

Shipmates,

Just returned from Pensacola and the 32nd reunion of the USS FORRESTAL. It was an outstanding reunion with a great turnout!

I would like to thank our Vice President Mike Gruening, and Master at Arms “Doc” Bordinat for the invaluable help of putting and keeping the whole thing together. Our oceanfront accommodations were wonderful, and the hotel staff was very accommodating throughout the week. The hotel’s Event Coordinators, Katy McPhail and Carly Buechner ensured that everything went smoothly.

The majority of Forrestal’s crew checked in on Wednesday and registration went smoothly. Swag bags with shirts and other memorabilia items were plentiful for all. Around 1130ish the BLUE ANGELS and THUNDERBIRDS did a flyby across the front of the hospitality rooms balcony area. What a sight to see and hear! The Welcome Aboard party Wednesday evening was a great time with shipmates and friends catching up on life events. There was plenty of pizza, vegetable, cheese, and fruit trays to accompany your beverage of choice.

Thursday, we loaded up three motor coaches and went the Naval Aviation Museum aboard NAS. For those who have never been there it is a world class museum. So much to see! There was also a section dedicated to FORRESTAL, Ready Room seats and a continual movie of the fire plus the nameplate from the stern of the ship mounted for everyone to see. While at the museum, you could step outside and see the BLUE ANGELS and THUNDERBIRDS practice. It was truly an exciting day, especially for aircraft buffs.

Friday was a different kind of day. We loaded four motor coaches and headed for the airshow at NAS. With over 150,000 vehicles competing for highway space and the long check in lines at the base, it took the buses a bit longer to get to the air show than anticipated, but they did make it and were able to watch the Blue Angels perform! Brent Baker, a retired Navy Diver, supplied seating for our group of over 200 folks. Thanks Brent you are a real shipmate!

Saturday, we conducted the business meeting and Wilmington, NC was voted in for next year’s reunion. Vice President Mike Gruening and Steve Pecorelli will lead the charge for NC. Next up was the USS Forrestal Memorial Service. RADM(Ret.) Peter Booth, and Mrs. Susan Briese, the widow of our previous President CAPT(Ret.) Steven Briese were our guests of honor. RADM Booth was a young fighter pilot aboard the Forrestal during the 1967 fire and served as the Commanding Officer from 1977-1979. At 1600 Shipmate Joe Sharp and his assistant (and best friend) Cindy set up a studio for group and individual photos which will soon be available for download, at no cost. He also did a group photo of 40+ survivors from the 1967 fire, that attended the reunion. Thank you, Joe, you are a true friend and shipmate. Saturday nights dinner was awesome. We had over 200 people in attendance and the meal was fantastic. After dinner music was supplied by a local disc jockey and a 50/50 drawing was held. The big winner, Joe Mominee, donated his winnings back to the Association. Thank you, Shipmate!

In closing I would like to thank everyone who attended this year and all of those who worked behind the scenes to make this reunion most successful.