



**NAVY LEAGUE**  
of the United States  
"Citizens in Support of the Sea Services."

**New Mexico**  
Council



January, 2020

[www.nmnavyleague.com](http://www.nmnavyleague.com)

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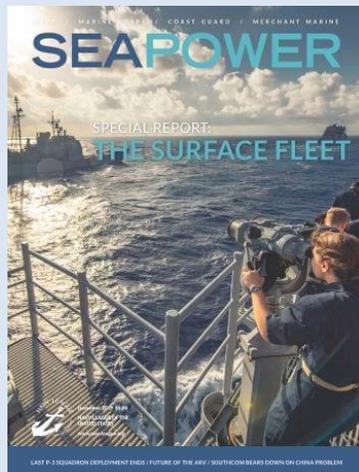
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Did you know that you can get the latest issues of Sea Power magazine in an App? Go to your mobile device App Store and search on "Navy League".



## Navy League New Mexico Council Annual Meeting Remembers 78<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor

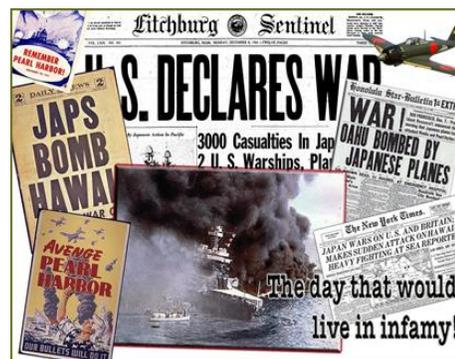
By Mark Schaefer  
Photos by Michael

Members of the Navy League New Mexico Council gathered on December 7<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the successes of the Council and to review the contributions that Council members made to the Navy community this past



year. It was fitting that the celebration was held on Pearl Harbor Day, a day of such importance to many Navy families and to the direction of the country back in 1941 that still impacts us today.

Outgoing President, Chuck Vaughan, presented an overview of the 2019 Council scholarships, awards, meeting speakers, membership, and financial status. A rollup of those comments is provided on page 7 of this issue of the NM Nautical News.



Incoming President for 2020, John Jones, begins his term with in the President's Message on page 2.

The council values all of your contributions of time, talent, and treasure that ultimately go to help educate our community about Navy endeavors, and to support our namesake ships and our local Sea Services. Thank you for your membership.

**Thank You!** When you keep your dues up to date with the Navy League national office, our New Mexico council receives a stipend for each active member. This makes a big difference in our ability to support our namesake ships, our youth, our Sea Cadets, and the local active and reserve. Joint or renew at

<https://www.navyleague.org/membership>

## 2020 COUNCIL OFFICERS

**John Jones**  
*President*

**Dave Williams**  
*Vice President*

**Chuck Vaughan**  
*Treasurer*

**Tom Gutierrez**  
*Secretary*

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**Damon Runyan**  
*USS New Mexico SSN-779*

**Ron Oleksak**  
*USS Santa Fe SSN-763*

**Greg Trapp**  
*BB-40 Memorial Bell*

**tbd**

*USS Los Alamos Commissioning*

**Rebecca Vigil**  
*Public Affairs*

**Joe Lukas-Drouillard**  
*Sea Cadet Liaison*

**Ed Nava**  
*Website Editor*

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*Newsletter Editor*



## President's Message



John Jones  
*President, New Mexico Council*

**Happy New Year New Mexico Council and Happy Birthday to the State of New Mexico on Monday January 6<sup>th</sup>!** The League will celebrate its 118<sup>th</sup> birthday this year.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President in the coming year. Additionally, Dave Williams is the new Vice President of the Board, Tom Gutierrez remains as Secretary, and Chuck Vaughan is the new Treasurer. A heart felt 'thank you' to last year's President, Chuck Vaughan, for all of the time and talent he provided in leadership of this great organization. We are all here to serve.

As is the case every year, there is plenty to do, and we'll discuss goals for 2020 at the Board meeting on Monday, January 13<sup>th</sup>. Along those lines, it is good to keep in mind 'the mission' and that the League is a nonprofit civilian, educational and advocacy organization that supports America's sea services - the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and U.S.-flag Merchant Marine. Three main tenants of the mission are:

- Enhance the morale of sea service personnel and their families through national and council level programs.

- Provide a powerful voice to educate the public and Congress on the importance of our sea services to our nation's defense, well-being and economic prosperity.
- Support youth through programs, such as the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, Junior ROTC and Young Marines, that expose young people to the values of our sea services.

In this issue you'll see an article from Dick Brown on the January 6, 1945 kamikaze attack on the NEW MEXICO (BB-40), our outreach to schools, a sad farewell to a member who has left us, and a brief appeal for donations ... right now.

Every effective and efficient organization needs a solid mission (we have one), along with members and funding to carry out the mission. One of the things we'll work on this year is expanding our individual and corporate membership. Our funding comes from membership dues through the National organization, and from donations. Please consider a tax deductible donation to the New Mexico Council in support our scholarship program for men and women on active duty and in the reserves, our work with crews on our namesake New Mexico ships, and our recognition programs with the Sea Cadets (Trident Battalion), as well as the Navy ROTC and Junior Navy and Marine Corps ROTC programs around the State.

Stay in touch, tell us what you think - Not for Self but Country ... and in the name of the United States Navy, the US Coast Guard, the US Marine Corps and for the US Merchant Marine.

John L Jones  
CDR SC USN (ret)

**Contact me any time at**  
[entranosa@aol.com](mailto:entranosa@aol.com)  
or by mail at the Council's P.O. box.

## NM Nautical Quiz!

Q1: If Apple was a pirate ship, then what would their sailors wear?

Q2: What kind of oranges to sailors eat to fight off scurvy?

(see page 5 for answers)

To contact the editor, write to Mark Schaefer at [usnanm@comcast.net](mailto:usnanm@comcast.net).

# Namesake Ships



*Editor's Note: The following article, contributed by Dick Brown, pays tribute to the survival of BB-40 Battleship New Mexico in World War II. The story is based on Dick's personal interview of one of our distinguished Navy veterans of the time, Chief George Herder.*

## **Kamikaze Attacks USS New Mexico** by Dick Brown

January 6, 2020, New Mexico Statehood Day, marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a deadly kamikaze attack on our namesake battleship. What follows is a first-hand account of the attack by George E. Herder, WWII Navy hero.

George Herder joined the Navy a month after the Pearl Harbor attack, on January 9, 1942. His seaman pay was \$21 a month. After bugle school, he reported to USS New Mexico (BB-40) in San Francisco. He served in the Navigation Division from 1942 to 1945. It was January 6, 1945 when New Mexico commenced her systematic bombardment of Luzon, the biggest and most-prized of the Philippine islands. At 1000 the Japanese began retaliating with repeated air attacks on the U.S. invasion fleet. George was at his battle station on the navigation bridge.

*"I believe it was late in the morning, maybe close to noon, and we were cruising back and forth in Lingayen Gulf, on the western side of Luzon, bombarding the installations on the beach."*

*"We had been at General Quarters for some time. Radar picked up bogies inbound. I was the Bugler for G.Q. so my battle station was on the bridge. I didn't have much to do, so the Chief Photographer asked me if I would take pictures from the bridge during G.Q. as he wandered all over the ship taking pictures from different perspectives. Of course I was more than pleased to help out. He supplied me with a K-56 aircraft-type camera. It took 50 8X10 contact size pictures. The bogies had closed in and the fleet was under air attack."*

*"One of the zeros, or Zeke's, I don't recall which type it was, had closed in on us, aft on the starboard quarter, and had started his dive on us. The noise from our 5"25's, and the 40 mm and 20 mm anti-aircraft guns, was deafening. I was on the port side of the bridge, and he was coming in over the starboard quarter, diving at about a 35 or 40 degree angle. The camera I was using probably weighed about 30 lbs. I hoisted it up to my chest, got him in my sights and snapped the picture."*

At this point, the kamikaze, with its 500-lb bomb, was about 500 to 700 yards from impact when George took the historic photograph at right from the navigation bridge. It has appeared in many books and publications over the years, including *All the Queen's Men* and *USS New Mexico BB-40*.



This head-on snapshot clearly shows the belly-mounted 500-lb bomb

*"I started to run to a more secure place on the port side of the bridge, but I turned around and lit out to the starboard side. Why I did that I'll never understand; it was only God that directed my steps, as it would seem that the plane would hit the starboard side. Had I remained on my original course I would have been killed. Somewhere along the way to the starboard side, I don't remember where to this day, I dropped the camera. It was later found on the gun deck, some 30 feet below. I was about 3/4 of the way to the*

*(story continues next page)*

# Namesake Ships



## Kamikaze Attacks USS New Mexico *(continued from previous page) by Dick Brown*

*starboard side when the plane hit the port side of the bridge, where I would have been. The explosion blew me around a corner, and I was burning, I opened my eyes, and thought I'm in hell. The explosion perhaps tore the camera from my hands. Then all of a sudden I felt very cold. I looked up and saw Ensign Sobel trying to get out from inside the bridge, his face was covered with blood . . . and he couldn't see. I helped him out of the hatchway, the fireball had dissipated, and I opened my eyes again and found I was still in the land of the living."*

British Lt. General Herbert Lumsden, who fought German General Erwin Rommel – The Desert Fox – in North Africa, was on the flag bridge to observe U.S. amphibious tactics. Bill Chickering, the veteran *Time* magazine correspondent who had been covering Pacific battles for the past three years, was also on the flag bridge during the attack. New Mexico's skipper, Capt. Robert Fleming and many others were killed, including Chickering and Lumsden, the most senior British Army combat casualty of the war.

*"I rushed back to the aft part of the bridge, where a fire hose was. Bridge radio was inside the superstructure, and was burning. I got the hose off the bulkhead and turned on the water, and stuck the nozzle in through the port hole to try to put out the fire, but shrapnel had rendered the hose useless, a good thing for me as I no doubt would have been electrocuted as the electric wires were all exposed from the fire. Water was spurting out the entire length of the hose from the shrapnel holes. I then went on to the port side, and the 20 mm gun and crew were wiped out and I looked over the side of the bridge and saw a large hole on the port side of the Forecastle Deck, where the propeller of the aircraft had penetrated. I noticed that my left foot was slipping in my shoe. I looked down and my pant leg was saturated with blood. I had not had any pain, but I went down to sick bay and had the wound taken care of. A piece of shrapnel had gone into my leg, which I still carry to this day."*



Chief George Edward Herder,  
USN-Retired

Commander John T. Warren, Executive Officer, assumed command upon the tragic death of his skipper. Anti-aircraft fire continued to stream skyward from the battleship's guns, though two of her weapons had been knocked out in the explosion. But 14-inch fire from the New Mexico continued to flail Luzon, paving the way for General Douglas MacArthur and his men.

Commander Warren's sword – a longtime family heirloom – was donated to the New Mexico Council in June 2018 by his grand-daughter, Lisa Cummings of Albuquerque.

Despite personnel losses, 30 dead and 87 wounded, New Mexico lost little in battle efficiency. Unopposed on the beaches, U.S. troops went ashore on January 9th to fight a campaign against an enemy disorganized and demoralized, badly equipped and badly supplied, and isolated beyond hope of remedy. George Herder was also on the bridge when New Mexico was hit a second time by a kamikaze off Okinawa on May 12, 1945.

George received several decorations, including a Purple Heart for the shrapnel he carried in his left thigh. After the war, he continued to serve in the Navy. While in Hawaii in 1955 he made chief. He retired in 1964 with a pension of \$205 a month. George started his second career at Norfolk International Airport as an aircraft assistant. He loved to fly and was a member of the Norfolk Naval Flying Club for many years. He founded and directed the Lighthouse Servicemen's Center in Norfolk.

The Chief, along with BB-40 veterans Leonard Hart and George Smith, were honored during SSN-779's christening ceremony at Northrop Grumman Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia. Chief Herder, while visiting the Chesapeake home of then Commander Mark Prokopius, PCU New Mexico skipper, and with the book *All the Queen's Men* open to the page showing his kamikaze photograph, described his battle experiences aboard BB-40.

At age 94, George passed away peacefully at his Virginia Beach home on September 28, 2019. He is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

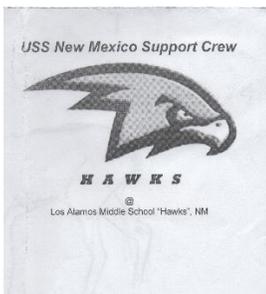
The following words appear on a memorial BB-40 plaque at the Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas.

*Shipmates from our queen, hope that when we die,  
We all will muster in and assemble in the sky,  
And then the high command, will order us to go  
Aboard that phantom ship, the USS New Mexico*

As it turns out, submarine New Mexico arrived at Naval Station Norfolk, her new homeport, on December 14, 2019, 11 years and one day after the christening ceremony that Chief George Herder so proudly attended.

### Los Alamos Middle School "Hawks" Adopt USS New Mexico (SSN-779) Crew *By Damon Runyan*

A recent phone call from the Computer Science teacher at Los Alamos Middle School to the Chairman of the USS New Mexico Committee came as bit of a surprise. Mr. T.J. Bonson and his class of seventh graders indicated they wanted to adopt the USS New Mexico submarine and its crew. They asked what they might be able to send to the crew to show their thanks for the fantastic effort and sacrifice



submariners exhibit in their service to the Navy. The Chairman of the Committee and his wife drove up to the middle school and presented



a slide-show on the origination of the naming, Christening, and Commissioning of the USS NEW MEXICO. The students had their work stations in the class designated with signs to indicate what part of the ship they represented: Operations, Weapons, Engineering, Medical, Navigation, and Communications. These students had done their homework and researched

how submarines are divided up and how they interact to make the entire vessel operate. Each student also wrote a short note to the crew. These students call themselves the USS NEW MEXICO Support Crew and have even created their own logo.



Past issues of the NM Nautical News can be found at [www.nmnavyleague.com/newsletters.html](http://www.nmnavyleague.com/newsletters.html)

Answers to NM Nautical Quiz (from page 2)  
A1: An iPatch.  
A2: Navel oranges.

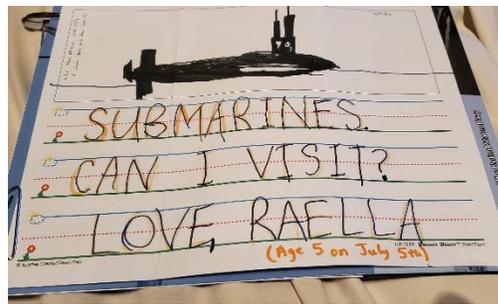
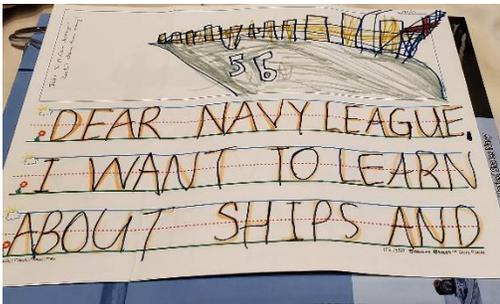
# Namesake Ships



## USS New Mexico (SSN-779) Committee Visits Home School Class! *By Damon Runyan*

Ms. Emilee (Sena) Reinholz, who created the official crest for the USS NEW MEXICO in 2006, forwarded a letter to the New Mexico Navy League from her 5 year old daughter, Raella (see photos). USS New Mexico Committee Chair Damon Runyan contacted the Reinholz family to see if we could provide a briefing to her school class on the USS NEW MEXICO.

Since Raella is home schooled, Mr. Runyan and his wife, Michelle, went to the Reinholz home to make a presentation to Raella and 12 other students. After the presentation and many questions from the students, Mr. Runyan presented Raella with an official coin from the USS NEW MEXICO to thank her for her interest in the U.S. Navy. Many Thanks to Emilee and Raella for their interest and support of the U.S. Navy.



## USS Santa Fe (SSN-763) Commanding Officer Update *By CDR Chris Hedrick*



Happy Holidays from Kittery, Maine! 2019 has truly been a banner year for SANTA FE: Since January 1<sup>st</sup> we completed our final certifications for deployment, broke ground as the first Submarine to get underway at night in recent times, completed an enormously successful Western Pacific deployment, including a coveted port visit to Perth, Australia, and then without losing a beat successfully moved the entire crew from Pearl Harbor, HI to Portsmouth, NH. Since my last letter in the summer, SANTA FE completed an inter-fleet transfer to the East Coast via the Panama Canal, and supported the team at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard through one of the smoothest beginnings of major shipyard availability they have ever seen.

We are now officially in the shipyard, where we will be until September of 2021. The ship is undergoing an Engineered Overhaul (EOH) during which almost every system onboard will be refurbished or replaced before we return to Pearl Harbor two years from now. This type of shipyard overhaul happens about once every ten years for a LOS ANGELES-class submarine. The project team at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard has been great to us so far and they're known for their professionalism and high-quality work. The picture that you see is us entering the drydock in late August. Since entering the drydock we've shutdown, depressurized, and drained almost every system onboard. While it may seem like there's not much to do with all of the systems being shutdown, this couldn't be farther from the truth. The crew has been extremely busy with maintenance, training, and many of our sailors have been underway on other Submarines, supporting their watch bills and keeping their skills sharp. Our job right now is to get the submarine back out to sea as soon as possible with a trained crew and materially-ready submarine. Thank you as always for your continued support.

CDR Chris Hedrick, Commanding Officer, USS Santa Fe (SSN 763)

# Local New Mexico News



## NM Council's 2019 Update *by Charles Vaughan, President, NM Council*

2019 was another very busy and very successful year for the New Mexico Council of the Navy League of the U. S. It was also a challenging year as the Council began the year with \$480.85 in the Council's checking account. With the Council typically having a budget around \$2,500.00 per year this presented a challenge; how to raise funds for Council activities for 2019. Fortunately, several Council members, when asked, provided donations, including a \$5,000.00 gift from Cash and Judy Smithwick, to fund Council activities. The Council's balance at the end of the year is \$7,100.10. Cash on hand at the beginning and end of 2019 is shown below for the Council account and all committee accounts.

The Council again provided JROTC awards to Navy and Marine Corps JROTC units located throughout New Mexico and in west Texas; a total of 24 awards were provided by the New Mexico Council. The Council awarded a \$750 scholarship to Hieu Ngo, a Navy

reserve petty officer 3rd class assigned to NOSC Albuquerque.

	January 8, 2019 balance (\$)	December 7, 2019 balance (\$)
763 Committee	6,992.64	6,723.64
779 Committee	10,879.84	11,390.92
Los Alamos Committee	4,206.24	4,208.34
Council	480.85	7,100.10
Savings	25.71	25.71
TOTAL	22,585.28	29,448.71

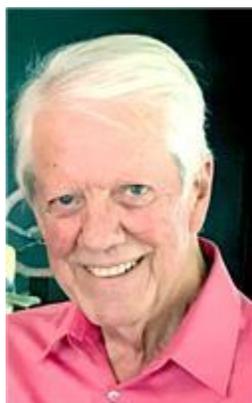


The Council participated in the annual Navy Birthday Ball and assisted in the planning and preparation of the Birthday Ball. The Birthday Ball speaker, Harrison Schmitt, spoke of his trip to the moon (he was the second to last person to walk on the moon).

The Council did not have any visits from crew members of the USS New Mexico or USS Santa Fe due to the ship's deployment schedule or activity at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine.

Council membership experienced a decline of 10 members in 2019, continuing a trend over the past several year, and bringing total membership in the Council to 103 members.

## A Tribute to Jim Nesmith (September 3, 1946 – December 9, 2019) *by Mark Schaefer*



The Navy League, New Mexico Council, is saddened for the loss of our friend and shipmate, James Leslie Nesmith, 73, of Los Alamos, New Mexico, who passed away December 9, 2019. Jim served as the chair of the USS Los Alamos Committee, bringing attention to the relationship between the Navy, the Los Alamos Laboratory, and the community of Los Alamos. He led the effort to name a submarine USS Los Alamos, interacting with U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich and the Secretary of the Navy to make this connection that spanned from the Manhattan Project to today's sea-based leg of the Navy strategic triad. Jim graduated from the University of Washington with an MBA. He



was very active in his community; he was a past President for the Los Alamos Rotary Club, founder and promoter of the USS Los Alamos, a Naturalization Program Coordinator, Chairman for the Los Alamos Veteran Committee, and he also volunteered at the Children's Hospital Ciudad de Juarez.



NAVY LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES  
 NEW MEXICO COUNCIL  
 P.O. BOX 91554  
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Return Service Requested



*Navy Birthday Ball - 2019*



Navy League of the United States New Mexico Council, P.O. Box 91554, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87199-1554. The Navy League is classified by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and your donation is tax-deductible.

**2020 Upcoming Events for Navy League, New Mexico Council**

Jan 13	Board meeting in Albuquerque (goals and committee assignments)
Feb 10	Board meeting in Santa Fe (finalize budget)
Feb 17	President's Day – national holiday
Mar 3	Navy Reserve Birthday
Mar 9	Board meeting in Albuquerque
Late March	Select USS New Mexico crew members to visit the State of New Mexico – dates tbd
Apr 13	Board meeting (Easter Monday)