

USS Belknap Association



DLG-26 1964 - 1975

Honoring all shipmates, all years, all crews



CG-26 1975 - 1995

USS Belknap Association Newsletter March 2025

Letter from the President

Tom Lewis (FC2, aboard 1985-1989)

Greetings, Shipmates.

I hope this message finds you all well. First, let me apologize for not getting a newsletter out soon after our October 2024 reunion in Lynchburg, VA. Mike Reeves did a phenomenal job with three tours; Appomattox Courthouse, Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, and the National D-Day Memorial did not disappoint. But a highlight for me was attending the weekly Lynchburg *Support the Troops* rally, which has been held at noon every Friday since November 2001 when the nation was preparing to respond to the 9-11 attacks. We were treated like dignitaries, which was extremely humbling to me. Thank you, MR, for the great surprise.

At the 2024 banquet, several shipmates received *Quilts of Valor* and we honored departed shipmates and family members with our traditional memorial service. Honoring those who have passed before us can be highly emotional and is greatly appreciated. Their service has made us great, and they deserve our gratitude for the part they have played in our lives.

Moving forward to 2025: this year, the Navy turns 250, the Belknap turns 61, and it's the 50th Anniversary of the horrible day in our ship's history when the accident with the JFK occurred. I didn't go aboard until ten years later, but I've learned so much more in the past six years. Even with losing eight shipmates (one JFK and seven Belknap sailors) the heroism of those who fought for their ship and shipmates keeps me in awe. In addition, the other ships and their efforts to save the Belknap were incredible. I often think to myself that I wouldn't be the person I am if it weren't for those sailors. Serving on the Belknap was the experience I needed at the time, and it will always live with me.

Our 2025 reunion will be held in Nashville, TN.

We've worked on this reunion for quite a while and have found a very nice venue with lots of things to do in the immediate vicinity, and only a short drive to downtown Nashville.



Tours this year will be limited so everyone will have time to explore. There are two 5-hour tours: on Thursday we will visit the Belle Meade Historic Site, one of the grand plantations of Nashville. While there, we will be provided with a nice lunch as well as wine tasting. On Friday, we'll take a riverboat cruise on the *General Jackson*, which includes lunch and a show. Everyone who took this cruise at a previous reunion still raves about it, so I wanted to include it again.

The board has invited shipmates from the USS Claude V. Ricketts, USS Bordelon, and the USS John F. Kennedy to join us in Nashville. The efforts of these three crews helped save our ship in 1975, and we believe it's appropriate to invite them.

Strong reunion attendance indicates that our Association is healthy and growing, which is highly gratifying to me. But we are always looking for new members, so I ask each of you to help me, the board, and our Past Presidents to reach out and invite all former Belknap sailors to join us.

You can contact me at any time!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tom'.

USS Belknap Association History

Our Association was started in 2002 by shipmates Jim Farrow, the late Dick Lemon, and the late Al Sniff. The first reunion was held in Norfolk, Virginia that year, and Jim Farrow was elected as the first Association President.

Early on, it was decided to hold every 5th reunion in our homeport of Norfolk/Hampton Roads. Our next homeport reunion will be in 2027. A list of reunions is shown below.

Past Reunions

2002	Norfolk, VA
2003	Pensacola, FL
2004	Charleston, SC
2005	San Antonio, TX
2006	Nashville, TN
2007	Norfolk, VA
2008	Mobile, AL
2009	St. Louis, MO
2010	Tampa, FL
2011	St. Louis, MO
2012	Virginia Beach, VA
2013	Tampa, FL
2014	Portland, ME
2015	Branson, MO
2016	Charleston, SC
2017	Virginia Beach, VA
2018	Las Vegas, NV
2019	Mobile, AL
2020	<i>Canceled (COVID-19)</i>
2021	Kissimmee, FL
2022	Norfolk, VA
2023	N. Myrtle Beach, SC
2024	Lynchburg, VA
2025	<i>Nashville, TN</i>

Association Past Presidents

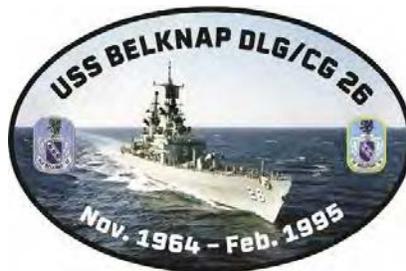
Oct 2002 – Oct 2005	Jim Farrow
Oct 2005 – Oct 2006	Dick Tremain
Oct 2006 – Oct 2007	Dick Lemon
Oct 2007 – Oct 2011	Chuck Taylor
Oct 2011 – Oct 2013	Skip McCarroll
Oct 2013 – Oct 2016	Mike Abbott
Oct 2016 – Oct 2017	Jim Farrow
Oct 2017 – Oct 2019	Mike Reeves
Oct 2019 – Oct 2023	Bill Staley

2025 Belknap Association Officers

President	Tom Lewis
Vice President	Jimmy D. Hines
Secretary	Bob Gilhooly
Treasurer	Mike Umbriaco
<i>Auxiliary President</i>	<i>Sandy Stoma</i>

Appointed Positions

Storekeeper	Louis Apuzzo
Assistant Storekeeper	Todd Wright
Historian	Tom Lewis
Chaplain	Collin Fuller
Newsletter & Brochure	Mike Reeves
Webmaster	Bob Gilhooly
Publicity & Membership	Ted Hetherington

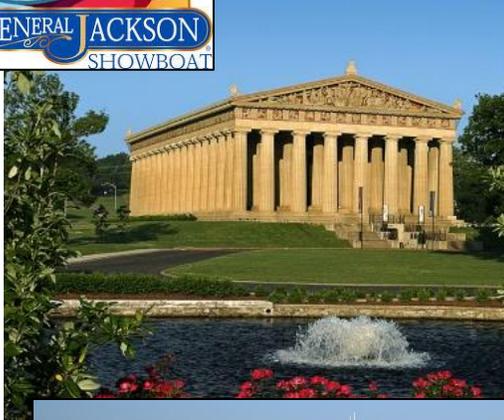


2025 USS Belknap Reunion

Nashville, TN 22-26 October



MUSIC CITY
Nashville
TENNESSEE



2025 USS Belknap Reunion Plan of the Days

Wednesday 22 October

- 1200 - Check-in begins, hospitality suite open
- 2400 - Hospitality Suite closes

Thursday 23 October

- 0700 – 0900 Breakfast at Large
- 0800 Hospitality Suite opens, check-in continues
- 0830 – 1430 Belle Meade Historic Tour
(Lunch included)
- 2400 Hospitality Suite closes

Friday 24 October

- 0700 – 0900 Breakfast at Large
- 0800 Hospitality suite opens, check-in continues
- 1000 – 1430 - POV to Gen. Jackson Showboat
(Lunch and Show included – share the ride)
- 1630 Dinner at Large
- 2400 Hospitality Suite closes

Saturday 25 October

- 0700 – 0900 Breakfast at Large
- 0800 Hospitality suite opens
- 1515 – 1600 Executive Board Meeting
- 1600 Hospitality Suite closes
- 1610 - 1700 Association Business Meeting
- 1800 Memorial Service 
- 1830 – 2000 Banquet 
- 2000 - 2400 Hospitality Suite open

Sunday 26 October

- 0600 Hospitality Suite opens for retrieval of Association property
- 0700 – 0900 Breakfast at Large
- 1100 Checkout deadline, clear Hospitality Suite

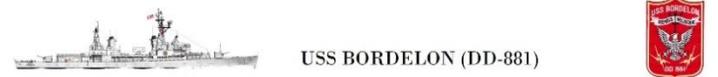
In Memory of the eight sailors who perished on 22 November 1975 when the USS Belknap (CG-26) collided with the USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) off the coast of Sicily:

*YN2 David A. Chivalette (JFK crewman)
MM1 James W. Cass
MM2 Douglas S. Freeman
EM2 Michael W. Kawola
DS3 Gerald A. Ketcham
STG3 Brent W. Lassen
FA David A. Messmer
DS2 Gordon T. St. Marie*

Fair Winds and Following Seas, Shipmates.

In Honor of the brave crews of the Belknap and the Kennedy who fought valiantly to save the ship, and In Appreciation of the crews of the USS Claude V. Ricketts (DDG-5) and the USS Bordelon (DD-881) who came to assist, risking their own ships and safety to help save the Belknap and minimize loss of life.

Well Done.  



Nashville has a lot to offer, with many daytime and nighttime activities. In addition to our two tours, there are plenty of things to do, so please take advantage of the ample free time in our schedule to take in Nashville's sights and sounds!

*As always, our Hospitality Suite is available to hang out with shipmates, reminisce, and catch up on each other's lives. **ENJOY!***

Jimmy D. “JD” Hines

Vice President

OS2, aboard '82 -'85



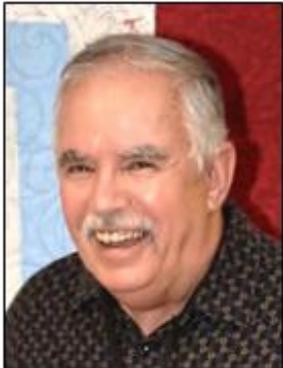
Greetings from the recliner of the Vice President!! I hope all have survived the winter none too worse for the experience. I know several have had various medical procedures; some planned and some unplanned; it is my prayer that all are recuperating well and will be able to join us in Nashville for the upcoming reunion. It looks as if it will be a great trip. I'm eagerly looking forward to spending time with my shipmates. I hope that more of the crew members from post-collision and Gaeta eras will be joining us. I'm also looking forward to Charleston, SC in 2026. Charleston is a favorite destination of Amy's and mine, and I'm always excited to plan another visit there.



Mike Umbriaco

Treasurer

QM2, aboard '74 -'75



Shipmates, inflation has made preparing for the Nashville reunion challenging. Fees have nearly doubled for our banquet, tour buses, and shipping our gear to/from the reunion site. Costs have also increased for special items such as the Belknap coins that we give to reunion first-timers.

Our Association began 2024 with a bank balance of about \$22,000, but at the start of 2025 our balance was about \$14,000 – still healthy. but as you can see we sucked up an additional \$8,000.00 in costs.

For Nashville, your board has adjusted tour and banquet fees to minimize the impact on our treasury while giving you good value for the reunion. In planning future reunions, we are committed to contain costs, with special attention to the affordability of each reunion site. I really appreciate how Tom Lewis has worked hard to manage the Nashville costs to keep it affordable.



Bob Gilhooly

Secretary

STG2, aboard '64 -'67

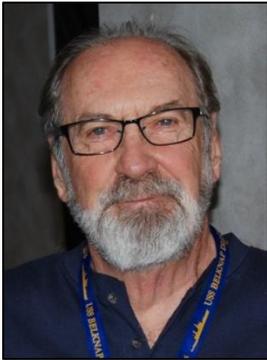
Are you receiving the newsletter via email? If not, we probably don't have a good email address for you. To keep up with the latest Association news and other correspondence, please send me an email at gilhooly@comcast.net. Also, please check out our website at <https://ussbelknap.org/>.



Ted Hetherington

Publicity and Membership Chairman

FTM2 Aboard '68 –'70



Our Association constitution states our purpose as to “...preserve the history and memory of the USS Belknap DLG/CG 26, its naval crews; to foster and strengthen the fraternal, civic, and patriotic ties among shipmates; to memorialize departed shipmates who served in USS Belknap...”

Thanks to Facebook postings and your personal efforts in “rattling cages and shaking trees,” our Association continues to reach new shipmates.

We are always looking for “lost” shipmates; if you have moved, changed your email address, or changed your phone number, please let us know through our website: <http://ussbelknap.org>. Click on *Membership and Rosters*, then *Online Shipmate Information Update* and complete the online form. Or if you prefer, email your updated information to webtech@ussbelknap.org or contact me by email: bowtieted@aol.com, Facebook Messenger, or phone 805-218-9025.



Ship’s Store News

Louis Apuzzo

Storekeeper

FTG, aboard '71 – '75

Todd Wright

Assistant Storekeeper

ET3, aboard '93 – '95
and Past Vice President

Shipmates,

Check out the Ship’s Store on our website for your caps, shirts, belt buckles, and many other items.

Some new items include a Belknap belt buckle, Christmas ornaments, many shirt designs, and custom-made cruise/career jackets. **YOUR jacket** can show all your duty stations, ports visited, awards, or specialties (not limited to USS Belknap service). Contact Lou to get started on your design!



Reunion T-Shirts:

Pre-order now to save on shipping; pick them up at the Nashville reunion. We are doing two colors this year - Carolina Blue and Sports Gray: Sm-XL \$18, 2XL \$20.00, 3XL \$22, 4-5-6XL \$24.



We also have Belknap playing cards and a variety of customizable tumblers, plus USS Belknap Rings. To see everything available, please check out the Ships Store on our website at USSBelknap.org.

We’re always looking for ideas, so please let us know if you have something we don’t have and we’ll try to get it for you. Email Lou (ljappuzzo@snet.net) with any questions. Include your name, address, and cell phone number so we can verify your order.

Sandy Stoma

President, USS Belknap
Association Auxiliary



Dear Spouses, Families, and Friends of the USS Belknap,

If you're new to us, welcome aboard! We are thrilled to have you join our close-knit community, dedicated to preserving and celebrating the rich history of the Belknap, its namesake family, and her brave crewmen. My husband Ted Stoma was a Boatswain's Mate on the Belknap from 1972 to 1975. Of the many ships he served on, the Belknap is our number one!

As our sailors continue to develop bonds unique to serving as warriors, being part of their extended Navy family means embracing a lifestyle where you make lifelong friendships and memories, and where we support each other.

I hope you can join us at our 2025 reunion, which promises to be another momentous event. We'll welcome the newest members of the USS Belknap Association, guests, and families in the beautiful city of Nashville, Tennessee.

Everyone should have a great time!

The Auxiliary looks forward to holding the popular raffles again this year, with many prizes in addition to a 50-50 raffle for CASH! All proceeds go to the Association to help cover operating costs. Prizes are mostly from donations, so please let us know if you can contribute a prize for the raffle.

For daily reunion updates, we'll again have a dry-erase board by the sign-in table, so be sure to check it out as you come and go.

Thanks to everyone for your help, especially to my special support people Betsy, Helen, Debbie, and Dena - and to our two new members Amy Hines and Dan Sanchez. Please let me know if you would like to help at the reunion, and consider joining the Auxiliary. We will enjoy an Auxiliary Brunch in the hotel on Saturday morning.

So join us in Nashville to see old friends and meet new ones. I Hope to see you in October!



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Collin Fuller, Chaplain
FC1, aboard '85 - '89



Prayers for:

- Our Country
- The USS Belknap Association staff, shipmates, and families
- Our upcoming Nashville reunion
- Belknap shipmates and families who have passed since our last reunion
- Continuing prayers for shipmates and families affected by the 1975 collision



STARBUSTER II

Mike Abbott

Past President

FTM3 and FTMCMM '66-'72 and '78 - 82

The manuscript for the new and improved version of the original *Starbuster* is in the final editing process. The new version containing over 725 pages, will have a hard cover and be printed in color. The photos from the original volume will now be in color if color copies are available. Additionally, there are dozens of new stories and photos included, as well as special sections devoted to our reunions and the history of the Belknap Association. Our plans are that *Starbuster II* will be available by the next reunion.



TAPS

Shipmates who have died, or whose deaths we have learned of, since the 2024 reunion:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Death</i>
BM2 Harold Schlipp	19 August 2023
SH3 Dwain Sutphin	17 September 2024
RD3 Jim Gillis	4 October 2024
MM3 Bill Wagoner	8 October 2024
Paul Edward Baker	28 February 2025
ET3 David Sands	9 March 2025
ET2 Matt Skillrud	29 September 2024
ET3 Jason Skaggs	10 February 2016

Shipmates' family members:

Maureen Ann Tremain	21 February 2025
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Shipmates honored at the 2024 Reunion Memorial Service:

Peter Bond	Billy Joel Hackett	Ricky Gene McDivitt
Peter W. Crawford	Byron Cleveland Hastings	Richard A. Mozier
Joseph Demers	Peter Francis Hennessy	Ronald R. Siegerdt
Terry G. England	Frank Kucsan, Jr.	James Robert Simpson
Terrence Patrick Fahey	William D. Leech	William Staley
Charlie L. Golden, Jr.	Michael B. Manko	Harry J. Turner

Langley Harriss Wood (WWII USS Belknap (DD-251), died 29 January 2007

Mike Reeves

Past President

Taps List Administrator
STG2, aboard '66 - '69



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are looking for help in the following positions:

Assistant Vice President	Assistant Treasurer	Assistant Secretary/Webmaster
Reunion Brochure Editor		Master at Arms

Please contact President Tom Lewis if you have the skills and can help your association!

Lynchburg, VA Reunion October 2024

The weather was beautiful for the entire reunion!



Union Maj. Gen E.O.C. Ord addresses USS Belknap Visitors at Appomattox Courthouse National Historic Park on Thursday.

Maj. Gen Ord was portrayed by Lynchburg reenactor OSCM Mark Day, USN (Ret).



Mark and his wife Barbara were our guests at the Belknap Banquet on Saturday night.



Appomattox Courthouse Visitor Center



American Civil War Museum.



The Depot Grille in the James River basin was a favorite dinner spot.



Lynchburg Veterans Rally

After lunch on Friday, our tour included a stop at Lynchburg's weekly *Support the Troops* rally. The rally began on 30 November 2001 as a vigil by local veterans to stand in opposition to an anti-war protest, when the US was preparing to go to war in response to the 9-11 attacks. After a few weeks, the protesters were gone, but veterans have continued to gather at historic Monument Terrace at every Friday since. At the time of our reunion, the rally had met without fail each week for nearly 23 years, and it's still going strong! With little organization, no officers, and no rules except unwavering support for troops and veterans, the rally is believed to be without parallel anywhere in the world!

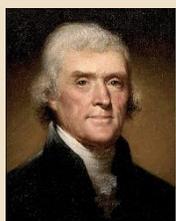
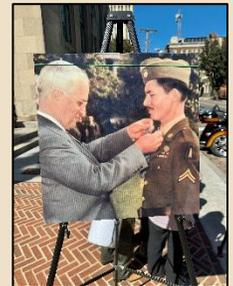


Regulars were impressed when our tour bus pulled up and disgorged a large group that doubled the crowd! The USS Belknap and its crews were duly recognized for their service, and our president Tom Lewis presented a check to the Monument Terrace Veterans. (The check was from our caterer *The Market at Main*, and it was given in honor of our ship, its crews, and their service.) We also

presented several USS Belknap challenge coins to key leaders of the rally. Everyone who attended received a challenge coin, and several have said the rally was a highlight of the reunion for them!



By coincidence, our visit was on the day a special proclamation was read to recognize October 12 as Desmond T. Doss Day in Lynchburg. Native son Doss received the Medal of Honor for saving at least 75 men who were wounded in action on Okinawa in 1945. Though he was wounded himself, combat medic Corporal Doss single-handedly dragged the wounded, one-by-one, to a bluff and lowered them to safety where they could receive life-saving treatment. The Doss story was the subject of the 2016 movie "Hacksaw Ridge."



Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest

Following the troop rally, the Belknap group re-boarded the bus for a short drive to Poplar Forest, Thomas Jefferson's retreat home on the west side of Lynchburg. Over the years, portions of the large estate were sold and the residence was modified significantly.



Then in 1971, Poplar Forest was designated a National Historic Landmark; it is now operated as a *historic house museum* by the nonprofit

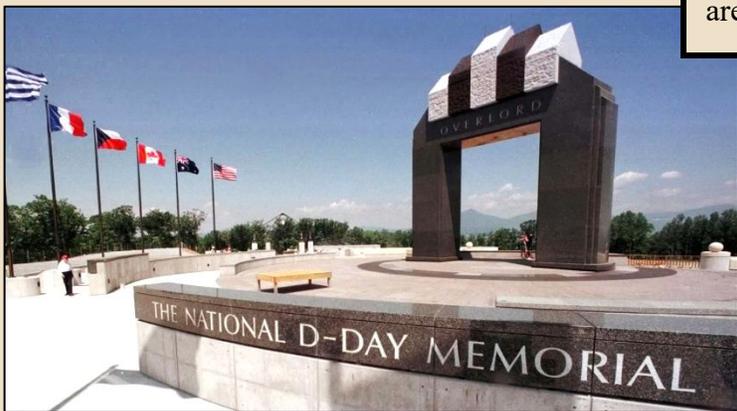


Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest. Some land has been re-acquired, and the estate is the site of continuing archeological research. Our volunteer tour guides explained historic findings and how efforts continue to restore the house to Mr. Jefferson's original design, using only hand tools with painstaking attention to detail.



Lynchburg native and reunion newbie SH2 Adam Pettyjohn (aboard '83-'87, at right) gets acquainted with Lou Apuzzo and the Ship's Store.

The privately funded National D-Day Memorial is in Bedford, Virginia, home to the "Bedford Boys," the 20 local National Guardsmen who were killed during the first wave of the D-Day invasion at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. Bedford thus suffered the highest per-capita loss of any American town, and it is fitting for the memorial to be in this scenic location at the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The iconic Peaks of Otter are in the background..



Chow time at the D-Day Memorial



The Military Order of the World Wars



In memory of
MOWW Past Commander-in-Chief
Rear Admiral Reginald Rowan Belknap
 US Navy, Retired

The Virginia Piedmont Chapter
 is pleased to present the

BRONZE PATRICK HENRY AWARD

to

The USS Belknap Association

for sustained excellence in Patriotism, Honor, and Esprit de Corps that are in keeping with key tenets of the MOWW Preamble: *"To cherish memories and associations of the World Wars waged for humanity; to inculcate and stimulate love of Country and the Flag; to foster fraternal relationships among all branches of the Armed Forces; to acquire and preserve records; and to encourage and assist in holding commemorations and establishing memorials."*

Well Done!

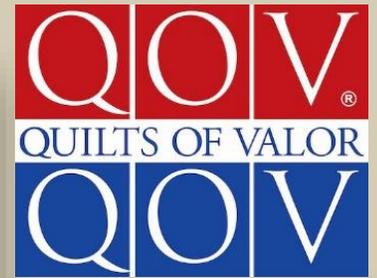


Charles B. Faulconer
 Charles B. Faulconer
 COL., US Army (Ret)
 Chapter Commander
 October 13, 2024



At the reunion banquet, Col. Charles B. "Buddy" Faulconer (right), US Army National Guard (Ret), Commander of the Virginia Piedmont Chapter, Military Order of The World Wars (MOWW), presented USS Belknap Association president Tom Lewis with the Bronze Patrick Henry award for Patriotism, in memory of RADM Reginald Rowan Belknap, who served two years as the National Commander in Chief of MOWW. In accepting the award, Tom presented Buddy with a USS Belknap challenge coin.

It has been our privilege at recent USS Belknap Reunions to have local Quilts of Valor groups present our Veterans with special handmade quilts to honor their service to the Nation. Here are a few of the 2024 honorees.





**USS BELKNAP ASSOCIATION
REUNION REGISTRATION FORM**



22 – 26 October 2025

The Inn at Opryland
2401 Music Valley Drive, Nashville TN 37214

Please read instructions carefully and **complete all blanks, front and back.**

Or – **Register and Pay Online** at www.USSBelknap.org using PayPal (you do not need an account).

Shipmate Name: _____ Ship attached to 22 NOV 1975 _____

Years on board (ex: 66-68): _____ Rate/Rank when aboard: (ex: FC2) _____

Guest Names: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Add sheet for additional guests **Total # Attendees** _____

Registration Fee*: (Shipmate only) **\$35** (\$45 after 31 July 2025) \$ _____

* Non-refundable after 30 September 2025

1st guest FREE: (additional guests \$20 each) \$ _____

BANQUET: (including Memorial Service, Saturday, 25 Oct 2025)

\$65.00 per person** (includes tax and gratuity) # People _____ \$ _____

** Non-refundable after 15 October 2025

The banquet will be buffet style. Entrees will include fresh garden salad, pasta salad, market fresh vegetables and herb-roasted potatoes rolls & butter, fresh brewed coffee or iced tea, and dessert.

Please indicate # entrée and dessert choices:

Rosemary-Baked Chicken: _____ **Herb-Roasted Pork** _____

Lemon Meringue Pie _____ **Chocolate Tart** _____

Please indicate any special meal requirements: _____

TOURS:

Thursday 0830-1430 - Belle Meade Historic Site (**\$100/person**, lunch included)

People _____ \$ _____

Friday 1000-1430 - General Jackson Showboat (**\$75/person**, lunch and show included)

People _____ \$ _____

ANNUAL DUES: (for those who need to pay: **\$30/year**). (Non-refundable) \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Make checks payable to: **USS BELKNAP Association** and mail with this completed form to:

Mike Umbriaco, 82964 Ash Lane, Creswell, OR 97426 (Questions? Call Mike at 541-895-2168).

Or – **Register and Pay Online** at www.USSBelknap.org using PayPal (you do not need an account).

BREAKFAST: There are multiple restaurants in the immediate area for breakfast/lunch including the Hotel Restaurant (Opry Backstage Grill). Cracker Barrel, Cascades American Café, Bob Evans, Waffle House, etc.

AUXILIARY SPECIAL EVENT:

For details contact Sandy Stoma: tsstoma@yahoo.com, phone 631-445-8175.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS: call 615-889-0800 – be sure to mention USS Belknap Reunion.

Or use this link to book online: [The Inn at Opryland USS Belknap Group Rate 2025](#)

(Our group rate is \$173.00 plus tax and fees (16.75% + \$2.50), available 20-28 October 2025. Rate is guaranteed until Wednesday, 22 September 2025.)

FREE PARKING: is available in the hotel lot. There is limited space for RVs (for hotel guests only; parking only, no hookups provided).

IMPORTANT: Reunion registration **does not include hotel reservations**, which must be made separately.

TRANSPORTATION: **POV** or arrange your own transportation from Airport (shuttle, taxi, Uber/Lyft, etc.).

Special questions for the Hotel and the Association:

Do you plan on driving to Nashville? Yes No Driving RV?

Are you staying at the hotel? Yes No

Is this your first Reunion? Yes If not, **how many prior reunions** have you attended? _____

Guests: Auxiliary Member? Yes If not, would you like to become a member? Yes

Are you willing to help-out during this reunion? Yes No

CONTACT INFORMATION: Please provide the information below so that we can ensure our master roster is up to date and keep you informed of any schedule changes or other important information.

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone(s): _____

