 Oak Lane

Glenolden, PA 19036

Questions about Ship's Store items can be E-mailed to: [ae17dc3@verizon.net](mailto:ae17dc3@verizon.net)

## Ship's Store



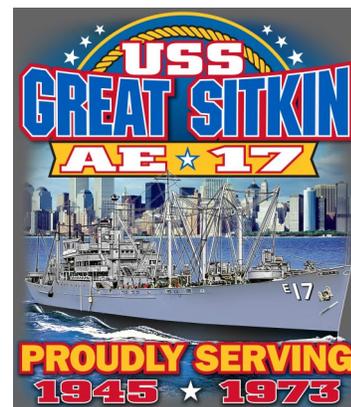
**Ship's Ball Caps \$15.00 each**  
 Blue - Solid Back



**Aluminum Water Bottle \$10 each**



**All Weather Jacket Blue, \$45 each**  
 (Jackets are Special Order)



**Ship's Picture Shirts**  
**T-Shirts \$18 each**  
**Sweat Shirts \$25.00 each**  
 Back of shirt has picture,  
 Front has Ship's patch design



## Polo Shirts

Men's and Ladies, Blue, Grey, Pink **\$25.00 each**  
 (Dark blue not shown)