

USS Johnston (DD821)

2024 USS JOHNSTON DD-821 Reunion Jacksonville, Florida

Your Association officers have worked hard to make Johnston's 2024 reunion the best ever. It will be held in Jacksonville, Florida at the "Doubletree by Hilton, Jacksonville Riverfront" located at 1201 Riverplace Blvd, Jacksonville, Florida 32207. We stayed here in 2016 and everyone loved it.

The reunion will start on Monday afternoon, May 6th and end Thursday evening, May 9th. If you plan to attend the entire reunion, you should arrive no later than Monday afternoon, May 6th and leave no sooner than Friday morning, May 10th. The "Welcome Dinner" will be held Monday evening. We have arranged exciting tours for both Tuesday and Wednesday during the day. Tuesday and Wednesday evenings will be free to do as you please. Thursday morning and afternoon will be free with our business meeting being held at 4:00 pm and followed by our Farewell Banquet and White Elephant Auction. The Hotel is providing a Hospitality Room for the reunion so we can relax and continue to exchange those old sea stories and once again spend time together. It will be open from early morning to late at night as required. Be sure to bring small gifts to be auctioned off in our white elephant auction after the Farewell Banquet. Don't forget that breakfast at the hotel is included in your hotel room rate for up to two people per room.

Johnston officer, Toby Mack has arranged for Admiral Mark Fitzgerald to speak at our Farewell Banquet. His Navy story is quite interesting so make sure you come to the Farewell Banquet on Thursday night.

Monday, May 6th - REUNION STARTS

Our Hospitality Room will open at approximately 3:00 pm (possibly earlier so check in earlier if you want). Please come by and pick up your Reunion Package. Snacks and Drinks will be available.

*Our **WELCOME DINNER** will be held this evening at the hotel. This event is casual so come as you are, however, please wear your nametags - as you know many of our memories aren't what they used to be. We have a feast planned with*

something for everyone so come with an empty stomach. Here is what is on our plate for tonight.

Garden Fresh Salad with choice of 2 dressings

Warm Rolls with Butter

Chicken Marsala

Pork Tenderloin with Mango Chutney

Chef's Selection of Starch

Chef's Selection of Vegetable

Cheesecake

Coffee, Water, and Iced Tea

Our own alcoholic drinks are not allowed in the banquet hall so we will need to purchase drinks from the bar which is connected to our banquet hall. After dinner you are free to stroll around the city or simply join your shipmates in our hospitality room. The Jacksonville Riverfront is a wonderful place to walk and enjoy the evening.

Welcome Dinner: \$56.00 each

Tuesday Morning, May 7th - ST. AUGUSTINE TOUR

We will be taking a trip to St. Augustine via motor coach. Your professional tour guide will meet the group dressed in period costume. They will cover 450 years of colorful history: the Ponce de Leon discovery, the pirate days of Sir Francis Drake, the Spanish and English colonial years, and the Victorian Flagler era. We will tour all the major sites and stop at the Castillo de San Marcos, the fort that was never captured in battle. St. Augustine was also the first winter resort for the rich and famous during the Gilded Age. Hear how Henry Flagler built the most opulent hotels of the day and turned the city into the "Newport of the South". The second stop will be the Venetian Renaissance gem of Flagler Memorial Church. Our guide will create an interactive tour atmosphere which will be fun for everyone.

This tour will be conducted on our coach and will be 2 hours in length. Once this memorable bus tour is complete, our guide will lead us to the historic district and make some lunch recommendations. Then we are on our own for lunch and shopping

in St. Augustine's unique historic district. What a wonderful way to enjoy our nation's oldest city!

This is a full day starting at about 9:00 am and returning to the hotel about 4:00 pm. The evening is yours to spend however you wish.

St. Augustine Tour: \$75.00 each

Wednesday, May 8th - AMELIA ISLAND AND FERNANDINA EXPERIENCE TOUR

We start the day with stories of the first inhabitants of the area, the Timucuan Indians. Our destination is Amelia Island, which was founded by the French, settled by the Spanish, named by the English, and tamed by the Americans. It is the only area in the U.S. to have been under eight different flags! Our first stop will be at Kingsley Plantation to hear the amazing story of Anna, a former slave who rose to become a property owner. We explore the grounds which include the slave quarters, barn, waterfront, kitchen house, and interpretive garden. We take the old buccaneer trail across Ft. George Island and the Talbot Islands following the picturesque Atlantic coastline. Next, we go to the quaint town of Fernandina on Amelia Island to hear the stories from the Fairbanks Folly to Florida's oldest tavern and resident ghost. The turn of the century town is filled with Victorian architecture and has the appearance of being caught in a time capsule. Lunch will be on your own in the historic district. Your guide creates an interactive tour atmosphere which is fun for everyone.

Amelia Island and Fernandina Experience Tour: \$75.00 each

On Your Own - JACKSONVILLE NAVAL MUSEUM featuring the USS ORLECK DD-886

You will be visiting the Jacksonville Naval Museum featuring the USS Orleck DD-886. The Orleck is a Gearing Class destroyer, the same as our Johnston. The museum is located less than one mile from our hotel at Pier 1, 610 E. Bay St, easily within walking distance for most of us. If you prefer transportation, we're told there are many inexpensive ways to get to the museum. The USS Johnston Association is picking up the tab for this so if you request tickets, please use them.

The operating hours of the museum are: Monday/Tuesday-closed, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday-open 9:00am to 3:00pm, Saturday-open 9:00am to 4:00pm and Sunday-open 10:00am to 4:00pm.

Details of the Orleck include:

- Named after Lieutenant Joseph Orleck, Commanding Officer of USS Nauset, killed in action on 9 September 1943 during World War II, & posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.
- Gearing Class Destroyer, keel laid in 1944, launched on 12 May '45, & Commissioned 15 September 1945.
- The "Top Gun" of Vietnam, fired 11,000+ rounds earning the nickname "Grey Ghost of the Vietnam Coast" & netting an astonishing 14 battle stars throughout the war.
- In the Korean War became a charter member of the "Train Busters Club" and received 4 battle stars during the war.

Having been commissioned right at the end of World War II the USS Orleck entered into service at the beginning of what became known as the "Cold War" and through all those years she operated in that atmosphere with her service primarily in the 7th Fleet in the Pacific. Through that era and into the times of Korea, Vietnam, up until 1982 she served her country well. She always had good crews. She always outperformed other ships of her kind. In Korea she was the initiator of the "Train Busters Club" in that she took out two enemy supply trains in the mountains as she silently and without lights waited in a cove for the train to approach, then opened fire shooting out the tracks before the train and then behind. At that point she would then spend the necessary time to blow the remainder of the train apart. This remarkable accomplishment was performed on two different occasions. After that, other ships got the idea, and many performed the same feat.

During Vietnam she gained the reputation of Top Gun, having fired more rounds in support of our ground troops than any other ship. She developed the nickname, "Grey Ghost of the Vietnam Coast" because she always seemed to be there to provide fire cover for pinned down marines who called for her assistance. At the later part of her service, she was used as a training vessel for our Naval Reserve Forces. At times she starred in movies and her most notable role was in "Winds of War" mini-series. Those 5-inch guns you saw Pug Henry in front of, menacingly turning, looking for its target, are her guns.

In December 1962, which allowed her to continue as an active and effective Naval vessel, she underwent what is known as FRAM modernization. In this process she was equipped with the most modern equipment and weapons found on destroyers including ASROC Missile Launchers and DASH Systems which were unmanned helicopter drone systems that could launch offensive attacks on submarines. With these improvements she now had the capability to meet the needs of the modern Navy that required her to be able not only to be effective against subsurface and surface ships but also to be effective in anti-aircraft situations as well.

Jacksonville Naval Museum USS Orleck DD-886 Tour: Free

Thursday, May 9th - BUSINESS MEETING, FAREWELL BANQUET & WHITE ELEPHANT AUCTION

The morning and afternoon are free and yours to do as you please. Our business meeting will be held just prior to the Farewell Banquet in the hotel at 4:00pm.

*Our **FAREWELL BANQUET** will be held this evening at the hotel. We relaxed our dress code a few years ago so please come dressed in business casual. Please wear your name tags. We have another feast planned so once again come with an empty stomach. Our own alcoholic drinks are not allowed in the banquet hall so we will need to purchase drinks from the bar which is connected to our banquet hall. Here is what is on our plate for tonight.*

Caesar Salad

Assorted Hot Rolls with Butter

Sliced Skirt Steak in a Burgundy Mushroom Sauce

Fried Tilapia

Mixed Vegetable Medley and Green Bean Almandine

Roasted New Potatoes and Wild Rice Pilaf

Double Chocolate Cake and Apple Pie

Coffee, Water, and Iced Tea

The White Elephant Auction will follow immediately after dinner. Please bring

plenty of cash for the raffle to win some of the wonderful items donated by our shipmates. The hospitality room will be open immediately after the White Elephant Auction.

Farewell Banquet: \$64.00 each

SAFE TRAVELS TO ALL

We hope you have a great time. Many of our shipmates will be leaving on Friday morning so be sure and give them a good send-off. We hope to see you again in 2025.