

September 29, 2015

Bob Orleck  
2015 Reunion U.S.S. Orleck  
Bar Harbor, Maine

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Dear Friends and Shipmates,  
Cindy and I had a wonderful time at the September 2015, U.S.S. Orleck reunion in Bar Harbor, Maine. Because I talk more than anybody has any right or reason to, I am sure I have filled most, if not all, of you in on my thoughts and experiences on the way to and at the reunion.

If you don't want to read about our last day at the reunion and our trip home, now is a good time to check out.

No kidding Bob, Cindy really did see a moose walking up a driveway, towards the road on our way to the "last supper" If I tell you something like that, well you know how old sailors are, you might have good reason to question it but Cindy was on the window side of the seat and got a clear look. She said it was in the open, in the middle of the driveway, walking toward the road and it wasn't a deer or a horse. Remember, the tour guide said is not common but once in a while moose do swim over to the island.

Now for a question: Did anyone else get a three clawed lobster or have the waitress pour a plate of lobster juice down their back? I swear to God, I did not pinch her butt. The shirt, however, is at the dry cleaners right now and Elmer thinks he can save it.

On the bus ride back from the lobster dinner, Cindy and I were talking with Debbie and Dave Thornton. (Dave's dad served on the Orleck and Dave has been working on the restoration) We learned earlier in the week that the Thorntons were from Wisconsin. In trying to nail them down to a specific region they said they were from Milwaukee. Cindy said, "We have close friends, that I graduated with, who lived until recently in Brookfield (a suburb of Milwaukee). Debbie said, "Well actually, we live in Brookfield". Cindy then said, "Now this is a real shot in the dark, but do you happen to know Jack and Carol Pollock?" Dave replied, "Yes" and Debbie said that Carol is her best friend. Now, what are the odds that four people, attending a ship's reunion in Maine, who live 500 miles from each other and have never met would have mutual friends that they are that close with?

After departing Bar Harbor on Friday, Cindy and I took the fast route down to Freeport to visit the L.L. Bean retail store. Knowing that we were going to be indoors, I left my Orleck ball cap in the car. We weren't in the store long when we ran into two tin can

sailors who were wearing their ball caps and had served on the U.S.S. Frank Knox DD 742 (built in Bath, Maine). You may also have heard about the “Knox on the Rocks.” The grounding on a reef required here to undergo a nearly complete replacement of the hull. They talked about the grounding but conveniently forgot to mention the derogatory nickname that stuck with the ship until her decommissioning. Unfortunately I did too and it just popped into my head as I type this.

They told us they were attending their 25<sup>th</sup> ship’s reunion and we said we had just left the Orleck reunion. We swapped sea stories while Cindy shopped and I told them that Cindy and I had visited Fort Frank Knox on the Penobscot River in Bucksport, Maine on our way up the coast. They were unfamiliar with the fort. I told them to check the website and neither of them had email or a computer. How primitive. Damned if I know how they keep in touch.

Needing an influx of ready cash, Cindy and I walked up the street to an ATM and reloaded. I decided that since I had already run into some old sailors I had better go back to the car and fetch my Orleck hat.

Having retrieved my hat and now being appropriately covered, we started back towards Main Street. As we neared the main entrance of L.L. Bean, I noticed a couple about our age approaching from the opposite direction. The woman, who was quite attractive I might add, began looking at me and the closer we got the more intently she looked. As I was thinking, “Yes, the old man still has it.” Or, does she just think I look like Santa Claus?” I realized she was looking at my hat.

She asked, “The Orleck, did you really serve on the Orleck?” Now with my ego appropriately in check, I was still quite pleased to hear the question and replied, “Yes I did.” She told me that her dad had served on the Orleck and that he had retired from the Navy with the rank of Captain. She said she was a Navy brat” (not really but that’s what I heard) and that she had grown up listening to her father tell stories about the Orleck. Her dad is now 91 and she and her husband and father are all living on the west coast. Her father’s surname is Birdt. (darned if I can remember the first name) She and her husband are Brian and Margie Abbott.

I told her that we had just left a reunion for the Orleck in Bar Harbor and by coincidence she and her husband had been there at the same time but never ran into our group. I called Bob and had them talk with each other on speaker phone. As it turns out Bob thinks he has Margie’s dad’s name.

We probably talked for an hour and we hope they stay in touch with the Orleck now that they know we are all still actively keeping in touch with each other. Ya meet the nicest people as a result of being associated with the Orleck.

Michael D. Cooper  
U.S.N.R. SF3  
Served Aboard U.S.S.Orleck  
April 1970 – May 1971