

KEARSAGA

USS Kearsarge Association Newsletter

ISSUE 54

CV, CVA, CVS-33, LHD-3

Spring 2015

Presidents Message by John Starnes



Greetings to all!

Oh how I wish I could write an article letting you know ALL about our upcoming reunion in San Antonio. Unfortunately, this is not the case. We are in the midst of planning and will make our site visit this May. We have tentatively selected May, 2016 for the reunion. It is before the official tourist season, crowds are smaller, weather is cooler and hotel accommodations are more reasonable. Can you think of any more reasons?

There is an extremely bright light in the harbor. We have visited San Antonio several times and are familiar with the area and many of the attractions, for example, the Alamo which is a monument to Texas history. San Antonio is famous for its Riverwalk area which includes the river boat rides, many restaurants and great shopping. In nearby Fredericksburg, which is the home of Admiral Chester Nimitz, is the Nimitz Museum, including a separate display of WW II guns and armaments. An additional treat in Fredericksburg is wonderful authentic German food. It's just really a nice way to spend the day.

The next edition of the Kearsaga will contain "etched in stone" information. In the meantime, if you have questions or suggestions, give me a call. I am looking forward to seeing everyone in San Antonio. What a beautiful and interesting city!

John

P.S. oops! I am sorry! I overlooked several of the largest Air Force bases in the U.S. Oh well!



TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF
THE U.S.S. KEARSARGE
WITH SPECIAL GREETINGS TO
THE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT!
1952
© WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS
Walt Disney
WALT DISNEY



K E A R S A G A

Ships crest as it appeared in issue one of KEARSAGA March 1946

SHIPS HISTORY

To all who served aboard the USS Kearsarge,

It began when I finally found myself ready to go through a hand carved chest my father, Foster Greene, had purchased in Shanghai in 1947. I knew there were many items in it that he had collected thru WWII, along with journals and bits and pieces of his family's history. What I didn't know was where that history would lead me.

There in the bottom of the chest was a very old bible. Its spine broken, pages no longer attached, and safety pinned together. The bible lists the births, marriages and deaths of family members beginning in the late 1800's. Most surprising was a newspaper article tucked among its pages telling of a bible that had been on the first USS Kearsarge, a Union Sloop of war, during its tour of duty between 1861 and 1894! It went on to state that the bible was later presented to the USS Kearsarge, CV33 and placed in a convex glass case in the crew's library on board. Was this the same bible? That question sent me to my computer, which lead to The USS Kearsarge Association and Ed and Lois McKee. Ed and I spoke for a bit, but he had nothing in his archives or knowledge of the bible being aboard.

So the mystery remains, and the question to those of you who served aboard the Honorable *33 is whether or not your memories include a story of the bible's presence on Her. Does anyone recollect where it was sent, or to whom it was given when she was decommissioned?

The mystery is now in yours to solve...

Betty

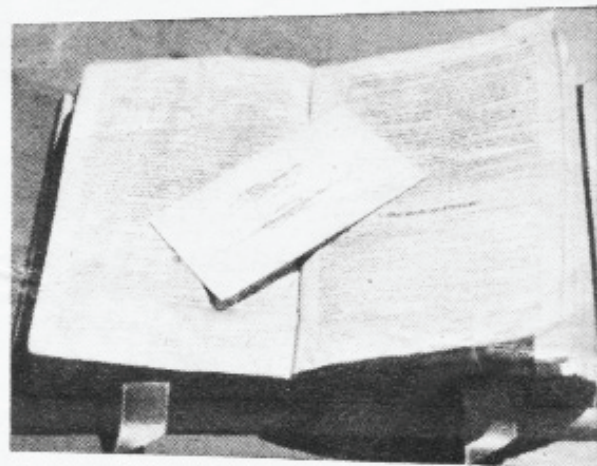


BIBLE SERVED ON FIRST KEARSARGE

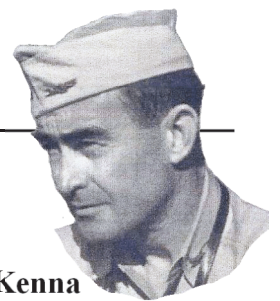
Resting in a convex glass case in the crew's library on board the 27,000-ton aircraft carrier *uss Kearsarge* (CV 33) is an 1821 Bible, its pages yellow and crisp with age. No longer subject to the rigors of time, space and the deep blue sea, the Bible is a priceless relic of the days gone by.

It was presented to the carrier by a group of men who served on board the first *Kearsarge*, a Union sloop of war, during its tour of duty between 1861 and 1894. The Bible, too, saw service on the old *Kearsarge*.

How many times the salty old Bible was knocked off the captain's shelf in heavy seas or bounced around like a rubber ball when a volley of shots was fired, we'll probably never know.



PRICELESS relic which saw service on a Union sloop of war between 1861 and 1894 now is enshrined on a carrier.



USS Kearsarge CV-33
First Commanding Officer
Captain Francis J. McKenna
by Admiral's son Michael F. McKenna

Rear Admiral Francis Joseph McKenna was born on March 19th, 1898 at Leicester, Massachusetts. He received his early education at the Leicester Grammar School, the Leicester Academy (1912-14), the Worcester Boys' Trade School (1914-15), and St John's High School, Worcester from 1915-17.

In 1917, he was appointed to the United States Naval Academy with the class of 1921. Because of the need for more naval officers during the First World War, the Class of 1921 was divided into two parts, '21A (which graduated one year early) and '21B (which graduated in 1921.) Midshipman McKenna graduated with the top half of his class in 1920 and reported on board the battleship USS North Dakota (BB-29). He spent a year and a half there before transferring to the gunboat USS Sacramento (PG-19), a unit of the Special Service Squadron which visited Vladivostok after the Russian Revolution.

After two years' duty with the Special Service and the Asiatic Squadrons, Ensign McKenna was reassigned as Gunnery Officer on the 42-year old (launched 1881 by Spaniards) gunboat USS Elcano (PG-38), where he spent just under two years on Yangtze Patrol. (The Elcano was similar to the fictional USS San Pablo, the gunboat in the Steve McQueen movie "The Sand Pebbles.") In January 1925, Ensign McKenna reported to the USS John D. Edwards (DD-216), a destroyer serving on Asiatic Station.

After eight months aboard the Edwards, in August 1925, his application for flight training was approved and, upon the return of the Edwards to the United States, he reported to the Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Florida.

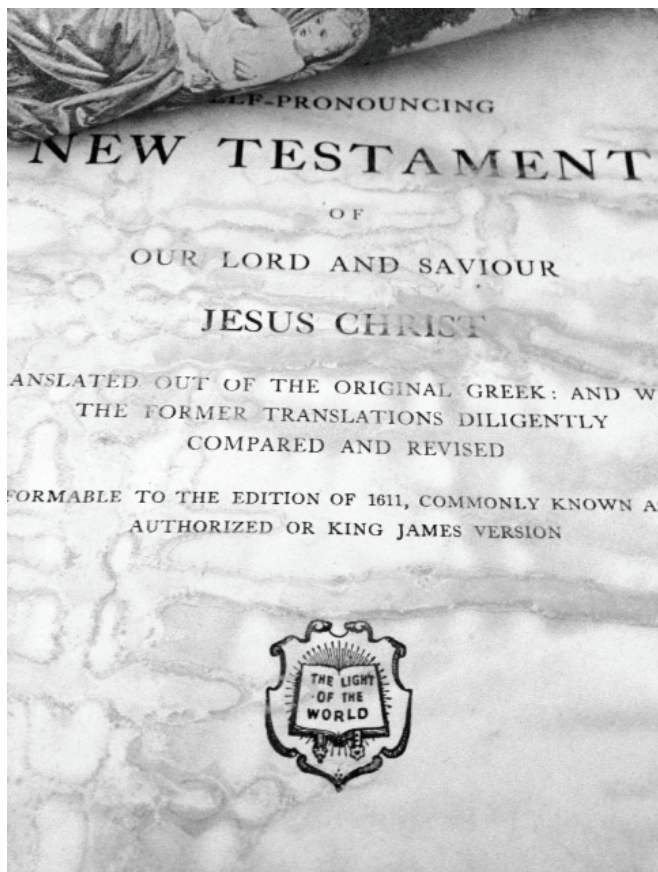
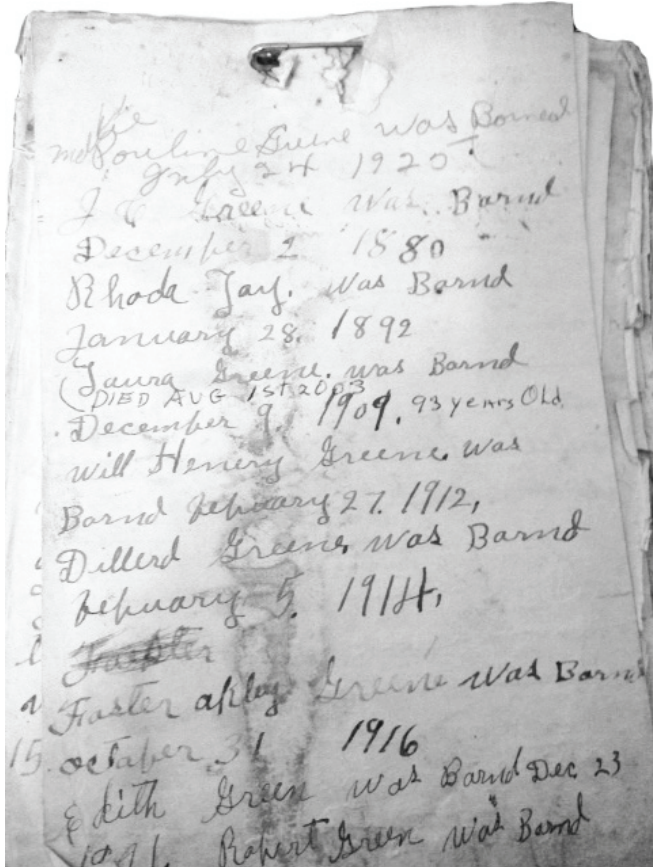
Upon successful completion of flight training in April of 1926, Lieutenant (junior grade) McKenna was awarded his Navy Wings and reported as a pilot in Scouting Squadron 1 (VS-1) of the Scouting Fleet, where he remained for about one year.

In 1927, he became a torpedo plane pilot on first cruise of USS Lexington, the newest aircraft carrier to join the Fleet. It was during this time that he met and married Catherine Eldredge (Cheatham) Bagnall, the widow of his classmate from '21B, Marine 1st Lieutenant Roger S. Bagnall. Subsequent sea-going flying assignments followed during the next two years with Fighting Three (VF-3) and Fighting Five (VF-5) on board Lexington.

In 1929, Lieutenant McKenna was assigned to three years of shore duty at Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia as a Flight Instructor with the Experimental Department. It was during this time that he supervised and took part in the testing of the new, hydraulic arresting gear (invented by Vice Admiral Mel Price) that revolutionized carrier operations.

In 1932, he began a three-year tour with Patrol Squadron Ten (VP-10), based variously in Norfolk, Virginia; Coco Solo, Panama; San Diego, California; and Honolulu, Hawaii. In 1935, he returned to the Naval Air Station at Norfolk where he became the Officer-in-Charge of the Experimental

Continued on page 4...



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1st Commanding Officer continued...

Department. In 1937, Lieutenant Commander McKenna became the first Commanding Officer of Bombing Squadron 6 (VB-6) assigned to the brand-new carrier USS Enterprise (CV-6). Under Commander McKenna's leadership, Bombing Six proved the value of the Navy's first all-metal, mono-wing dive bomber, the Northrop BT-1—the direct predecessor of the famous Douglas Dauntless (SBD). (Nine years later, Bombing Six, flying the SBD Dauntless, was a major participant in the crucial Battle of Midway in June of 1942, when it was responsible for the sinking of the Japanese aircraft carriers Kaga and Akagi.)

From 1939 to mid-1940, Lieutenant Commander McKenna served one-year tour as Tactics Officer on the staff of (then) Rear Admiral Earnest J. King, Commander, Aircraft, Battle Force.

From June 1940 until June 1942, he served as Operations Officer at the Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia. With the war with Japan underway, he was promoted to Commander and ordered to duty as Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station at Dutch Harbor, in the Aleutian Islands. Shortly after his arrival there, he was promoted to the rank of Captain and assigned additional duty as Commander, Unalaska Subsector and Commandant of the Naval Operating Base, Dutch Harbor and. This placed him in command of all US Navy forces operating in the Aleutian Islands.

In the spring of 1943, he was ordered as the Prospective Commanding Officer of the escort carrier USS Midway, then under construction at the Kaiser Shipbuilding Company in Vancouver, Washington.

Captain McKenna placed the ship in commission on the 23rd of October 1943. Midway ferried replacement aircraft to Hawaii and Australia, and operated from San Diego and Pearl Harbor training aviators from newly-formed composite aircraft squadrons until April 1944, when Composite Squadron 65 (VC-65) was embarked. In June and July 1944, Midway was in action in support of amphibious operations against the islands of Saipan and Tinian, and in early October, took part in support operations during the invasion of Morotai. On the 10th of October 1944, the ship was renamed Saint Lo, thereby freeing the name Midway for a super carrier then under construction.

St. Lo was a member of "Taffy 3" at the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval battle in history. The ship came through the surface engagement with the Japanese battle fleet unscathed, but shortly afterwards was attacked by a kamikaze aircraft of the Shikishima Special Attack unit and was sunk, the first US ship to be sunk by a Japanese suicide attack. Captain McKenna, the last man to leave his doomed ship, was awarded the Navy Cross for conspicuous gallantry in action.

After the post-sinking affairs were completed, Captain McKenna was assigned as Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station at Sand Point, Seattle, Washington.

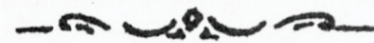
In July, 1945, Captain McKenna was ordered to the assignment he had always longed for: Commanding Officer of an Essex class aircraft carrier, then under construction at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. **USS Kearsarge (CV-33)** was placed in commission by Captain McKenna on March 2, 1946. Much to his chagrin, his new ship was completed too late to participate in the final operations against Japan.

Following detachment from **Kearsarge** in 1947, Captain McKenna was assigned as the Commanding Officer of the giant Naval Air Station complex at Corpus Christi, Texas.

His final active duty assignment was as the Bureau of Aeronautics Representative to the famed "Grumman Iron Works" (Grumman Aircraft Engineering Company) where he renewed his friendships with Roy Grumman and the other pioneers of Naval Aviation with whom he had worked over a 30-year career, during which he accumulated 3,750 military flight hours. Upon his retirement in 1950, he was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral.

Admiral McKenna was authorized to wear the Navy Cross (second only to the Medal of Honor), the Bronze Star with Combat "V," and the Legion of Merit medals. Additionally, and of great pride to him, he was authorized—with the rest of the crew of USS St. Lo (CVE-63)—to wear the Presidential Unit Citation for the heroic and magnificent job performed by ship and men at Leyte Gulf as a unit of "Taffy 3" (TU 77.4.3).

Following his retirement from the Navy in 1950, Admiral McKenna worked as a full-time, and later a part-time, consultant to the Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, until retiring for good in 1961. He and his family resided in Manhasset, New York from 1948 until his death from cancer on 29 May, 1969. Admiral McKenna was survived by his wife, Catherine, who died in January 1981, his stepson Roger S. Bagnall III of New Jersey, who died in July 2008, his daughter Elizabeth, who died in 1986, and his son Michael, who resides in Rhode Island.



MAIL CALL

**Joseph E. Long SK3
1947-1950**

Just received the latest issue of "Kearsaga" and I thought about why the stories were from the 60's and 70'. Where were stories from the 40's and 50's. I realized that most of the shipmates from that era are dead. I am 85 years old and fortunate to be alive and of sound mind (I think). I was on the Kearsarge from Nov 1947 till June 1950. My memories of that time are faint but some are retained. I remember clearly the lousy chow we had, boiled potatoes with no seasoning, no salt, no pepper, no butter. Fried chicken with blood around the bone. Beans and cornbread for breakfast. We had no ketchup, mustard, mayo, salt, pepper, no nothing except what they threw at you. Was that tradition or was it that they didn't care?

I remember going to Cuba two or three times but we had to stay on the base. I don't know the reason except I heard that a sailor had urinated on a statue of one of their hero's and the Navy was not welcome.

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I remember on New Years Eve, I think we were in Boston at the time. A friend of mine was a signalman and was familiar with the bridge area. He had liberty but no money and I had money but no liberty. I furnished the money and he went ashore and bought a bottle of whiskey. I lowered a bucket on a rope down to the dock and hauled the whiskey up to the signal bridge.

He knew how to work the huge radios on the bridge so we had a New Years Eve party listening to music and drinking. There was no such thing as security back then, there probably was no more than a hundred men aboard that New years Eve.

Oh well, that was then, and what Navy life is now is unknown to me, I will bet it's a lot better.

Felix Manaia V1, S2C 1945

I was aboard the U.S.S. Kearsarge CV33 on its shakedown cruise from Brooklyn, New York. We stopped in Boyonne, New Jersey for ammunition and Norfolk, Virginia for our aircraft, and continued off to Gauntanamo, Cuba and Panama.

I took my accordion on board at Brooklyn and didn't do anything. They only wanted me to entertain my shipmates on the hanger deck and entertain the pilots. One of the pilots that made the 1000th landing aboard an aircraft carrier asked me if he could take me on the plane to fly the Panama Canal. He flew so low to the ocean that the propellers picked up the spray from the ocean waves. It was an experience I will never forget.

I would like to hear from anyone that was on the shakedown cruise that remembers a skinny young 18 year old that played the accordion in 1946. I have and still play the accordion for 79 years now. Thanking you in advance.

Ray B. Ramsey LI3 1957 - 1960

Thank you for the reminder. Ray has had a rough year and I guess I got to forget to send a check. We did see everyone in Florida. I don't know about traveling in a year. Ray's health is not good. Say prayers for him. We have been married 54 years. I met Ray in Jan 1960. He retired in Dec 1976. He has a pacemaker, walker and has trouble driving. God Bless to All! Kitty Ramsey

Dale R. Roberts

Thanks for a job well done

Walter Wisening MaM3, Dec 1945 - Nov 1947

I am a plank owner. Thank you for all the good work. I was born in 1927.

F.A. "Bud" Scheller VA702/Va145 AO3

John, although we have yet to meet. I thank you for the many years you have served as an officer of the USS Kearsarge Association. Thanks to you and the other officers. The memories of serving aboard the Mighty K and her spirit will continue on for some years to come.. The good Lord willing!

John R Rudolph V2, Nov 1956 - Jun 1958

Worked in arresting gear mostly. Did stand cat watches.

Was aboard when starboard cat blew up. Lost some good friends. Was working in pre fly at the time adjusting arresting gear pressure for different types of aircraft. Saw the aircraft drop off starboard side, pilot out halfway, plane sank by the time it hit the fantail.

Had a lot of good times aboard the Kearsarge CVA and CVS. Two trips to the far east. Would do it over anytime. Balboa Hospital Jul 1958 - Jan 1959 Kwajalein M.I. Security Jan 1959 - Oct 1959 USS Harned CVS12 V2 div Oct 1959 - Jul 1960

Rick Morrill SMC(SW)

Just wanted to thank all the staff of the Kearsarge Association for the outstanding work that you all do. Everytime I receive a Kearsaga newsletter, it just takes me back to some great times and memories of all those who I worked with and shared good, and bad times together. I first reported to the Kearsarge, CVS 33, during their yard period in Long Beach. (not sure of the month, but I believe it was either in late 1965 or early 1966) I left the Kearsarge in February 1967. I was in CS division, and all the signal gang were outstanding folks who made my time on board more memorable. Again BRAVO ZULU to you all. GO NAVY!

Tommy L. James DT2, 1952 - 1953

I am interested in several events that happened on CVA-33 during my tour. 1) Helicopter accident. 2) Marine pilots mishap during landing on deck. 3) Missile that was ejected from landing aircraft and caused havoc. 4) Maybe meet some old shipmates if still among us.

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TAPS

My dear husband **Raymond C Cole** MS1 US Navy Retired and former crewman on the Kearsarge passed away January 11, 2015. He served on the Kearsarge from Feb of 1962 to Feb of 1967. The Kearsarge was the ship he served on the longest amount of time. Raymond was a long time member of the USS Kearsarge Association. He was on the Kearsarge during the time they picked up the Mercury astronauts. He also was aboard when they took President Johnson's helicopter in 1966. Because of that trip he got to cross the equator with all the ceremonies associated with that. Stars and personalities that came aboard making movies while he served were Robert Young and Robert Reed. However the biggest star both in stature and star power was John Wayne and I have a picture of my husband with Mr Wayne. My husband was a cook and he had something to do with a cake they had baked for Mr Wayne. Captain Muckenthaler was the skipper when he went aboard and later Captain Rankin was the skipper. Of course he was aboard during the unfortunate collision with cruise ship and a bridge and the joke was that they would start to go to sea on Monday morning and by noon he would call and tell me to come get him as they were not going to sea that week. We enjoyed the two reunions we attended with the Kearsaga group and would have liked to have done more, but he had COPD and was not able to travel much these last few years. Raymond was a long time member of the USS Kearsarge Association. He was was in the Navy from June of 1948 until July of 1968. He retired from USNAAS Chase Field Beeville, Texas. He was also stationed aboard the USS Boxer and the USS Midway as well as the USS Pilot and USS Uvalde. He was very proud of his service. Our son is retired after 23 years of service from the US Marines and our oldest daughter served in the US Air Force. Raymond comes from a long line of military men. His great-great-grandfather was in the Revolutionary War and his great-grandfather was in the War of 1812 and his grandfather was in the Civil War and two of his brothers served in WWII. We currently have a granddaughter who is going to college at Norwich University in Vermont which is a military school and she hopes to graduate to become a lawyer in the US Army. So the tradition continues.
Yours truly, Barbara Cole

Joseph Antista passed away on Dec 7, 2014.

Joseph was the third person to sign on as a member of the Kearsarge association and was a plank owner when the ship was re-commissioned in February 1952. Everyone that knew him always heard of his love of the Navy and how proud he was to have served on the Mighty-K. Joseph was on the Kearsarge from Feb 1952 to April 1953. His rank was DT3.



Joe is pictured on the left. Joe and I were married for fifty eight years.
Teresa Antista (wife)

Please accept our fathers dues for 2015. Though he passed away, he would have wanted us to continue to support the Kearsarge Association. Thank you for all your hard work.

Richard M. Gaskell Ensign 2nd class 1948-1953, Korean War veteran passed away Dec 31, 2013. Though he served our country in the WI Air National Guard for 39 years his time on the Kearsarge, with his beloved shipmates were his proudest. He loved the reunions and the Navy. For all of you who served our great country, thank you. Sincere thanks,
The family of Richard Gaskell.



Many have chosen to receive their copy of the KEARSAGA as a PDF file via E-mail? If you are interested in receiving your copy via E-mail please go to our web page and leave a message stating "Send KEARSAGA via E-mail". For those who do not have a computer we will continue sending via U. S. Postal service. Thanks for your replies.

USS Kearsarge Association Newsletter

SHIPS STORE

Golf Shirts



CV, CVA, CVS 33 - Navy or White - Med, large, W-large, 2x large - \$29.00

Sweat Shirts



CV, CVA, CVS 33 - Navy or White - Med, large, W-large, 2x large - \$36.00

Dress Shirts



CV, CVA, CVS 33 - Short sleeve - Navy only - Med, large, W-large, 2x large - \$29.00

Hats



Kearsarge CV CVA CVS 33 - Navy - \$14.00



Marine - Red - \$14.00



LHD 3 - Navy - \$7.00

Watch Cap



Navy - CV, CVA, CVS 33 - \$11.00

Ships Crest



Cloth - CV, CVA, CVS 33 - \$5.00



Magnetic - CV, CVA, CVS 33 - \$2.50

Zippo Lighter



Chrome - Ships crest CV, CVA, CVS 33 - \$15.00



Chrome - LHD 3 - \$15.00



Brass - LHD 3 Ships crest - \$15.00

50th Anniversary



1st Day Cover Envelope - \$1.50

Dawn of Glory



Print - LHD 3 with inserts of previous ships - \$20.00

Jackets



The Port Authority Challenger jacket has a Tekon nylon durable, water repellent outside with a poly-filled body with heavyweight fleece lining. It has rib knit cuffs and waistband, zippered pockets outside a zippered inside pocket. We are offering it in Navy with a Navy lining with USS KEARSARGE, CV,CVA,CVS and the ships silhouette on the back.

Small, medium, large and 1X large for \$57.00
2X large for \$61.00 - 3X large for \$65.00



A light weight nylon jacket with mesh lining is also available in Navy with the same stitching on the back.

Small, medium, large and 1X large for \$53.00
2X large for \$55.00 - 3X large for \$57.00

They are a Special order item only and all sales are final. When I have 6 orders I will place the order with the supplier. We need a minimum of 6 to be eligible for the above mentioned prices.

ALL PRICES INCLUDE SHIPPING AND HANDLING

Make checks payable to the Kearsarge Association and send order to:
Charles Patton

9125 Live Oak Ave
Ocean springs, MS 39564

(228) 875-7572
charlotteap@bellsouth.net

KEARSARGE

USS Kearsarge Association Newsletter

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If it has been highlighted in yellow please renew immediately

2016 Reunion - San Antonio, TX

Details to come later

Dues and Membership

The annual dues for the Kearsarge Association are \$15.00

To pay dues, send a check payable to THE KEARSARGE ASSOCIATION To Bill Hollywood

To sign up a new member, send information to Bill Hollywood, including

Name, rate/rank, division, years aboard, address and phone number

Membership application forms are downloadable from www.kearsargeassociation.com

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Honorary President Kenneth McDaniel (*Deceased*) Association Founder
