



# USS KASKASKIA BLAST

*Dedicated to the men who served aboard USS KASKASKIA (AO 27)*

Volume 8 No. 1

May 2025

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## President's Message

*Michael "Mike" Valsamy*

Hi to all my shipmates, spouses and good friends.

It is hard to believe that our Kaskaskia Reunion Group has been putting together great reunions for the past 34 years. Since this is my first attempt at organizing a reunion, I am relying on the help of shipmates that have experience in organizing reunions in the past.

I want thank Ben Pfister, Richard Jones, Ed Schied, Larry Kish, Don Seymour and Jimmy Tabb for all their help and advice.

I want us all to reminisce about our homeport of Mayport, when we sailed off on our last Med tour, back in 1969. I wanted to include a visit to Saint Augustine, which brings fond memories of walking around the Fort and the Old Town, seeing the Lions Bridge from a distance.

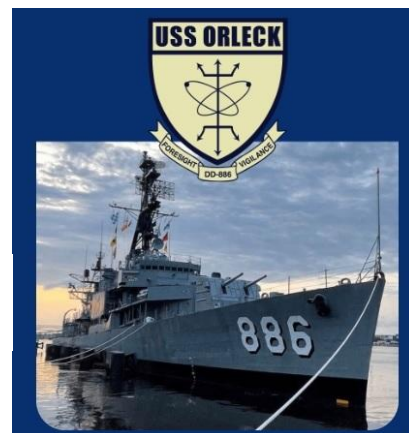
I hope everyone will enjoy the package of events I have put together. I didn't want this reunion to be too strenuous for us. The Naval Museum, Marineland and the Lightner Museum involve some walking. Mayport and the boat ride will be relaxing. Our banquet will be at our hotel Saturday night.

I hope that everyone has a great time.

Thank you all so much

Mike Valsamy

Jacksonville Naval  
Museum USS Orleck  
(DD 886)



See Page 2

USS KASKASKIA Reunion Webpage  
<http://www.kaskaskia27reunion.com/>

## USS KASKASKIA 2025 Reunion

**Wednesday- 9/17** --Meet and greet in the Hospitality Room. Registration and check in begins at 3:00 PM. Enjoy the drinks, snacks and conversation.

**Thursday- 9/18** --Tour of Mayport Naval Base by bus, followed by the USS ORLECK Museum located in the St. Johns River in downtown Jacksonville. Please meet in the lobby at 9:00 AM to board our bus.

The Mayport tour will require a **Special Event** form. Please provide your information on the Reservation form.

The USS ORLECK (DD 886) Museum has the following lunch menu available, after the tour: Lunch is a buffet style.

Pulled pork sliders, chicken salad, turkey and ham sandwich with pasta salad and veggies, Seasonal fruit/vegetable trays, crackers & dip and drinks.

**Friday - 9/19** -- A Boat tour of St. Augustine harbor on Red Boat Water Tours. 10 AM to 1:30 PM. Please meet in the lobby at 8:00 AM to board our bus.

If guests wish to sightsee Saint Augustine town, we will have the bus return, to pick you up. There are two excursions that you may want to consider in the Saint Augustine area:

The Lightner Museum in Saint Augustine. 75 King Street, St. Augustine, Florida 32084

Marineland Aquarium south of St. Augustine. 9600 Ocean Shore Blvd. St. Augustine, FL 32080

**Saturday - 9/20** --Annual Business Meeting at 10:00 AM This is your free day to go shopping at Jacksonville, Jax Beach and St. Augustine.

**Banquet** in the Hospitality Room starts at 5:00 PM

### Additional Notes

For members with own transportation, the Navy Exchange and Commissary for Mayport are located off base on Mayport Road. (no gate pass needed, just military I.D.)

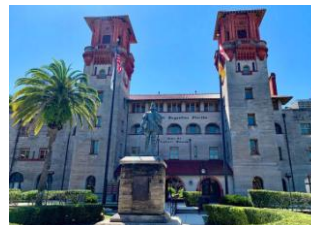
Naval Air Station Jax has a relatively new Exchange and Commissary located on base. NAS Jax is located in Orange Park on US 17 (Roosevelt Blvd).

The major shopping and dining center in the Jax area is the St. Johns Town Center with most of the major stores and a wide range of restaurants to select.

For those looking for nostalgia, most of the bars outside of Mayport have disappeared to be replaced by motels, condos and apartment complexes. The St Johns Mayport Ferry should be back open in September after a small crash to the docking ramp in early May. But the seafood restaurants are still busy.



Arrows show where Kas was usually tied up at C-2 and C-3 (now F-2)



## USS KASKASKIA Ship's Store

President Mike Valsamy has several USS KASKASKIA (AO 27) related items for sale. He plans to bring them to the Reunion; however, shipmates can order hats and pins from Mike via his email address. Mike has hats and a limited number of charms and pins from past reunions. The hats are \$10.00 plus \$3.00 postage and the charms and pins are \$5.00 plus \$2.00 postage. See the website for pictures of all of the charms available.



USS KASKASKIA AO27 Ballcap



USS KASKASKIA AO27 pin



**USS KASKASKIA (AO 27) 35th Reunion**  
**Mayport Homeport Jacksonville, Florida**  
**Reservation Form Due by August 1, 2025**

**Hotel Reservations:** Hilton Garden Inn Jacksonville JTB / Deerwood Park  
 9745 Gate Parkway North, Jacksonville FL 32246

Reservations can be made by calling 904-997-6600. Mention the USS KASKASKIA Reunion.

Our room rate is \$120.31 + taxes per night. Sales taxes are 13.5% = \$16.25

Total room rate is \$136.56. We all have the following Amenities:

Internet access all rooms, Parking, Pool, Hot tub and Gym.

**Excursion and Banquet Reservations 2025**

**Transportation** - Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ x \$99.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

**Wednesday- 9/17** Meet and greet in the Hospitality Room. Registration and check in begins at 3:00 PM.  
 Enjoy the drinks, snacks and conversation.

Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ x \$50.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

**Thursday- 9/18** Tour of Mayport Naval Base by bus, Tour of USS ORLECK Museum.

The Mayport tour will require a Special Event form. Please provide the following information.

Guest Name _____	Guest Name _____
Gender _____	Gender _____
Birth date _____	Birth date _____
Last 4 SSN _____	Last 4 SSN _____

The USS ORIECK (DD 886) Museum is harbored in the St. Johns River Downtown Jacksonville.

Admission to tour is \$13 per person. Admission to tour and buffet lunch is \$35 per person.

Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ x \$13.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ x \$35.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday - 9/19** A Boat tour of St. Augustine Harbor on Red Boat Water Tours. 10 AM to 11:30 AM.

Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ x \$23.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

If guests wish to sightsee Saint Augustine town, we will have the bus return, to pick you up.  
 There are two excursions that you may want to consider in the Saint Augustine area.

The Lightner Museum in Saint Augustine.

Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ x \$16.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

Marineland Aquarium south of Saint Augustine.

Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday - 9/20** Banquet in the Hospitality Room.

Number of guests \_\_\_\_\_ \$40.00 per person = \_\_\_\_\_

Your total cost = \_\_\_\_\_

Please make all checks payable to **Ben Pfister** - Registration due by August 1, 2025

Mail to: Ben Pfister

2411 - 45th Street

Rock Island, Illinois 61204

Phone - 309-314-7141 (Please identify by name)

Email - ben.joe.pfister@gmail.com



**USS KASKASKIA (AO 27)**

2024 Reunion Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2024

Moline, Illinois

President Mike Valsamy called the meeting to order. Board members present: Mike Valsamy and Ben Pfister.

Nine additional members present: Dennis Butterfield, Bob Crosby, Ed Schied, Don Grout, Richard Jones, Dave Lutman, Jerry Sheets, Jimmy Tabb, and Don Seymour.

Meeting opened by reciting the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance

President Valsamy commenced Ben Pfister on a great job with the 2024 reunion.

Treasurer Ben Pfister gave the financial report. Total funds on hand \$6,436.81.

Jimmy Tabb made a motion to look into shortage of funds when Ben was given the bank account. (Approximately \$1500.00). Bob Crosby second. Motion carried. (President Valsamy agreed to look into the shortage).

Ben Pfister motioned to refund Don Seymour his money for reunion. Jimmy Tabb second. Motion carried.

Bob Crosby motioned to approve minutes of the 2023 meeting in Buffalo, New York. Don Grout seconded. Motion carried.

Bob Crosby motioned that we keep our association 'as is' and not join any other groups. Dennis Butterfield seconded. Motion carried.

**New Business:**

Bob Crosby motioned to have President pick a reunion location and use a reunion coordinator. Jimmy Tabb seconded. Motion carried. Locations mentioned were New Orleans and Branson.

Recognized departed Shipmates with a moment of silence

Jimmy Tabb motioned that Ben Pfister remain Treasurer. Seconded by Bob Crosby. Motion carried.

**Proposed Officers for 2025.**

President -- Mike Valsamy

Vice President -- Don Seymour

Secretary -- Richard Jones

Treasurer -- Ben Pfister

A motion to approve the above slate was made. Motion carried.

**Convention Statistics:**

Oldest -- Erv Wilfred

Youngest -- Ed Schied

Member Traveling the farthest -- Richard Jones

Member Traveling the least -- Ben Pfister

Robert Crosby made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Dave Lutman. Motion carried.

**Dues are Due**

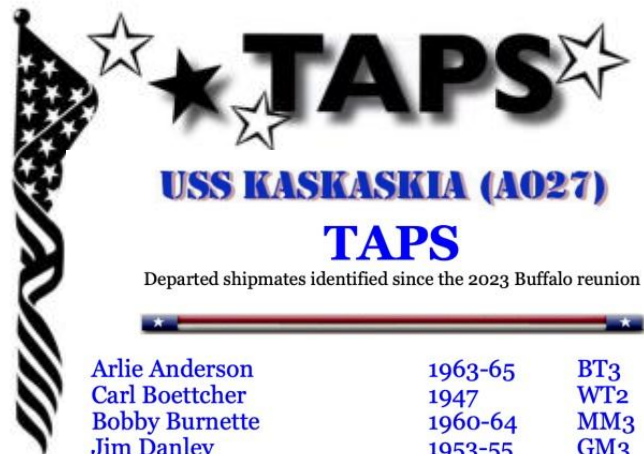
*Yearly dues of \$10.00 are now due. This token rate helps pay for the printing and mailing of the KASKASKIA BLAST and also for the yearly costs of maintaining the website. As you know, the fees for the website have continued to increase each year. However, the board believes the cost is justified since it contains so much data and history of our ship.*

*Please send your check for \$10.00 to the Treasurer BEN PFISTER.*

*Make check payable to BEN PFISTER*

*2411- 45<sup>th</sup> Street*

*Rock Island, IL 61204*



Departed shipmates identified since the 2023 Buffalo reunion

Arle Anderson	1963-65	BT3
Carl Boettcher	1947	WT2
Bobby Burnette	1960-64	MM3
Jim Danley	1953-55	GM3
Ken Eddowes	1966-67	IC3
Terry Gacioch	1963-66	IC3
Charles Gnerlich	1963-68	DCA
Bill Hartwig	1952-55	BM2
Marshall T. Harvey	1947-48	
Donald Hitchens	1948-49	RMSN
Timm Katalin	1968-69	QM3
Maurice Lewis	1946-48	QM3
Louis Rutland	1963-65	Lt Jg
Robert Styles	1945-48	S1
Michael Toomey	1964-65	QM2

Departed shipmates identified since the 2024 Quad Cities reunion

John Bakowski	1967-69	YN3
Melvin Brandos	1941-45	Baker
Chuck Freeland	1951	MM3
James Glascock	1949-50	RM
Vince King	1962-63	E3
Bill Nartwig		
Gerald Plamann	1963-66	IC3
Timm Ross	1968-69	QM3
Eugene Silva	1961-63	ENS
Stanford Wise Jr.	1953-55	MM3



### From the Editor's Desk

It is hard to believe, but that last KASKASKIA Reunion in the Jacksonville-Mayport area was in 2000! We are back for 2025!

By my count of the latest mailing labels, we still have over 25 former shipmates living in Florida, Georgia and Alabama. Ten former shipmates live in the Jacksonville-North Florida area. I sincerely hope many of you can join the Reunion this year and share your memories of life aboard KASKASKIA in the 1960's. Many Reunion members helped recommission KASKASKIA up in Hoboken in December 1961 and brought her to our homeport at Mayport.

Please consider participating in the Reunion this year, you might really enjoy bringing back memories and stories of adventures both good and somewhat challenging. We all have great Sea Stories to share! Join us.

### Quad Cities Candid Photos



*Loading up for John Deere trip.*



*Entrance to John Deere Factory.*



*The John Deere Factory was so massive we had to ride shuttle carts through the stations.*



*Lunch and presentation at the Robotic Dairy was fun and educational.*



*A view of the robotic dairy from the second floor lunch room. Cows lounging in sand beds after milking. Robotic milking stations are to the left of the photo.*



*Cow taking care of an itch with the automatic back scratching rollers.*



*Some of the John Deere equipment performs a multitude of operations*





Richard D. Jones  
137 Putnam Ave  
Ormond Beach FL 32174

To:

**Heading to Mayport for 2025 Reunion!**

**Reunion Registration Information Enclosed – This Year--Join in--Be There!**

**MAX OP TEMPO BEGINS**

