



Contributed by  
LT. Keith Midberry USGC Ret

# The Zephyr

**The Newsletter of the Westwind Association**

The Westwind Association is the organization for all sailors who served aboard the

**USCGC WESTWIND (WAGB-231)**

JANUARY 2005 - VOLUME 2. NO.1 - J THOMPSON, MANAGING EDITOR AND ASSOCIATION SECRETARY - ROBERT BEYER, EDITOR

## Vice Admiral Robert T. Nelson, Ret. “Breaks the Ice” at Baltimore Reunion

I wouldn't trade my six years of icebreaking duty with all my forty years in the Coast Guard". These are the words of Vice Admiral Robert Nelson, now retired, who was the guest speaker at the Westwind Association's Baltimore reunion in September. He went on to say that it was a privilege to be part of this great (icebreaker) heritage. During his distinguished career in the Coast Guard the admiral served on three different "Wind" class icebreakers including the USCGC Westwind, USCGC Eastwind and the USCGC Southwind. His icebreaker assignments progressed from a young Ensign newly graduated from the Coast Guard Academy, to executive officer and finally as Commanding Officer of CGC Westwind.

Admiral Nelson spoke on a wide range of topics including his personal experiences, the direction the Coast Guard is going with present day icebreaking, and eliciting comments and stories from the audience. He noted that there have been five decades of icebreaker crews both US Navy and US Coast Guard. It is an ever-changing mission that requires flexibility and adaptability. New icebreakers are considerably different than the older ships. Besides being somewhat larger, the newer vessels have smaller crews, more technology and air conditioning – the latter being an important upgrade when crossing the equator heading for Antarctica.

He recalled how when the USCGC Westwind cleared the ice from White Star Bay in Thule Greenland the ship would send a message to the base commander that "the port was ice free and open for shipping." After the Westwind finished a tour at "Gitmo" and was leaving the harbor, they sent a message to the base commander that "the port was ice free and open for shipping." Apparently headquarters did not think this was as humorous as the sailors did.

Recalling some of the essentials of shipboard life the Admiral noted the critical job of the bakers who arose early and put in long hours to enhance the ship's menu. And of course there were the movies that sustained crew's entertainment cravings. Many agreed that the number one movie of the sixties was a skin flick "Barbarella" that was shown over and over again. During a trip to Goose Bay, Labrador he recalled that the Westwind hosted a tour of the ship for the wives of Army personnel stationed there. The wives said it was the most exciting thing that happened to them while stationed at Goose Bay.

Admiral Nelson was accompanied at the banquet dinner by his wife Patricia, who was also kind enough to say a few words to the reunion attendees. They recalled that missing family and loved ones was perhaps the biggest hardship that sailors had to bear during extended icebreaking assignments. For example, Admiral Nelson was in Christ Church, New Zealand when he first learned he was going to be a father. The Nelsons have three grown children.

*The Westwind Association is grateful to Admiral Nelson for his contribution to making the 2004 reunion a success. As one sailor said "Nelson is going to be a hard act to follow." We suspect that was the case for his entire Coast Guard career.*

## KEITH MIDBERRY WINS WESTWIND MODEL



From left, Keith Midberry, Captain Dennis Holland, Patrice Holland, Patricia Nelson, Vice Admiral Robert Nelson

When active duty Captain (LTJG WW 81) Dennis Holland's wife Patrice drew the winning ticket for the scale model of the CGC Westwind, Keith Midberry (LT, USCG, RET) came up the winner! Keith, who served on the CGC Westwind as an HMC in the early 80's is also the Association's Historian. He is truly pleased to have this one of a kind replica of the Westwind and promises to try to bring it to future reunions or at least those he can drive to! "I don't know where I'm going to put it but I am delighted to have it" was Keith's comment shortly after the drawing. The fact that Keith personally invited his old shipmate

(and boss!), now Captain Holland (stationed at USCG HQ) and his wife, to their first reunion is just a coincidence!

The model is carved from wood and shows great detail of how the ship looked in the mid fifties – white hull, of course. The original contractor was not able to take on the project but Alex Mavica found an alternate professional model maker that agreed to do the job. One difficulty was to get the blueprints of the USCGC Westwind. It turned out that none was available. Alex, who we have all learned is a resourceful fellow, got ahold of the USCGC Eastwind's plans where the hull design was identical to the Westwind's. Because of differences in the superstructure, the model maker was able to build the topside areas from numerous photographs that Alex supplied.

The raffle for the model was intended to raise money for the association and netted nearly \$800 in profit through the generosity of the membership. Some members bought tickets and said "I hope I don't win it because I have no place to put it". Arnie Schmick couldn't make the reunion but sent in a donation but didn't want any raffle tickets. With shipmates like these, how can the Westwind Association go wrong?

## **MEET THE CREW** **RAYMOND JEWELL, BMC**

*I spoke with Raymond by phone last August and encouraged him to attend the reunion but at 81 years old he isn't keen on travel so he said to say hello to everyone for him. He is doing well, living on a "patch of ground" in northwestern Pennsylvania with six acres cleared for growing oats. There is plenty of wildlife around and he takes a crack at a deer once in awhile. Since many a sailor learned their trade from Ray, it seemed appropriate to provide this update. – Bob Beyer*

If you served aboard the USCGC Westwind in the fifties it is likely you know Raymond Jewell. Most everyone who knows him says "he is the best boatswain's mate I ever met" and they always agree that he was also one of the most colorful sailors they ever knew.

Raymond served on the Westwind from 1954 to 1958 and says "I was on the Westwind longer than any other ship." He made three Arctic trips and one Antarctic trip on the USCGC Westwind, served on the USCGC Storis, brought the USCGC Northwind through the Panama Canal and then made a trip up to Sweden and Russia. He also served on several other cutters including the USCGC Duane, USCGC Spencer and he was a plank owner on the USCGC Cape Strait. He said that he remembers lots of shipmates but added that "half the Coast Guard came through the Westwind while I was on her."

During WWII Raymond was in the Navy and was discharged in 1946. Like many Navy sailors who came back to serve, he joined the Coast Guard in 1949 and completed twenty two years of service in 1966 when he retired as Chief Boatswain's Mate.

After discharge, he worked in a shipyard for a couple of years. When a cargo ship's Captain said he could use a sailor like Raymond, he signed up in the Merchant Marine and hauled ammunition to Viet Nam for several years.

## **WESTWIND ASSOCIATION** **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

2004 THROUGH 2006

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## **ARTICLES (SEA STORIES) WANTED**

The editors of the Zephyr are asking members to submit first person stories of their Coast Guard experiences that would be appropriate for publication in this newsletter. Please include photos if possible. All photos will be returned.

### ***Send your article to:***

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## JOE ROGERS TAKES THE HELM OF THE WESTWIND ASSOCIATION

*Joe Rogers steps up to the Association's Chairman Billet. When Ken Grode felt that personal obligations would take away from his ability to serve as Chairman, Joe Rogers was next in line for the job and agreed to serve the 2004 to 2006 term. We appreciate Joe's willingness to take on this responsibility and look forward to his leadership. The editors of the Zephyr wanted to take this opportunity for the members to get to know him. - Bob Bayer*

Joe was born a week after D-Day in 1944. After attending public schools, he tried college for awhile and then went to work in the winter of 1964-65. Joe got a phone call from his draft board in February of 1965 for a physical and the lady on the other end of the line said "You will be drafted and if you are going to do something other than the Army do it now!" He didn't need to be told twice so it was off to the Navy recruiting office. The Coast Guard recruiter was the only recruiter present, so after taking the test for USCG and qualifying, Joe signed the enlistment papers and went to Cape May in May of 1965.

After Boot Camp he was assigned to the Captain of the Port Baltimore (Group Baltimore) and in August 1965 he became a small boat engineer. He then served twenty one days TAD at Thomas Point Light Station and wound up on the USCGC Westwind as a Fireman in October of 1966 - two South trips (Palmer Station Deep Freeze 67 - McMurdo Deep Freeze 68), one North Trip (Greenland 68) and the first Great Lakes trip in February 1969. He was discharged as an EN2 in May of 1969, back where he started in Baltimore. This was after spending two years, seven months and 12 days of sea duty, all on the Westwind.

Joe is very active in the American Legion's Furniture City Post 258 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has occupied five chairs in the officer's line-up, including Commander in 1995. It was a great honor for him to be awarded a gold life membership card by his fellow post members in 1998. Post 258 is the only post in the American Legion that restricts its membership to Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard veterans. They have a one of a kind uniform, as noted by Westwind sailors at the banquet. "They all laughed until I sat down to play", Joe quipped. He was the one holding the electronic bugle. Because of his unique uniform Joe is easy to spot in the reunion group photo.

Joe met and married his wife Sharon in Baltimore in 1966. They have a daughter Jennifer and a son-in-law Scott who have provided a grandson, Evan. Evan is nearly four years old and keeps Joe on his toes.

Joe says, "I am proud to have served in the U. S. Coast Guard. I matured (but not too much) in the Coast Guard. I gained the knowledge needed to pursue a career in the heavy truck diesel engine field (now looking forward to retirement), but most of all I found friendships that have endured to this day. I am proud to be called "SHIPMATE" and to be able to use "SHIPMATE" to describe everyone in our association."

## REUNION HIGHLIGHTS

Eighty sailors and guest attended the third Westwind Association Reunion in Baltimore in mid September 2004 at the Wyndham Hotel. It started on Friday afternoon with registration of sailors and their guests who quickly assembled in the hospitality suite. Some of the attendees had not seen shipmates for as long as fifty years.

Many scrapbooks and memorabilia were deployed around the room where the attendees relived their Westwind experiences. Movies of Westwind trips were shown on a TV screen.

On Saturday many of the members took the opportunity to visit the Baltimore Maritime Museum that consisted of three ships: the Navy submarine USS Torsk, the USCGC Taney and the USCGLS Chesapeake. Others took tours of historic Baltimore or visited the National Aquarium that is right in the Inner Harbor area.

An Association business meeting was held on Saturday evening where Alex Mavica was presented with a plaque acknowledging his excellent leadership during the past two years. The plaque was inscribed as follows:

*The members of the Westwind Association express their sincere thanks to:  
Alex Mavica, BMC  
For his leadership as Chairman of the Westwind Association from the years 2002 to 2004.  
His dedication, hard work and foresight have enabled the Association to thrive and grow during his chairmanship.*

A discussion of the next reunion venue resulted in considering a joint reunion with the Eastwind Association in Laughlin, Nevada in April of 2006. The Eastwind crew holds their alternate year reunions there and enjoys very reasonable rates at the local hotels/motels. Laughlin is about an hour and a half south of Las Vegas. (*Stay tuned to future issues of the Zephyr for more on the next reunion*).

The banquet dinner followed the business meeting. After a fine meal, Vice Admiral Robert Nelson gave an excellent talk. At the conclusion of the banquet, J Thompson conducted a memorial ceremony for those Westwind shipmates who have "passed over the bar." The ceremony included reading the names of those now deceased with a ringing of the ship's bell, in their honor followed by taps.

All attendees agreed that this was our best reunion yet.





Reunion Sailors Muster for Group Photo at Baltimore reunion 2004 (Apologies to those who got “left” out)

**Application for Membership  
USCGC Westwind Association**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Rank, current, at discharge or retirement \_\_\_\_\_

Years on Westwind – 19\_\_ to 19\_\_

Annual dues are \$25. Please make check payable to Gordon Sauer. Mail to Gordon at 1516 N. State Parkway, Chicago, IL 60610. – Questions? Call, write or phone: 312.664.8837 – email: [gtsauer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gtsauer@sbcglobal.net)

**Please remember - 2005 dues are due now.  
Please send your check for \$25 to Gordon Sauer at  
the address shown on the membership application.**

It is membership support that makes reunions possible, publish the Zephyr and order souvenirs. Your support is appreciated.

If are receiving the Zephyr by snail mail and have email capabilities, perhaps you would like to receive future copies by email. If so, kindly advise Gordon Sauer when sending in your dues.

**Wackiest Consumer Warning Labels of 2004**

- First Prize: Toilet brush - “*Do not use for personal hygiene*”
- Second Prize: Kids scooter - “*This product moves when used*”
- Third Prize: Thermometer - “*Once used rectally the thermometer should not be used orally*”