

USS TELFAIR APA-210 -- 2019 REUNION REPORT

"Was it the best of times? Why yes, it was the best of times!"

What a great reunion! While part of the larger amphibious ship reunion group, we still are able to proudly announce that we had a total of 35 Telfair attendees, including 18 former Telfair shipmates. Of the total of 18 ships represented, Telfair led the group with the most shipmates in attendance. Not bad for our first year with the group! Overall, there were around 160 people in attendance, making it the largest amphibious ship group reunion so far -- something that Telfair surely helped make happen.

The Buffalo area was great, weather was great, hotel facilities were great -- really nothing to complain about at all. Everyone from Telfair unanimously agreed it was a great success and look forward to staying with the group approach in the future.

While some ships were represented by many shipmates and guests, others were represented only by one or a few. Regardless, all were "gator" ships, including the USS Arneb (AKA-56), USS Bayfield (APA-33), USS Bexar (APA-237), USS Cambria (APA-36), USS Catamount (LSD-17), USS Chilton (APA-38), USS Fort Marion (LSD-22), USS Gunston Hall (LSD-5), USS Lenawee (APA-195), USS LSM 297, USS LSM 419, USS Okanogan (APA-220), USS Pickaway (APA-222), USS Rankin (AKA-103), USS Rockbridge (APA-228), USS Telfair (APA-210), USS Wyandot (AKA-92) and USS Yancey (AKA-93).

We luckily had no last minute cancellations and even enjoyed having a few Telfair "first timers" in attendance. Here's a list of those that were there:

Leland ("Alex") Alexander *

Ken & Pam Bibb

John & Velma Birkel (came on Telfair in 1968 just before final decommissioning)

Bill & Barbara Bunger

Steve & Erica Carr

Dick Disotell

Royce & Peggy Ford *

Henry Garcia

Jim & Shirley Harvey * (w/daughter Lisa Temmerman and guest Jamie McCabe)

Frank & Bonnie Hilberer

Brian & Jean Miller

Jim & Pam Orebaugh (recent newlyweds!)

Jose & Sherry Rivera

Dave & Barb Robbins

Jim & Susie Rosenow

Don Rushford * (w/guest Barb DeSimone)

Mike & Flossie Schultz

Tustin, John & Carolyn Hughes

While we had more Telfair shipmates in attendance than in the last several years, it still was disappointing to see only four from the Korean era (*). We understand that Telfair has an aging roster and can only hope that we will see more of these senior shipmates at upcoming reunions. On the bright side we did have a few more who served in the 60's in attendance. We hope to have more of their involvement in the future, as well. A special thanks to those "regulars" who always seem to come year after year (Alex Alexander, Jim Harvey, Royce Ford, Bill Bunger and Mike Schultz, just to name a few). Without them, the Telfair reunion likely would have died by now.

The group reunion was managed and coordinated by Ray Casey of Military Reunion Planners, and he did an excellent job. MRP is Ray's company, and every event was carefully planned. Ray and his assistant Christine were there every day making sure everything ran smoothly. Of course, all of this effort was done with the help and direction of Skip Sander (USS Rankin) and George Clifton (USS Yancey), the original founders of the group. It was really great to attend a reunion where we could simply enjoy it without having to do all the work as in years past! And don't let me forget the hospitality room. It was the best stocked hospitality we've ever seen, with enough libation and snacks to satisfy everyone's tastes and desires.

The tours and other events were great, and almost everyone signed up to do all of them. On Thursday evening there was a welcome prime rib buffet for the group that was well attended. A private hot breakfast buffet for reunion attendees staying at the hotel also was available every morning.

On Friday we traveled to the Erie Canal and had a nice cruise on it, followed by a catered luncheon buffet. That evening we had a group cake and ice cream social celebrating the 75th launch anniversary (1944-2019) for eight of the ships represented (including Telfair). No calorie counting that night!

Saturday we traveled to Buffalo's Navy Park, where we were able to tour the light cruiser USS Little Rock, the destroyer USS The Sullivans, and the submarine USS Croaker. A special memorial service was held on the fantail of the Little Rock remembering those shipmates who we have lost since the last reunion.

Sunday had us at Niagara Falls. Two tours were available -- one to the US side and one to the Canadian side. Regardless of which side you visited, the Falls were spectacular. You can't help but be awed, even if you've been there before. Those doing the US side also were given a bus tour of Buffalo, including its many interesting neighborhoods.

The reunion closed with our Sunday night banquet that was a sit-down dinner held in the hotel's ballroom. During the meal we were entertained by the "Friends of Harmony" -- a local barbershop-style a cappella male chorus who sang a variety of patriotic numbers. Their rendition of the Navy Hymn was especially moving.

Crew's Meeting...

Mid Sunday afternoon was used for group and individual photographs that would be included in the reunion memory book for those who ordered one. There also was a short group meeting during which it was announced that the 2020 reunion will be held in Annapolis, Maryland. Actual dates and venue are to be determined, and that information will be shared with Telfair roster members with email addresses and on the website once it is known.

Following the group meeting, Telfair attendees separately met to discuss their impressions and opinions of the group reunion. As mentioned above, to a person everyone said it was a great reunion and that we should stay with the group going forward.

Bill Bunger briefly discussed our financial situation (his report was previously sent to all roster members with email addresses). While relatively meager in amount, it was felt that we should be okay for the coming year, relying only on a few individual generous donations going forward.

We also discussed roster communications. A significant number of roster members have not provided us with current email information, and it was necessary in the past to send reunion notices to them by postcard. That effort is labor-intensive and costs around \$110 to do. It was decided to forego these mailings in the future as they have generated no new reunion attendance. All future communications only will be by email and website postings.

There were no changes in the current Ship's committee. Bill Bunger will continue to handle financial matters and Telfair funds, with Jose Rivera acting as his backup. I will continue to maintain the Telfair website and crew roster, with Henry Garcia as my backup.

Group pictures of reunion attendees, tour locations and banquet will be posted to our website at <https://usstelfair.org/reunion-information> when they become available. This report is being sent only by email and not mailed, but a copy also will be posted on that web page, as well.

Thanks again to all that attended. Let's all and more make it to Annapolis next year!

Jim Rosenow