

Twenty-five years ago [today](#) Janie and I enjoyed one of the best, the most unusual and the most satisfying of 4th of July celebrations ever. On July 4, 1984, the Navy commissioned the USS YORKTOWN (CG-48) at the Naval Weapons Station pier in Yorktown, Virginia. We were there, with hundreds of others.

It was sunny. It was hot. It was memorable...in a number of ways. I'll explain...

A few years prior to that event, the WW II crew of CV-5, the first of two aircraft carriers named YORKTOWN which were built by [Newport News Shipbuilding](#) held a reunion in Williamsburg. Many of them were survivors of their ship's sinking during the [Battle of Midway](#).

Learning of their reunion beforehand, I suggested to the yard's PR Department that those veterans each be provided with a packet of memories of their ship, courtesy of the shipbuilders. We managed to find a number of items in the s/y files, reproduced them in quantity, and I hand-carried stuff they had never seen before to those proud vets. To say that they were grateful would be an understatement.

I thought that was the end of the story, but in the Spring of 1984, I unexpectedly received an invitation to the CG-48 commissioning. I was surprised, for she had not been built at NNS and I didn't know any of the prospective crew. Later on, I learned my name had been added to Navy's invitation list by the CV-5 veteran's group, in appreciation for what had been done for them. My fondest 'pay-back' story...

Although the ship to be commissioned (the second of the AEGIS class of anti-missile cruisers) was built in Mississippi, [Senator John Warner](#), powerful Chairman of the Armed Services Committee at the time, had 'arranged' for the ship to be commissioned at Yorktown. There was another angle, other than the obvious...

The ship's sponsor was Mary Mathews, wife of *the* Nick Mathews. They were both first generation, proud and patriotic Greek-American citizens, owners of the world-famous Nick's Seafood Pavilion in Yorktown, and major supporters of the commissioning.

The year before, when they journeyed to Mississippi with Warner so that Mary could christen the ship, Nick died on the way. Mary stoically did her duty in spite of that untimely tragedy. When it came time during the July 4, 1984 commissioning ceremonies to order the crew to 'bring YORKTOWN to life' - that honor was appropriately accorded to Mary Mathews.

Medallions were distributed to all present at the reception that followed, and I was able to renew acquaintances with the CV-5 crew, and meet others from the CV-10 crew, as well. CV-10, the second NNS-built YORKTOWN is the museum ship in Charleston, SC.

We saw Mary Mathews again, much later that same day. As usual, she was guarding the cash register at Nick's at dinner time, and directing people to tables as they became available (Nick's took no reservations - they didn't have to - and always had long lines of people waiting in line; especially during summer tourist season).

Knowing that, we got there early, and capped off the end of a great day by an equally great meal and the opportunity to tell Mary what a truly grand and appropriate day it had been, even though Nick was not present. Of course, she felt he was...

Five years ago, the Navy took CG-48 out of commission and placed her in reserve. Her service to our nation may be over, but the motto on YORKTOWN's crest endures...

- Bill Lee (Warwick HS - '54) of NC - 07/04/09

WOWZERON!! Thank you so much for sharing this remarkable story with us, Bill!



Carol

Bill Lee's (Warwick HS - '54 - of NC) memories of the commissioning of the ship, Yorktown, Nick's Seafood Pavilion, and Mary Matthews reminded me to share with the Typhoon Nation something special. Chef Jimmy, formerly of Nick's, is now offering bottles of the house salad dressing Nick's served for so many years...a real treat for those of us who miss the restaurant. It's available here in beautiful downtown Bena, Virginia, at a local general store, Almost Square. I'm sure it must be available somewhere in Yorktown, as well, but I don't know where. There is a phone number on the bottle for those interested in obtaining a bottle -- (757) 532-6437.

- Renee Helterbran Benton ('59) of VA - 07/04/09  
WOWZERON!!!! What great news! Thanks for sharing that with us, Renee!

Hi Carol -

Was replying to Renee Helterbran Benton's '59 article about Chef Jimmy (Krikales) formerly of Nick's and his salad dressing. Chef Jimmy is currently operating the RIVER ROOM at the Duke of York Motor Hotel on the water in Yorktown, Va.

We were there recently and the food is just like being at Nick's again. He has the enormous lobster tails, seafood shish kabob and most of all the "famous" Baked Alaska. Salads taste like they did at Nick's and are served with basket of assorted breads & the dressing is also sold at the restaurant. They serve breakfast & lunch from 7:00am-2:00pm and dinner 4:30-9:00pm. Casual atmosphere & worth the trip !

- Donna Chadwell Nunemaker ('64) of FL and VA - 07/06/09  
WOWZERONI - great news! Thank you, Donna!

<http://www.dukeofyorkmotel.com/>  
<http://hamptonroads.metromix.com/restaurants/american/river-room-yorktown/205519/content>

I greatly enjoyed reading Bill Lee's (Warwick HS - '54) remarks about Mary and Nick Matthews and their connection with the USS Yorktown. When I began my law enforcement career as a York County Deputy in 1993 Miss Mary was still active at the restaurant and in the community. Many people did not realize there were many occasions when a naval vessel would pull into the Weapons Station, only to receive an invitation to bring the entire crew to Nick's for a meal. Mary and Nick also donated to the Commonwealth the land used for the Yorktown Victory Center. Their burial site is on the grounds and maintained by the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation.

At Christmas Miss Mary would appear at the Sheriff's Office with hams, turkeys and other treats for those of us working for the Sheriff. Miss Mary's home was in Yorktown on the bluff overlooking the restaurant. During her later years the deputies would take her to work and return her home in the evenings. It's hard to imagine two people who may have contributed more to their adopted country than Mary and Nick. It was my pleasure to be a part of those they touched with their compassion and generosity.

- Dave Arnold ('65) of VA - 07/08/09  
Thanks so much, Dave!

Carol:



I'd like to augment the already impressive story of Mary and Nick's generosity, as related by Dave Arnold ('65 - of VA) on 9 July. May I ask you to add the following?

In the 1960s when I was a member, the York County Volunteer Fire Department depended heavily on citizen contributions to augment the county's limited funds. In essence, the county funded day-to-day operations; the volunteers had to solicit funds whenever a new ambulance or fire truck was needed. Mary and Nick were always amongst those that gave generously.

In addition, each year the volunteer organization had an annual banquet for members and their wives. Those banquets were held at Nick's Seafood Pavilion. Each year, the entire event was paid for by Mary and Nick, in appreciation of our service to the community.

But their generosity did not include alcoholic beverages. Nick always delighted, year after year, in telling us that he didn't want 'his' firemen to get drunk and be unable to save his restaurant, if it caught fire!

- Bill Lee (Warwick HS - '54) of NC - 07/09/09  
Oh, what a delightful story! Thanks, Bill!