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January 2026

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## Navy Week at Hope Christian HS Salvaged by USS New Mexico

by Damon Runyan, Chair, USS New Mexico Committee

Anticipating a crew visit by eight members of USS NEW MEXICO (SSN-779), Damon Runyan went to Hope Christian High School on November 6<sup>th</sup> at the invitation of College Prep Math Teacher, Mr. TJ Bonzon, to pre-brief the students for the following week's visit. Unfortunately, due to Department of War travel policies in effect during the government shutdown, Navy Week Santa Fe was completely cancelled this year.

Commander Hector Marin, Commanding Officer USS NEW MEXICO, and his crew came to the rescue! The recent Navy Captain selectee offered to Zoom into the classroom he and the crew members had been scheduled to visit.



USS New Mexico (SSN-779) crew members CDR Hector Marin (Commanding Officer) and LTJG Jonathan Lane (DCA) call into a Zoom meeting from their car on the pier at Norfolk Naval Base, Virginia.

Read more about the questions the students asked during the Zoom meeting and how the discussion went and see additional photos from the visit on page 3.

**Thank You!** When you keep your dues up to date with the Navy League national office, our New Mexico council receives a stipend for each active member. This makes a big difference in our ability to help support our namesake ships, our youth, our Sea Cadets, and the local active and reserve.  
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**Donations to the USS Albuquerque Memorial are now being accepted at this City of Albuquerque web site:**

<https://one-albuquerque-fund.snbll.com/uss-albuquerque-memorial>



## President's Message



**David F Williams**

*President, New Mexico Council*

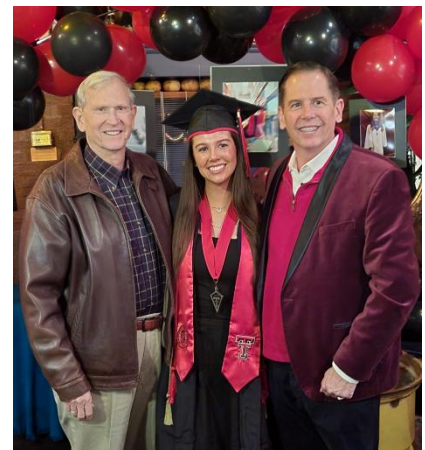
### Attention All Hands...

This is my last column as your President. John Jones takes back the lead in 2026. I owe him a very big thanks for being more than a typical Vice President. He was truly an Executive Officer taking care of all the details which kept us looking good for the past two years. When John was not available, Damon Runyan jumped in. Chuck Vaughn kept us honest and in the black. Our committee chairs continued their self-directed quality work. Our newsletter editor, Mark Schaefer, won another Gold Mackie Award from Navy League Headquarters for our council newsletter, which Greg Trapp enriched regularly with historical articles in his feature section titled 'From the Sea Chest'. Ed Nava and Kristelle Sizarza Moon mobilized our social media with Ed managing the web site, [nmnavyleague.com](http://nmnavyleague.com) and Kristelle taking care of our Facebook page. Dave Minster joined us and broadened our perspectives to include the United States Air Force.

We recently lost one of our most respected Board members, a person with a long career in serving our Country, in and out of uniform, both in the Marine Corps and in the Navy, CAPT Tom Gutierrez. As we say in the Greek Orthodox Church, "may his memory be

eternal". We would be fortunate if his wife, Rebecca Vigil, continued to represent us in Santa Fe and at City Hall. A rosary will be held at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church, 811 Guaymas PL NE in Albuquerque on January 30<sup>th</sup> at 1230, followed by a mass.

December was a special time of pride for me. My granddaughter, Ashley Williams, shown below with her father, a Navy League Member in San Diego, CPO David Williams III, USCGR, and me, graduated in 3 ½ years Summa Cum Laude from Texas Tech University.



Ashley is doing biomedical research at Texas Tech University pending admission to medical school. Her performance showed what a good investment the national Navy League made in having awarded her a four-year scholarship starting her freshman year.

You are in great hands with John Jones taking the helm in 2026!

In the meantime, I wish all of you "Fair winds and following seas".

**Dave Williams**

*Commander, U.S. Navy (ret)*



**NEW MEXICO  
Council**



# Local New Mexico News



## Navy Week at Hope Christian High School *(continued from front page)*

During our originally scheduled 2025 Navy Week Santa Fe, the annual sponsor, Navy Community Outreach (NAVCO), had planned numerous activities in both Albuquerque and Santa Fe surrounding Veteran's Day. Committee members of the New Mexico Council of Navy League had planned a big dinner in Santa Fe and a luncheon in Albuquerque, in addition to visiting a local high school. When the government shutdown hit, Navy Week Santa Fe was cancelled entirely.

To help mitigate some the disappointment of the cancelled visit, Commander Hector Marin, Commanding Officer USS NEW MEXICO and recent Navy Captain selectee, Zoomed into the classroom he and his crew members were scheduled to visit. With immense help from the College Prep Math Teacher at Hope Christian High School, Mr. TJ Bonzon, a Zoom call was initiated from the submarine parking lot at Norfolk Naval Base, VA to the classroom at Hope Christian High School in Albuquerque. CDR Marin had to call from his personal vehicle as signals from inside a submarine are restricted.



*USS New Mexico Committee Chair, Damon Runyan, and active duty submariner LCDR Kevin Heister (USS Maine SSBN-741) visit Hope Christian High School that LCDR Heister attended.*

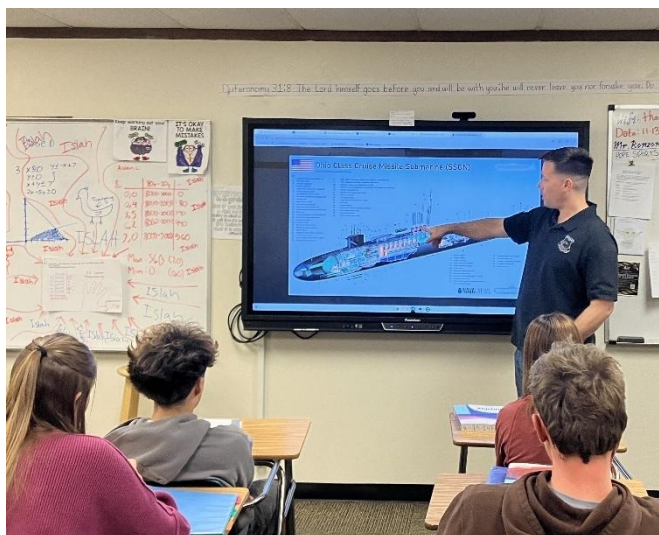
By amazing coincidence, on that very day, a graduate of Hope Christian and New Mexico Tech, LCDR Kevin Heister, was also visiting the school and added immensely to the information presented to students. LCDR Heister had recently detached from a Department Head Tour aboard USS MAINE (SSBN-741) as the Weapons Officer, stopped in Albuquerque to see family, and was headed to the East Coast to take an assignment at the large Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, VA.

For over an hour, students asked questions about life aboard the NEW MEXICO and the MAINE. CDR Marin was joined in the call by LTJG Jonathan Lane, the submarine's Damage Control Division Officer. The students were interested in what motivated them to join the Navy, when did they know that the Navy was their choice, how hard is life at sea separated from family, what the food was like, and how did they stay busy while on board, and what were the differences about the

mission of an SSN and SSBN submarine. The Commanding Officer and the DCA did a great job relating tales about good food, exercising, preparing for drills, and completing the assigned mission in foreign waters. But they also stressed the need to stay as quiet as possible while onboard, no matter what they were doing at that moment.

It was indeed a unique event for both CDR Marin and the students to be able to ask whatever they wanted and what they should or could be doing to prepare themselves for college, future careers whether it be in the military or civilian world.

The New Mexico Council and the SSN-779 Committee extends heartfelt thanks to CDR Marin, LTJG Lane, LCDR Heister, Mr. TJ Bonzon, and the Principal of Hope Christian Ms. Melissa Juarez.



*LCDR Heister points out various parts of USS Maine (SSBN-741) to college prep seniors at Hope Christian High School on November 13, 2025.*



# Local New Mexico News



## Renaming of City Park Honors U.S. Navy W.A.V.E. Dorothy Blanchard *by Damon Runyan*

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, the City of Albuquerque renamed the High Desert Park in the Far Northeast Heights as the Dorothy Jensen Blanchard Park at High Desert.

Chief Dorothy Blanchard was among the very first Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (W.A.V.E.S.). According to Dave Simon, City of Albuquerque Parks and Recreation Director, this action marks the FIRST park of any kind named for a U.S. female military veteran in the state of New Mexico.



*Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller at the dedication of the park.*

Among the attendees were Ms. Blanchard's daughter and son-in-law, Linda and Bomi, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller, Brigadier General Jamison Herrera (NM Dept of Veteran Services), two state representatives, numerous veterans from all services, and two TV stations. Our council was represented by Damon Runyan, chair of the USS New Mexico (SSN-779) Committee.



*The new placard at Dorothy Jensen Blanchard Park with Mayor Tim Keller and Blanchard family members.*

A full recap of Dorothy Blanchard's career in the Navy was previously published in a recent Nautical News quarterly newsletter.

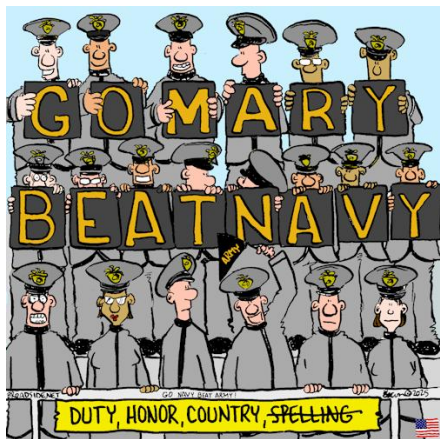
## Blue Star Mothers Send 415 Care Packages to Deployed Ships and Units *by Dave Williams*

The Rio Grand Valley Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers held a care package packing event on Saturday, November 15th. It was attended by dozens of volunteers including New Mexico Council members.

The 415 care packages sent out remind those serving worldwide that their families in New Mexico are still with them in their hearts at Christmas.

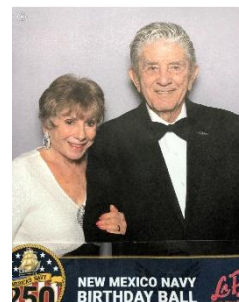
Photos show the "chain" of supporters, one of which was Dave Williams, President, NM Chapter of the Navy League of the United States.





## **Navy Birthday Ball 2025** *story by Mark Schaefer; cartoon courtesy of Broadside cartoons; photo courtesy of Layne Moss, Navy League of the United States, NM Chapter*

The 250th Navy Birthday Ball on October 18th at the Isleta Resort and Casino was a very successful event that was oversubscribed and needed extra tables. The speaker was Captain Jeff Bacon, creator of the Broadside comic strip. The New Mexico Department of Veteran Services honored 101-year old Navy veteran Ray Bonda with a state flag and the council presented a centennial plaque. Our MC was Jessica Garate of KRQE TV13.



*Dan and Layne Moss*

A silent auction was a nice fundraiser that did well. Navy League member Dan Moss donated 8 hand-carved items to the silent auction. Dan and Layne Moss got a very nice photo at the ball that Layne shared. Next year's Ball, honoring the Nations 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday, will be held in October at Isleta Resort and Casino.

## **New Mexico Chapter 2025 Hot Wash-up** *a rollup of yearly events from President Dave Williams*

Our 2025 Annual meeting was held at the famous El Pinto restaurant in Albuquerque's North Valley, famous for its authentic New Mexican cuisine. We dined on a buffet of red chile cheese enchiladas, green chile chicken enchiladas, tamale pie, beans, rice, posole & chile con carne... salsa & chips and biscochitos made it a meal!

John Jones organized the agenda for the meeting. Here are some highlights of 2025:

- Our 763 and 779 Committees (chairs Ron Oleksak and Damon Runyon) continued to creatively perform support functions for our deployed submarines throughout the year.
- Our 706 Sail Committee continues to work with the City of Albuquerque, the USSVI Bullhead Base and Submarine Veterans to create a home for the sail of our namesake submarine, USS Albuquerque. Lawrence Edwards highlighted the achievements of the Committee and spoke about the design to be finalized by the City of Albuquerque in the summer of 2026.
- The council supported more than a dozen of the JROTC units with Teddy Roosevelt Awards.
- Our Historian (Greg Trapp) made numerous contributions of historical interest to the newsletter and is working on slide presentation focusing on battleship New Mexico (BB-40) and cruiser Santa Fe (CL-60).
- We worked with Blue Star Mothers and the Daughters of the American Revolution with their programs to support New Mexicans on active duty around the world and at sea (thank you Damon Runyan, Lisa Childress).
- We published four quarterly, high quality, newsletters distributed in hardcopy and email – thanks to the excellent work of Mark Schaefer. The NM Council received a Gold Donald Mackie Award, making the newsletter one of the best in the Nation.
- Our website was reworked and kept current by Ed Nava, and Kristelle Siarza energized our Facebook page with several new postings each week.
- President Dave Williams assisted US Senate staffs in their work to screen appointments to the military academies – and Tom and Rebecca Gutierrez identified future Academy Midshipmen through their work with the Naval Academy Blue & Gold team.
- At the request of a targeted donor, we provided \$500 to the STEM program of West Mesa NJROTC.
- Through the efforts of John Glynn, we held several Network Navy social events.
- We worked with the Reserve Center to host the 250th Navy Ball at Isleta Resort and Casino. The event netted over \$7000, which helps support our mission.
- We've established a Coast Guard program for the Council.





# Nautical Items of Interest

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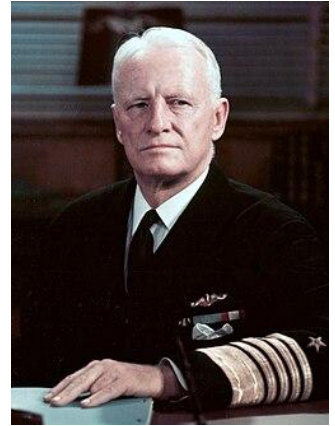
## Chester W. Nimitz – Undersea Warrior *by Dick Brown*

*In celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the US Navy and the 150th Anniversary of our Submarine Force*

Chester William Nimitz was born on February 24, 1885 in Fredericksburg, Texas. Selected for appointment to Annapolis in 1901, he left high school and entered the Naval Academy, Class of 1905. Nimitz graduated with distinction – 7<sup>th</sup> in a class of 114.

After graduation, he boarded battleship *USS Ohio (BB-12)* in San Francisco and cruised to the Far East. In January 1907, after two years of sea duty as a warrant officer (then required by law), he was commissioned Ensign in the regular Navy. He returned to the U. S. and reported to Submarine School in Groton, CT.

His first submarine assignment was *USS Plunger (SS-2)*. In turn, he commanded *USS Snapper (SS-16)*, *USS Narwal (SS-17)* and *USS Skipjack (SS-24)* until 1912. After serving as the *Skipjack* skipper, he turned his submarine duty to advantage. Though junior in rank, he was invited to address the Naval War College on submarine tactics. His knowledge of submarines later served him well when submarines became one of America's primary weapons in WWII.



*Chester W. Nimitz proudly wearing his submarine dolphin pin.*

Nimitz had one year in command of the Atlantic Submarine Flotilla before coming ashore in 1913 for duty in connection with building diesel engines for the tanker *USS Maumee (AO-2)*. His experience at sea convinced him of the fire danger and inefficiency of gasoline-powered engines. Consequently, Nimitz was sent to Germany to study diesel technology. Fortunately, he spoke fluent German. Upon his return, he immediately put his new knowledge to work in the New York Navy Yard supervising construction of *Maumee's* two 2600 hp diesel engines. He served as Executive Officer and Engineering Officer of *Maumee* until 1917 when he was assigned as Aide and Chief of Staff to COMSUBLANT. LCDR Nimitz served in that billet during WWI.

In September 1918, CDR Nimitz was assigned shore duty in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations and was a member of the Board of Submarine Design. In fact, he was recognized as the Navy's leading diesel propulsion expert. Due to his leadership skills, he served two years as aide to Commander Submarine Force, Atlantic Fleet. His first sea duty in big ships came in 1919 as Executive Officer of *USS South Carolina (BB-26)*.

In 1920, CDR Nimitz received orders to build a submarine base at Pearl Harbor. He arrived there with one map, four CPOs and equipment scavenged from East Coast shipyards. The cruiser *USS Chicago (CA-29)* became his command ship and floating quarters. *Chicago* was the flagship for our Atlantic Submarine Force in 1917. By 1919 she was back in Pearl to support our submarines.

In 1922, Nimitz attended the Naval War College. His study of logistics, including underway replenishment and refueling methods, in a fictional Pacific war would become quite relevant two decades later. Upon graduation, he became Chief of Staff to Commander Battle Forces.

Later in the decade, Nimitz was one of six officers who established one of the first NROTC units, this one at the University of California in Berkeley. In 1929, holding the rank of Captain, he began two years as Commander, Submarine Division 20, followed by two more years in charge of reserve destroyers at San Diego. He then took the heavy cruiser *USS Augusta (CA-31)* to the Orient, where, under his command, she was the flagship of the Asiatic Fleet in 1933-35. Three years' duty at the Bureau of Navigation in Washington, DC ended in 1938 with his promotion from Captain directly to 2-star Rear Admiral.

His next sea command was in flag rank as Commander Cruiser Division Two and then as Commander Battleship Division One. On December 31, 1941, in a ceremony aboard *USS Grayling (SS209)*, Nimitz was promoted directly to 4-star Admiral. This action was quite fitting as many capital ships lay at the bottom of Pearl Harbor after the Japanese surprise attack. ADM Nimitz' long service in submarines would prove most valuable. He was designated as Commander-in-Chief,

Pacific Fleet, where he served throughout WWII. On December 19, 1944, he was advanced to the newly created 5-star rank of Fleet Admiral, and on September 2, 1945, he was the United States signatory to the Japanese surrender documents aboard the battleship *USS Missouri (BB-63)* in Tokyo Bay.

*"It is to the everlasting honor and glory of our submarine personnel that they never failed us in our days of peril."* Chester W. Nimitz

In December 1945, Nimitz relieved Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King as Chief of Naval Operations for a term of two years. As CNO, Nimitz was key in gaining approval for ADM Rickover to develop the world's first nuclear-powered submarine. Because the rank of Fleet Admiral is a lifetime appointment, Nimitz remained on active duty for the rest of his life. Chester Nimitz suffered a stroke and died with wife Catherine at his side on February 20, 1966 in San Francisco, four days before his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. He is buried in Golden Gate National Cemetery.

Chester W. Nimitz pioneered submarine propulsion by changing from gasoline engines to diesel engines. Just as serving in the rank of Fleet Admiral is for life, Nimitz would be most pleased to know that today's nuclear submarines like *USS New Mexico (SSN-779)* are fueled for life.

## **Admiral Stuart Munsch Moves to Civilian Life** *by Mark Schaefer, newsletter editor*

SeaPower Magazine, the official publication of the Navy League of the United States, reported in its weekly SeaPower email that Admiral Stuart B. Munsch was relieved by Admiral George M. Wikoff as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Africa (NAVEUR/NAVAF). This occurred during a change of command ceremony held at Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Naples, on November 19, 2025. The assignment was Admiral Munsch's last assignment before retiring, and he had been the second longest serving commander of Naval Forces Europe since the Command was established in 1917.

Admiral Munsch commanded *USS Albuquerque (SSN-706)* from 2002 to 2005. Under his command, the *Albuquerque* completed a modernization period and refueling overhaul at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine and then returned to its duty station at Naval Submarine Base New London. As a part of the Harry S Truman carrier strike group (CSG), she deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism. She deployed for six months to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> fleet areas. As part of that deployment, the *Albuquerque* showed the flag with port visits to Scotland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Seychelles, and Bahrain. It sounds like it would have been great to be a submariner under Admiral Munsch's command!

Closer to home, Admiral Munsch was the lead sponsor for Navy Week Albuquerque in 2024 and toured the sail restoration project, visited with crew members of the *USS Santa Fe (SSN-763)*, and encouraged the UNM Lobo football team as part of that visit. We appreciate all that Admiral Munsch has done for the State of New Mexico, and we wish him fair winds and following seas in whatever he pursues next.



*Official Navy photo*



*Admiral Munsch interacted with City Officials, citizens, and veterans during the Albuquerque Sail Monument ceremony in September 2024.  
(photo from Navy Community Outreach)*



*Admiral Munsch gave a motivational speaking session to the UNM Lobo football team in September 2024.  
(photos from Navy Community Outreach)*



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**2025 Upcoming Events for Navy League, New Mexico Council**

<b>January 2 - 1430</b>	<b>Navy football vs. Cincinnati in the Liberty Bowl – Craft Republic I-25 &amp; Jefferson</b>
January	Navy League, New Mexico Council board meeting via Zoom
January 30	Rosary and Mass for CAPT Tom Gutierrez; Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church
February	Navy League, New Mexico Council board meeting via Zoom
March	Navy League, New Mexico Council board meeting via Zoom
<b>October TBD</b>	<b>Navy Birthday Ball 2026 – Isleta Resort &amp; Casino</b>