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## YAGRGRAM #92 - SUMMER 2024

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view & print this YAGRGRAM in color at <http://www.yagrs.org>

In this issue:

pg 1: Hotel info & reunion hat pin

pg 2: Memo from Lee Doyel

pg 3: Origin of the 3 rifle volley

pg 4: Battle ship cove YAGR exhibit

pg 7: reunion registration form

pg 8: YAGR ships and emblems

## YAGR'S 27th AND FINAL REUNION INFORMATION

In the last YAGRGRAM (#91) there were instructions on how to register at the hotel. **DO NOT USE** that procedure. There have been problems with it. Instead **call the hotel direct at 401-681-4723** and mention YAGRS for our room rate which is good 3 days before and after the reunion dates

YAGRS - 2024 REUNION LOCATION & HOTEL INFO - Lee Doyel

The Crown Plaza Hotel in Warwick, RI is very friendly to the military and it's contracts have all the pertinent concessions (i.e. free parking, no room attrition, own alcohol & snacks, free hospitality room, etc.). The hotel had weekday space available in September 2024. No Friday or Saturday. Therefore I selected Monday, September 16 through Thursday, September 19, 2024 for our final reunion. Details follow.

Crowne Plaza Hotel

801 Greenwich Ave

Warwick, RI 02886

401 681 4723

Room rate is \$149.00 plus 13% room tax which makes it \$168.37.

Good 3 days pre & post reunion dates solely based on availability. So sign up early.

**The cut off date for the block of rooms is Friday, August 16, 2024.**

Use group code YAR when registering.

May cancel 24 hrs. prior without penalty.

Mon, check in.

Tue & Wed tours.

Thursday, decommissioning ceremony around noon on the battleship & banquet/dance Thursday night.

Registration form for reunion and tours included in this YAGRGRAM.



## Memo from Lee Doyel

In the last YAGRGRAM I reported that the Association had received a substantial amount of money from a will of a member of YAGRS. That individual was George C. Clement and the amount was \$18,333.33. The Association is very greatly indebted to him as it allowed us to reduce the cost of our last reunion. Clement was an ETN onboard USS Skywatcher AGR-3, 1960-62.

At the business meeting last year there was a discussion about the future. Clearly there is little reason to believe that the Association can gather large numbers for a reunion again. Small numbers make getting hotels and tours more difficult and expensive. Following discussion, it was agreed that one final meeting (as per bylaws) be on the USS Massachusetts, in Fall River, MA for the purpose of decommissioning the Association as the only viable option. The bylaws also state that the remaining funds must go to the USS Massachusetts for the purpose of maintaining the YAGR exhibit.

At that meeting it was decided to keep \$5000 in the bank account for contingency purposes. However, it has been brought to my attention that this means the Association will still legally exist, which means we are liable for any unforeseen circumstances as well as tax considerations and people and organizations sending money and items to us. Unfortunately, all things considered, this means we need to dissolve completely. We will have a short business meeting at the reunion to accomplish this. Also, Mel has said that he will no longer be doing the YAGRGRAM either electronically or hard mail after this last reunion. I know it is hard to give up and at the last business meeting it was evident efforts were present to "hang on". I totally understand that. However, I think total dissolution is the best route, no matter how painful. As to the future, matters such as the continuation of the web site and other communications will have to be finalized by or at the final business meeting.

I want to take time in this YAGRGRAM to thank all of you as individuals and an organization for your support and prayers. I know prayers were made or otherwise I would not have been able to lead the Association. Saying farewell is not easy after all these years as it is leaving a piece of life. I will cherish the memories created over the years. I enjoyed seeing the renewed friendships and camaraderie from the time on your ship and the making of new friends with members of other ships. I must admit that at times it was frustrating and rewarding at the same time. Occasionally it was like herding a bunch of cats.

I want to thank staff members Mel Harder, Frank Pulaski, Ray Ostrowski, and Armand Lamarche. They all served exceptionally well. Mel continually putting out great YAGRGRAMS while being a caregiver to his wife who had a debilitating disease. Frank designed and maintained one of the better military web sites found on the internet. Ray who kept the money figures straight and corrected my mistakes when submitting expenses. Armand, original Treasurer, whose records included the email of members. Those records proved a God send when several Ships Coordinators lost their ships email list. Armand's records allowed me to help recreate those lists. They were indispensable. And Roland Cote for attending to the YAGRS exhibit/museum on onboard the battleship making sure it did not degrade in appearance and quality as many are wont to do. Although not official staff members I want to commend Suzanne Attig and Pat Reichling. Suzanne for acting as the reunion photographer taking all those reunion pictures you see on the YAGRS web site and Pat for taking over and successfully running the Ladies Breakfast after the death of my wife, Nell. I must also mention the Ships Coordinators who were instrumental in keeping the members apprised of timely and pertinent information I issued. Without the effort and dedication of the above individuals, YAGRS Association would not have the reputation it has and deserves.

When I was elected (in abstention) to replace our founder Harry Miller, I knew it would be a challenge. Thanks to the support of the members and the help of Brian Forrester, it proved to be easier than anticipated. I want to say that without Brian's help and guidance and recommendations, things would have not gone as smooth as they did. As you know over the years the reunions had what I call "hiccups." Changes and modifications to the planned agenda. Without him things would have been a disaster. Cannot say enough about him.

I said I was elected in abstention. As many of you know at the Nashville reunion (2011) where Harry gave up running the organization, a Chairman was to be elected. Also many know my wife had a medical situation that need immediate attention, so we left for Pensacola before the business meeting. Down the road Al Nannini called me to say I had been elected as Chairman of YAGRS Association. I was under the impression there were other names submitted for consideration. However only a couple of years back I was informed there were no other names submitted and that the election was basically by acclamation. This was a surprise to me and I am in awe that the group had that much faith in me at that time.

I am thankful and grateful and filled with gratitude and appreciate it that I had the privilege to serve as Chairman of YAGRS.

I wish all of you Godspeed and fair winds and following seas.

## The Origin of the 3 Rifle Volley

At military funerals, one often sees three volleys of shots fired in honor of the deceased veteran. This is often mistaken by the layman as a 21-gun salute, although it is entirely different (in the military, a gun is a large calibered weapon). The three volleys are fired from "rifles", not "guns". Therefore, the three volleys isn't any kind of "gun salute".

Anyone who is entitled to a military funeral (generally anyone who dies on active duty, honorably discharged veterans, and military retirees) are entitled to the three rifle volleys, subject to availability of honor guard teams.

The three volleys consists of no less than three and no more than seven rifles firing three volleys in memory of the fallen. The original history comes from the Roman era that at the end of the day of battle when the battle field was cleared, if the soldier removing the slain soldier knew the name of the soldier, they would call his name three times into the night as a form of remembering their sacrifice.

Typically three fired cartridges are placed in the folded flag prior to presentation to the next of kin; the cartridges signify "duty, honor and sacrifice".

**ship's coordinators** : Lee Doyel

Many thanks to Jay A. Kacena who has come aboard as the new ship's coordinator for the USS Locator AGR-6. Ship's coordinators maintain an email list that is used to forward memos from the chair and advance notices of reunion plans to crew members. If you wish to be included, send an email to your ship's coordinator. Due to various circumstances, I now need coordinators for AGR-1, 6, 7 & 9. I can supply group lists to anyone who takes one of these ships. Duties are not extensive. Primarily forwarding what I put out to the ship's email list.

AGR-1

AGR-2 Ralph Rappuhun [rrappuhn@aol.com](mailto:rrappuhn@aol.com)

AGR-3 Chuck Parker [chuckparker@gmail.com](mailto:chuckparker@gmail.com)

AGR-4 Steve Mierzejewsk [stevejackie43@gmail.com](mailto:stevejackie43@gmail.com)

AGR-5 Bob Werstler [rdwerst@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rdwerst@sbcglobal.net)

AGR-6 Jay A. Kacena [jaykacena7709@msn.com](mailto:jaykacena7709@msn.com)

AGR-7

AGR-8 Ken Helmick [komneb@yahoo.com](mailto:komneb@yahoo.com)

AGR-9

AGR-10 Paul Langenus [plangenus@cox.net](mailto:plangenus@cox.net)

AGR-11 George Sleeper [gsleeper@roadrunner.com](mailto:gsleeper@roadrunner.com)

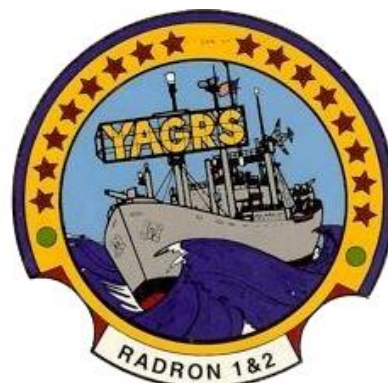
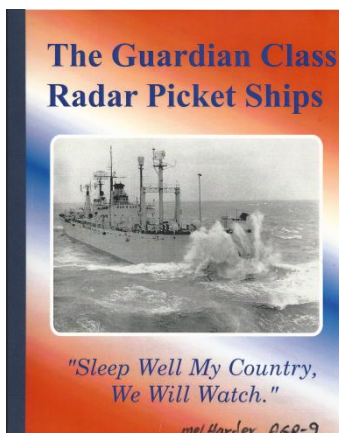
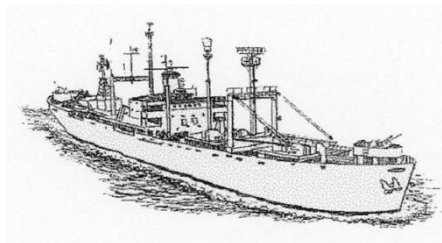
AGR-12 Jesse Germany [jgermany31@gmail.com](mailto:jgermany31@gmail.com)

AGR-13 Richard Willhite [willys55nut@comcast.net](mailto:willys55nut@comcast.net)

AGR-14 Howard Oberstein [howardoberstein@sbcglobal.net](mailto:howardoberstein@sbcglobal.net)

AGR-15 Lee Doyel [mldoyel@cox.net](mailto:mldoyel@cox.net)

AGR-16 Frank McNamara [ec2sc1@comcast.net](mailto:ec2sc1@comcast.net)



## Battleship Cove

Fall River, MA



Our YAGR'S ASSOCIATION members who have dedicated a lot of time at Battleship Cove, building our exhibit, have been asked to help with other projects with the ships anchored there. We will show these projects and describe what was accomplished by providing pictures and descriptions. Thanks to those who have dedicated their time and expertise.

As we all know, a single ship requires constant maintenance. Multiply that by four and you have one huge task. And then start adding new exhibits onboard the ships and the workload is made even more enormous.

The four ships at Battleship Cove:

Battleship Massachusetts  
Destroyer Kennedy  
Submarine Lionfish  
Soviet-built Missile Corvette Hiddensee

## Battleship Cove unveils Cold War defense exhibit

*The Herald News Staff May 29, 2002*

**FALL RIVER** — *The embers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had barely cooled when the Soviets challenged U.S. military superiority by detonating their own atomic device on Aug. 29, 1949. As the threat of long-range Badger bombers loomed over the consciousness of the American public, top armed forces strategists agreed that early detection was the key to national survival. Radar picket ships, designated YAGR/AGRs, were part of an integrated air defense early warning system to warn the United States of Soviet air attacks. Extending across Alaska, Northern Canada, Greenland, and the North Atlantic, this system was headquartered in Colorado Springs in a secret bunker in Cheyenne Mountain.*

*At 10 a.m. today, Battleship Cove will unveil New England's first interpretation of these covert Cold War relics at a premiere that will include a crew members' reunion, memorial and wreath-casting ceremony and 21-gun salute on board Battleship Massachusetts.*

*Designed by Harry Miller and funded by the national YAGR Association in Pawtucket, RI, this exhibit will be introduced by Battleship Cove's chief preservation officer, Commander Strafford Morss. "The YAGRs represented a critical component of this nation's air defense in the Cold War," said Morss, who served on board the picket ship Protector during the tumultuous April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion. "Given the events of the last year, one must not underestimate the importance of the advance warning provided by such surveillance."*

*Converted from mothballed World War II Liberty cargo ships, the YAGR/AGRs were evenly divided into two eight-ship squadrons, with four designated ocean stations off the Atlantic coast and four*

*stations off the Pacific Coast. East Coast ships were home-ported at the Navy Construction Battalion Base at Davisville, Rhode Island. The Pacific Coast ships operated out of San Francisco Bay. Manned by 165-man Navy crews skilled at fighter interception tactics, the ships were under the administrative control of the Eastern and Western Sea Frontiers. North American Air Defense Command was assigned operational control.*

*Equipped with three massive high power radars, extensive radio communications and an airplane-homing beacon, YAGRs engaged in mock battles against Strategic Air Command bombers testing NORAD air defense capabilities with penetration tactics including electronic jamming and deception. In the early 1960s, barely a decade after their inception, land-based and submarine-launched ballistic missiles rendered these venerable vessels obsolete. By 1966, all the ships were out of commission, replaced by massive shore-based radars, thus ending an intriguing chapter in American naval history.*

*For more information, call 508-678-1100 or 800-533-3194 or check the web site at [www.battleshipcove.org](http://www.battleshipcove.org).*

*Battleship Cove exhibit honors a rare breed of sailor*

*DEBORAH ALLARD-BERNARDI, Herald News Staff Reporter May 30, 2002*



*Herald News Photo by OMAR BRADLEY*

*FALL RIVER — While people today are well aware that war strategists are working with sophisticated electronics to predict terrorist attacks on the United States, many may never have heard of an older form of early detection — a radar picket ship.*

*On Wednesday, Battleship Cove unveiled its new picket ship exhibit and held a crew member reunion and memorial service for the sailors who worked on those ships. There was also a 21-gun salute, “Taps,” a wreath-laying and a Korean War veterans color guard display.*

*Radar picket ships, called YAGRs (pronounced Yagers), were used for about a decade in the 1950s and '60s as an early warning system to predict Soviet air attacks on the United States.*

*The ships were equipped with radar, communication equipment and homing beacons, sophisticated for their time, which tracked air travel all over the country. The men often went out to sea for 30 to 35 days at a time, spending their lives below decks.*

*“I was in the operations department,” said Captain Albert Nannini, who served aboard the YAGR USS Tracer from 1960 to 1962 — his first duty aboard a ship. “We were very busy monitoring air traffic,” Nannini said. “We might not see the sun for 30 days.” Working with a small crew, Nannini said they were like a family living on a large ship. Below decks, they had a swimming pool and a room with a volleyball court.*

*He went on to say that because YAGR ships were unseen and not too many knew about them, it was like they didn't exist, not even to the Navy. "We operated independently of the Navy," Nannini said. "When we went to sea we were under the operation of the Air Force. (The Navy) didn't know we existed."*

*With the permanent exhibit aboard the Battleship Massachusetts, however, the existence of YAGR ships and sailors has now been immortalized.*

*"They were the silent heroes of that era of the cold war," said Capt. Ernst M. Cummings, USCG (Ret.), executive director of USS Massachusetts Memorial Committee Inc., at the ceremony.*

*Radar picket ships saw their demise early on. Technological changes came quickly. Barely a decade after the picket ship's inception, land-based and submarine-launched ballistic missiles rendered the ships obsolete. By 1966, all of the radar picket ships were out of commission. They were replaced by massive shore-based radar units, ending their chapter in American history.*

*Many of the men who served aboard those ships were present with their families at Wednesday's ceremony, some dressed in original uniform. There were 345 attendees who turned out for the unveiling.*

*The exhibit was designed by Harry Miller, founder of the YAGR Association and former crew member of the radar picket ship USS Protector and funded by the national YAGR Association in Pawtucket, R.I.*

*"It is something all of us can be proud of," Miller said. "It's the only exhibit of its kind aboard a museum ship." Miller and 15 picket ship crew members worked for the past three years to develop phase 1 of the exhibit. Located on the second deck, port side forward, the exhibit consists mostly of model ships and photographs, giving the viewer an idea of how these ships contributed to the country's safety.*

*"The YAGRs represented a critical component of this nation's air defense in the Cold War," said Cmdr. Strafford Morss, USNR (Ret.), and Battleship Cove's chief preservation officer. Morss was an engineering officer from 1960 to 1962 on the USS Protector. "At sea, life was smooth and rough, hot and cold, wet and windy, clear and foggy, but never dull," Morss reminisced.*

*Rear Admiral Thomas Patterson, representing the USS Guardian, AGR-1, the first radar ship in commission, remembered the day he received his assignment to serve aboard the YAGR. "I received (my orders) in August of 1954," Patterson said. "Not too many people knew what a YAGR was. I drove out there, and there she was, a liberty ship." Patterson said he typically spent 35 days on the ship and five on port.*

*"We'll be remembered on this fine ship," Patterson said. "We did our job the best we could."*

*According to Miller, the second phase of the exhibit will include a radar room, photos, plaques, programs and ship relics. Considered a minor class, Miller said no one really knew about or cared about radar picket ships.*

*"It gives the public a better idea of what (picket ships) were," Miller said.*

# REGISTRATION FORM - YAGR'S 27th & FINAL REUNION

## WARWICK RI - MON. SEPT. 16 - THURS. SEPT. 19 2024

### BANQUET, HOSPITALITY ROOM AND TOURS RESERVATION FORM

THIS FORM WILL NOT TAKE CARE OF YOUR HOTEL YOU MUST CONTACT THE HOTEL DIRECTLY

**Please return completed registration form ASAP but no later than August 15, 2024. Mail to our treasurer Ray Ostrowski, 123 Barbara Dr., Newburgh, NY 12550. Print your name exactly as you want it to appear on your name tag. Make checks payable to YAGRS Association. Also, indicate your choice of beef, chicken or fish for the Thursday evening banquet. Hotel checkout is Friday**

NAME _____	BANQUET MEAL _____
SPOUSE/GUEST _____	BANQUET MEAL _____
ADDITIONAL GUEST(s) _____	BANQUET MEAL _____
SHIP _____	CONTACT PHONE # _____

REGISTRATION	PRICE PER PERSON	NUMBER OF PEOPLE	TOTAL
Hospitality Room 10:00 a.m. Mon. 9/16 includes Thurs. eve. meal for hotel guests	\$50.00	X	\$

note: Thurs. eve meal for guests not staying at the hotel	\$20.00	X	\$
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DATES/TIMES	TOURS	COST PER PERSON	NUMBER OF TICKETS	TOTAL
Tues. 9/17 10 am - 6 pm	Rhode Island River Valley Tour (no lunch)	\$25.00	X	\$
Wed. 9/18 9 am - 2 pm	Newport Yatch Sail & Lunch at Sweet Berry Farm	\$50.00	X	\$
Thurs. 9/19 10:30am-3:30pm	Decomissioning Ceremony w/lunch aboard USS Massachusetts	\$0	X	\$

Total amount for registration and tours	\$
<b>Total amount payable to: YAGRS ASSOCIATION</b>	\$

staying in hotel            yes no  
 sharing room                yes no  
 if yes with whom  
 use a walker                yes no  
 use a wheelchair            yes no  
 powered chair                yes no  
 hotel room confirmation #  
 email address  
 special dietary needs

**note:**  
 If you will not be staying at the reunion hotel, please fill out and return a registration form as we need to know how many will be attending, including the number attending the luncheon onboard the *Massachusetts*.  
 Details on the two tours can be found at *Experience Rhode Island Tours*.  
**Non hotel attendee fees are listed above.**  
**THE CUTOFF DATE FOR REGISTRATION IS AUGUST 15, 2024**



# OCEAN GOING RADAR PICKET SHIPS DISTANT EARLY WARNING NETWORK - NORAD 1955-1965



USS GUARDIAN AGR-1  
Erv Thomure



USS LOOKOUT AGR-2



USS SKYWATCHER AGR-3



USS SEARCHER AGR-4



USS SCANNER AGR-5



USS LOCATOR AGR-6  
Lee Callahan



USS PICKET AGR-7



USS INTERCEPTOR AGR-8  
Gene Hildreth



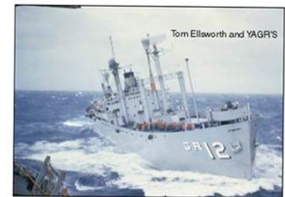
USS INVESTIGATOR AGR-9



USS OUTPOST AGR-10



USS PROTECTOR AGR-11



USS Vigil (AGR-12) Coming along side the USS Protector (AGR-11)  
Tom Ellsworth and YAGR'S



USS INTERDICTOR AGR-13



USS INTERPRETER AGR-14



USS TRACER AGR-15



USS WATCHMAN AGR-16



WHILE AT DANVILLE, VA  
NOTE: AREA OUTLINED WAS ADDED TO THE HULL TO ACCOMMODATE  
RADRON TWO AND HIS SPMF.  
HARRY WALSH  
YAGR'S.ORG

