From the President’s desk...

**Tragic Breaking News:** It is my sad duty to inform you of the passing of Windy City’s Bernie Fink. Bernie and Enid were active participants at WC meetings and contributed their talents liberally when WC hosted conferences until Bernie’s health faded last year. Our hearts and prayers go out to Enid and Bernie’s family. May God be with them. Ed.

Dear Windy City Chapter,

I am honored to have been selected as your 2008 Windy City President. I’ve been active in WC since consolidation with Glenview began in 1993. My NERA experience includes participation at Regional and National Conferences and committee assignments in preparation for the 2005 conference in Chicago, as well as terms as VP and Exec Counselor.

For the next year I’ll be joined by not just a cadre of fine and devoted WC NERA officers but by the dozens of you who are willing to participate from the sidelines or are always pushing for our success. This team possesses numerous resources: excellent leadership skills, outstanding functional capabilities, and an unwavering desire to contribute to their shipmates and the Navy. Although several current WC officers are airdales; skimmers, CB’s and bubbleheads comprise much of the staff that gets things done. We are grateful that HQ has given our hard charging associate members the recognition they deserve, bringing them in near parity with our sailors.

Windy City’s challenges and opportunities are different than those of NERA National. My job is to make a smooth operation run seamlessly. To that end, I will be working to establish timelines and improve data exchange. There are several enhancements that your Editor and I will try, foremost; this is your newsletter, send us your suggestions, let us know what you think the newsletter needs.

NERA’s operating environment has changed dramatically over the past fifteen years. Today’s Naval Reserve is 40% of the size it was then; while that means more of us are retired it also spawned the influential WC chapter we know today. In the seventies Windy City’s founders envisioned that the only vehicle that could bring Windy City influence within NERA was the establishment of a greater Chicago Chapter (like Greater NY or Garden State). They were correctly predicting Windy City’s future. Together, we can assure that WC will continue to grow and improve.

Thank you, Butch Michaelson

Mark Your Calendar:

Meetings are conducted at 2000 on the second Tuesdays of even numbered months at the VFW Post # Canfield at Higgins (alongside the Kennedy Expressway) : on the 2nd deck adjacent to the bar.

2008 Windy City NERA Meetings schedule: Feb 12, Apr 8, June 10, Aug 12, Oct 14, Dec 9th.

Watch this spot for news about our picnic & holiday get-togethers

WC chapter members interested in participating in orchestrating the North Central Regional Conference are invited to join the committee for dinner at the conference site, the Ramada-Waukegan Hotel Friday, February 8th at 1830

Get your calendar/ schedule out!!!

Windy City Chapter is the host for the “08 North Central Regional conference to be conducted April 18 & 19 at the Ramada Waukegan Hotel @ 200 N. Green Bay Rd. Waukegan, IL 60085. This site is about a mile and a half north of the Great Lakes Main Exchange, between Belvidere and Grand Ave. For locals who have never attended a NERA conference this is a great opportunity to get your feet wet at minimal cost and inconvenience. If you need accommodations contact the hotel directly at 847-244-2400, be sure to ask for the NERA rate. You will find a conference registration form at the back of this newsletter.

2008 Meeting Schedule:

Feb.12, April 8, June 10, Aug. 12, Oct. 14, Dec. 9
A Special Meeting was conducted during the Holiday Party on January 19th. President Whiteside explained that the special meeting was necessary to comply with National’s reporting procedures within the time constraints required. Roll Call was taken. President: present, Vice President: present, Treasurer: absent, Executive Counselor: present. Secretary: absent. A quorum was present.

(1) President solicited nominations for all offices from floor three times; with no nominations forthcoming a motion to close nominations was made by Jim Premeske; seconded by Darlene Nickelson. Motion carried.

A show of hands was taken for the only contested race, that being V.P. All other candidates were elected by unanimous acclamation of those present. Motion to adjourn by Larry Monroe, 2nd by Darlene Nickelson

**2008 Windy City Chapter Officers are:** President Walter “Butch” Michaelson, V.P.: Ed Whiteside, Secretary: Mark Gutierrez, Treasurer: Gene Koelker, Executive Counselor: Paul Smurawski.


The following article was originally prepared (by WC newsletter editor, Jim Premeske) for publication in Mariner Magazine (circa 2006). At that time the NEC (National Executive Council) was hesitant to publicize any indication that NERA was undergoing reformation. A legitimate fear emerged that internal, and confidential, information was best kept out of a publication that is widely distributed throughout the DOD and Capitol Hill. When Windy City engaged in the HQ challenge coin promotion, the article was updated and revised; again HQ decided not to publish this article in Mariner.

At this time, your editor has decided to apply the article for Windy City’s use on the basis that, at least within our ranks, our chapter’s membership deserves the knowledge and recognition of a contribution that is above and beyond the average chapter’s call of duty. Thank you all for participating!!

Windy City’s Contribution

As Windy City Chapter prepared to dispatch its delegation to the 2004 National Conference in Dayton its membership discussed potential proposals that might be expected at that conference to compensate for the unprecedented shrinkage of the Life Member Investment Fund, due to the market downturn. Windy City recognized that sacrifice might be required, both from the membership and Headquarters. The delegation was authorized by the chapter to support those initiatives it felt would best support the ongoing viability of NERA. It was decided that Headquarters’ arrearage in Windy City rebates would be addressed, but not made into an issue.

As the ‘04 Conference progressed, (then) President DeFeis made several attempts at cost cutting initiatives; but it appeared that the chapters were not ready for reform. Consequently, the LMIF continued its downward slide for another year.

Upon their return to Chicago land the Windy City National Conference committee continued planning for its (first ever) 2005 National Conference. Included in the planning was the premise that the conference should be self-supporting, it would not be prudent to present Headquarters with a large expense. An already large committee was expanded further, everyone contributing the talents they were best at, but everyone expected to provide for profitable fundraising raffles. Those in attendance know how successful the ‘05 conference was; and Windy City gained an added surprise when its conference chair, Penny Padour, was elected National President.

Penny made it clear to her advisors from the beginning that fiscal reform was primary on her agenda. Windy City Chapter undertook several initiatives for the benefit of NERA. National President Padour was encouraged not to forgo Public Relations opportunities for the sake of frugality; Windy City would cover her travel expenses, not National. HQ’s past due rebates to Windy City were put on hold. Windy City authorized its Treasurer (and outfitter) to create and produce NERA challenge coins for fundraising.

As Windy City’s ’06 delegation prepared for the National Conference in Charleston, the chapter membership authorized its delegation to make certain decisions on behalf of Windy City. These decisions would be contingent upon a spirit of positive cooperation among other delegates present, as NERA’s financial forecast was explained, and reform proposals were submitted. Inspired by initiatives from the Chumash and other delegations Windy City chose to donate 300 of the NERA challenge coins to National at no charge; all setup and die costs had already been borne by Windy City. Windy City chose to forgive the remaining past due rebates.

Windy City had confidence that when the financial future was clearly explained, and once HQ’s budget was revised; NERA’s delegates would be receptive to the reform’s proposed. NERA is not yet at the beginning of the end of this challenging period, but it is at the end of the beginning. Challenge coins are still available by contacting NERA HQ.

**NAVY NEWS**

The US Navy is constructing a military installation on one of two Iraqi petroleum-export platforms in the Persian Gulf. The Khwar Al Amaya oil terminal and the Al Basra oil terminal have the potential to load almost 2.4 percent of the world’s daily oil needs. Commentators suggest the construction signals US intentions to establish long term bases in the region, with particular interest in protecting Iraq’s oil industry. Some commentators suggest the installation will also allow the US to monitor Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps who are stationed near Khwar Al Amaya. *(Wall Street Journal)*
A federal judge forbade the Navy on Thursday (1/3/08) from using a powerful form of sonar within 12 miles of the California coast and slapped other restrictions on naval war exercises in a ruling that could have repercussions in the Pacific Northwest.

U.S. District Judge Florence Marie-Cooper said noise from the Navy's midfrequency sonar far outstrips levels at which federal rules require ear protection for humans on the job. Whales' hearing is extremely sensitive.

"The court is persuaded that the (protection) scheme proposed by the Navy is grossly inadequate to protect marine mammals from debilitating levels of sonar exposure," Marie-Cooper wrote in her ruling.

The Navy offered to reduce the sonar's intensity when whales approached within about 1,100 yards and power down further before shutting the sonar off when the creatures got within 200 yards. The judge ordered sonar shut off when marine mammals are within 2,200 yards.

By the Navy's own estimate, it would harass or harm marine mammals, as prohibited by the Endangered Species Act, about 170,000 times, the judge said. The Navy said the series of 14 exercises would temporarily deafen whales 8,000 times and cause permanent injuries in more than 400 cases.

Environmental groups, led by the Natural Resources Defense Council, brought suit as part of a campaign to rein in sonar use, which they contend violates several federal laws. They had sought a ban on naval exercises out to 25 miles from shore.

The Navy argued that it must train sailors against a new generation of quiet submarines that can't be detected by traditional "passive" sonar, but are picked up by the midfrequency version.

The service said exercises off Southern California are important because they give sailors training around undersea mountain ranges like those where they might chase subs elsewhere in the world.

"Despite the care the court took in crafting its order, we do not believe it struck the right balance between national security and environmental concerns," said Jeff Davis, a Navy spokesman at the Pentagon.

The judge also required the Navy to watch for marine mammals for an hour before using the sonar, among other conditions.

The restrictions could affect the debate in the Northwest over protecting Puget Sound orcas and other marine mammals.

However, different species are at risk off Southern California. There, beaked whales sometimes disappear underwater for up to an hour. Orcas are usually easier to spot.

robertmcclure@seattlepi.com

Did you know??

The DOD has announced that a 2008 COLA (cost of living allowance) for military retirees will be reflected in January payments.

Reservists on Active Duty can now benefit from a new Quick Assist Loan Program from the Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society. Its purpose is to deter service members from taking on predatory lender debt (payday loans, etc.) if they are qualified for a Navy Relief Quick Assist Loan. All that is required is a LES and an ID Card; an answer is available in fifteen minutes.

In 2007 Navy Relief loaned $1.37 million to 1700 sailors and marines. Charity Navigator rates Navy Relief at a very high 67+% (four stars) the highest rating given to an organization of its purpose. 91% of money donated goes to military families in crisis via low interest loans and grants; the remaining 9% covers admin and fundraising.

Founded in 1904, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is sponsored by the Department of the Navy, and operates nearly 250 offices ashore and afloat at Navy and Marine Corps bases throughout the world. The mission of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is to provide financial, educational, and other assistance to members of the Naval Services of the U.S, family members, and survivors when in need; and to manage funds to administer these programs.

Happy 232nd Birthday to our Navy this past October 13th, which coincidentally was the 20th birthday for a prominent bronze 2nd class. That’s correct the lone sailor at the Navy Memorial has grown up before our very eyes. Congratulations to us all!

The Navy has finally wised up to the fact that spouses often know what they are doing! Distribution has begun on a 50 page publication written by spouses to assist reservists with every question they might encounter. Included:

*Preparing for mobilization
*Knowing your benefits
*Tricare
*Survivor benefits
*A Help & resource index
*Helpful checklists

If not available at your NOSC it can be acquired from 1-877-673-7773.

What of Importance is Happening in DC?

NERA and the TMC (The Military Coalition) are currently working with leaders of the Defense Authorization Conference Committee on issues related to banning TRICARE cost increases, military pay increases, both active and reserve manpower reductions,. further reducing the point at which SBP (survivor benefit plan) is paid off (currently 70), and other considerations. Sounds like a full plate. There is currently little interest in D.C. for age 55 retirement.

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214's online: http://vetrecs.archives.gov/. This may be
particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files. Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use the new online military personnel records system to request documents.

"Some people spend an entire lifetime wondering if they made a difference in the world. But, the Marines don't have that problem" — Ronald Reagan

Army recruiting continued its use of lower standards to satisfy recruiting requirements last year. Their recruiting commander defended the policy stating "... many in congress would have difficulty getting into the military today" (Ed’s note: This a statement I really agree with)

Editor’s Note: This magazine has been prepared while your editor is visiting soldiers at Ft. Leavenworth. As always, I have found that the soldiers are intelligent, well disciplined and totally professional. I don’t know where they put the losers but I never get to see them. your Ed.

Those watching President Bush’s State of the Union saw our friend Capt. Terry Gainer clearing the aisle following the speech. More on Gainer’s job as Senate Sargent-at-arms in the next issue.

"The few. The proud.

Now drug smugglers turn to submarines

By Jeremy McDermott in Medellin, Columbia

SOUTH American drug seizures at sea are at a record high, with 70 tons of cocaine worth more than £800 million found by the Colombian navy alone last year, prompting drugs cartels to move their shipments deeper under cover, beneath the waves.

During last year, more than ten "narcosubs" – were discovered by the Colombian and United States navies, more than were found during the past ten years put together.

Until now, the favored method has been the use of super-fast speed boats, designed to be nautical bullets that take tons of drugs darting across the water, especially the Caribbean, travelling so fast the navy has no vessel fast enough to intercept.

Another benefit of the submarines for traffickers is they can carry far larger cargoes than the super-fast boats. One of the largest submarines in use was discovered in November in a jungle estuary in the province of Narino, by the Pacific Ocean. A massive fibreglass construction almost 60ft long and 10ft wide, the sub could carry 12 tons of drugs, needing a crew of four. In the same month, a few hundred miles up the coast near the drug-smuggling centre of Buenaventura, two more submarines were found in a guerrilla shipyard, each 56ft long.

The submarines, alongside go-fast speedboats, were being built by rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This 12,000-strong army is largely financed by the drugs trade and is now working in tandem not just with drugs cartels but with right-wing paramilitaries that were once its sworn enemies. One of the subs was finished, kitted out with a 350-horsepower diesel engine and fuel tanks big enough to take the vessel up to Mexico or anywhere in Central America.

Many of the submarines are not fully submersible, in the sense that they do not dive deep under the water like naval boats. Rather, the drug subs are "semi-submersibles", which means that the body of the vessel stays under the water line, with breathing tubes and part of the navigation system visible.

"What is visible is so small that it is hard for land or air radar to pick them up"

It is clear that some of the drug subs can travel thousands of miles. One, 33ft in length, was found off the north-west coast of Spain last year, no doubt abandoned after its cargo of up to five tons of drugs had been unloaded.

As well as semi-submersibles, drugs traffickers are known to use underwater containers filled with drugs that are attached by cable to fishing boats and dragged in their wake. The advantage of this system is that, if the boats are intercepted, the fishing vessels simply drop the cable holding the drugs, meaning there is no evidence of smuggling.

However, the crews of the drug subs also have orders to scuttle their vessels rather than allow the narcotics to be captured. On 7 December, four men were rescued after sinking their drug subs, laden with as much as 12 tons of drugs off Colombia. They were picked up by a US navy vessel, their clothes showing signs of contact with cocaine. However, the submarine sank to the bottom of the 10,000ft-deep ocean, according to Admiral Edgar Cely, the Colombian navy's chief of operations, thus burying much of the evidence against them.

What also worries US and Colombian intelligence officials is the military use that these subs could be put to. "There could be five tons of anything on board these things".

A senior official with the US Drug Enforcement Administration in Colombia said: "Any viable method to covertly transport large quantities of illicit drugs over long distances such as these (vessels) could conceivably be employed to transport other prohibited materials."

HOW SMUGGLERS ARE GOING TO EXTREMES

The largest narco-sub yet discovered was 100ft long and would have been capable of carrying 200 tons of cocaine.

The Bogota warehouse where it was being built – apparently to Russian plans – was raided by Colombian police before the vessel could be used.

The move to find ever more covert ways of shipping drugs is a response to international efforts to clamp down on the trade. A US senate hearing was told last month that the Drug Enforcement Administration had far more intelligence on South American drug cartels than it had the capacity to act on.

Nevertheless, the US Coast Guard recently said illicit trafficking in cocaine was seemingly shifting from the Caribbean to the Pacific, as it announced record seizures last year.

"We have forced them to adapt to routes that are dangerous and are expensive," said Coast Guard Commander Bob Watts in announcing cocaine seizures worth more than $4.7 billion. Because of the US Coast Guard's increased surveillance in the
Caribbean Sea, smugglers are turning to riskier tactics, including dissolving cocaine in diesel fuel. They had also been forced to turn to the more expensive and arduous Pacific routes, including via the Galapagos Islands, since most routes via the Caribbean Sea have been shut down. Africa was increasingly being used as an alternative trans-shipment route to the drug market in Europe. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Colombia is the world's biggest producer of cocaine, followed by Peru and Bolivia.

Memberships Expiring This and Last Quarter:

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NERA’s NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL Conference
18-19 APRIL 2008
RAMADA INN
200 N Green Bay Road Waukegan IL 60085
866 209-4045 or 847 244-2400 www.ramadainnwaukegan-gurnee.com

Name
First_ Last_ Rate/Rank_
Address_ City_ State_ Zip_

Contact Phone:(___)______________ Number of People attending ______

E-Mail __________________________ Chapter ___________ Position: __________ 1st Conf? Y/N ______

Spouse/guest name
First_ Last_ Rank_

REGISTRATION EVENTS

Registration:
Before 15 March 2008			$35.00 X ____ = $______

Events:
Fri 18 Apr 0700 Boot Camp Graduation	FREE = $___ FREE
Fri 18 Apr Mixer		FREE = $___ FREE
Sat 19 Apr TBA (Opening Ceremonies, Speaker, Meeting Agenda)
LUNCH On your own or Saddle Ridge Restaurant in Hotel
DINNER On your own or Saddle Ridge Restaurant in Hotel

Registration/Events Total: $_______

ROOM RESERVATIONS
Rates are contracted for 3 days before and 3 days after conference.
Room: $85.00/$90 / Room Night Depending on size of bed. (plus 11% tax)

RAMADA Group Name: Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
Group Code NESA
Phone: 866 209-4045

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Make checks payable to: Windy City Chapter 313.098
Send registration form to: Penny Padour
Mail to: 1010 Darlington Ln
Crystal Lake IL 60014