

# **2023 Conference #3**

## **U.S. Naval Bases in San Diego**

### **May 21-24, 2023**

#### **The Pendry San Diego Hotel (in the Gaslamp Quarter)**

The DOCA San Diego trip was in many ways reflective of the fast-paced ops tempo that exists throughout today's military, where we tried to match that same fast-paced tempo by doing dozens of tours instead of sit-down briefings.<sup>1</sup> As such, this report will necessarily consist primarily of photos.

#### **Sunday, May 21 – MCAS Miramar – Top Gun Maverick Before Our Eyes**

Many of us began the day of arrival enjoying visiting Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, VMFAT-502 (F-35B Squadron) thanks to Sunny Jha's connections to several of the pilots and leadership at Miramar. We received a briefing in their squadron facilities, where we learned in great detail, among other things, about the specific near-peer threats (the J20 and SU57). We went out on the flight line and received a walk-around briefing of the F-35B version that includes vertical take-off and landing, with the jet engine actually tilting 90 degrees downward when it is in hover mode. Both briefers (Zombie and Ralph) were incredibly hospitable and enthusiastic about teaching us about the aircraft.



Lt Col Adam "Zombie" Wellington, Commanding Officer of Marine Aircraft Group 11, provides a detailed mission brief

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, there were one or two briefings, but they were far in between the numerous hikes which we took, from the base of the carrier to the bridge (a mere 10 levels, 5-6 stories up) or inside the 4-5 levels inside a submarine, and yes, the ladders are straight up and down, so high heels were *not* an option!).



Sunny's friend Marc Arnold, Sunny Jha, and Major Daniel "Ralph" Tolbert and Lt Col Adam "Zombie" Wellington, Commanding Officer of Marine Aircraft Group 11<sup>2</sup>

## **Monday, May 22: Naval Base San Diego**

### **NAB Coronado/NAS North Island – Expeditionary Warfare Training Group, Pacific (EWTGPAC)**

Expeditionary Warfare Training Group, Pacific provides instruction in the tactics, techniques, and doctrine of expeditionary warfare to US forces and our NATO allies. Our accredited instructors provide world class instruction to any command preparing for deployment and assist commanders in maintaining a high level of readiness and excellence.



LCDR Julius Dabu of the Expeditionary Warfare and Training Group provided a briefing to our DOCA group about how the Navy can create docks and off load tanks, personnel carriers, basically anything that is loaded on a ship.

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<sup>2</sup> Each of these pilots were willing to advise us that each of them is the best pilot known to man (and woman).

## **Mariner Skills Training Center, Pacific MSTCPAC**

Mariner Skills Training Center, Pacific, was established on Oct. 1, 2020 and its mission is to ready sea-bound warriors to serve on surface combatants possessing the shiphandling and navigation skills to fulfill the Navy's mission of maintaining global maritime superiority.



CAPT (Retired) Carl Mauser of the Mariner Skills Training Center explains how the Navy trains its active duty surface ship personnel to "drive" ships, navigate, and not run aground – all through the use of simulators.



DOCA members in a surface ship simulator, trying not to run aground.



Briefing from LT Rachael Berger in another surface ship simulator focused on navigation skills. DOCA members were allowed to try their skills and give orders as to direction, speed, etc. to the personnel physically inputting those orders with the controls.<sup>3</sup>

## **Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC)**

Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center's mission is to increase the tactical proficiency and lethality of the Surface Force across all domains, through Advanced Tactical Training, Warfare Tactics Instructor Production, Doctrine and Tactical Guidance Development, Operational Support to Naval Component and Numbered Fleet Commanders and Combatant Commanders, and Capability Assessments, Experimentation, and Requirements Support.

We were pleased to receive a briefing from two very able members of the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center, LT Megs Barron and LCDR Josh White, but because of clearance limits no photos were allowed.

## **Lunch! And distribution of funds for Morale and Welfare!**

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<sup>3</sup> To our knowledge, no ships were lost or run aground – that's our story and we are sticking to it!



DOCA Chairman of the Investment Committee Douglas Lempereur (left) and DOCA President John Caccamo (right) provide Mr. Danny Romero, Senior Program Director of SAY San Diego and the San Diego Military Community Collaborative, a check from DOCA's Defense Fund for morale, recreation, and welfare support.

### **Tour of USS SAN DIEGO (LPD-22, Amphibious Transport Dock)**

**USS *San Diego* (LPD-22)**, is a *San Antonio*-class amphibious transport dock. It is the fourth ship of the United States Navy to be named for San Diego, California. An amphibious warfare ship is a warship that embarks, transports, and lands elements of a landing force for expeditionary warfare missions. The ships are generally designed to transport troops into a war zone by sea, primarily using landing craft, although invariably they also have the capability to operate transport helicopters.

The *San Antonio* class is a class of amphibious transport docks, also called a "landing platform, dock" (LPD). The ship can carry two LCACs (air cushion) or one LCU (conventional), has a complement of 28 officers, 333 enlisted, and has the capacity to carry 699 (66 officers, 633 enlisted) and up to a surge to 800 total. Amphibious transport docks perform the mission of amphibious transports, amphibious cargo ships, and the older dock landing ships (LSD) by incorporating both a flight deck and a well deck that can be ballasted and deballasted to support landing craft or amphibious vehicles. The main difference between LSDs and LPDs is that while both have helicopter landing decks, the LPD also has hangar facilities for protection and maintenance.



USS *San Diego* (LPD-22) boarding plank.



USS *San Diego* (LPD-22) exterior.



USS *San Diego* (LPD-22) entryway.



USS *San Diego* (LPD-22) briefer showing the stern opening area that literally allows the sea to enter the vessel and be used to ingress and egress amphibious platforms.



Bruce Burda with Commanding Officer of the USS *San Diego* (LPD-22), CAPT David W. Walton.



DOCA members receive a briefing in the mess of USS *San Diego* (LPD-22)



Helipad of the stern of the USS *San Diego* (LPD-22)

## **USS SPRUANCE (DDG-111, Guided-Missile Destroyer)**



DOCA members coming aboard the USS *Spruance* (DDG 111).

There is no doubt that one of the highlights of the entire trip was touring in great detail the best destroyer in the Navy,<sup>4</sup> the USS *Spruance* (DDG 111). The ship is the 103<sup>rd</sup> Aegis ship to be delivered to the US and the 61<sup>st</sup> ship of the Aegis Burke class. It has 360 visibility and with some Naval air assistance and see well beyond the horizon. CDR assures us that while part of a carrier group there is no way an "adverse" submarine would even consider attempting to get near.

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<sup>4</sup> As gladly attested to by every person on the ship . . . .



*Spruance* is the second ship to be named for Admiral Raymond A. Spruance (1886–1969), who commanded American naval forces at the Battles of Midway and the Philippine Sea. *Spruance* was the first of the U.S. Navy's destroyers to be fitted with the Gigabit Ethernet Data Multiplex System (GEDMS), manufactured by the Boeing Company. GEDMS provides an Internet Protocol (IP) based backbone for video and data services on the ship. The bridge features touch screen controls and color readouts instead of gauges.

The *Arleigh Burke* class of guided-missile destroyers (DDGs) is a class of destroyer centered around the Aegis Combat System and the SPY-1D multi-function passive electronically scanned array radar. With an overall length of 505 to 509.5 feet, displacement ranging from 8,300 to 9,700 tons, and weaponry including over 90 missiles, the *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers are larger and more heavily armed than many previous classes of guided-missile cruisers. These warships are multi-mission destroyers able to conduct anti-aircraft warfare (AAW) with Aegis and surface-to-air missiles; tactical land strikes with Tomahawk missiles; anti-submarine warfare (ASW) with towed array sonar, anti-submarine rockets, and ASW helicopters; and anti-surface warfare (ASuW) with Harpoon missiles. With upgrades to their AN/SPY-1 phased radar systems and their associated missile payloads as part of the Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System, ships of this class have also demonstrated capability as mobile anti-ballistic missile and anti-satellite platforms.

USS *Spruance* (DDG 111) is commanded by the equally lethal CDR Christopher D. Ivey and his XO CDR Thomas "Matt" Adams (who CDR Ivey specifically requested) from the best place in the world, Montana!<sup>5</sup> Watching these two warriors respectfully banter back and forth, covering each person's back as to certain details and at times clearly one being able to finish the sentence of the other, is a study in command leadership and integration. Unlike say the Air Force – where the XO is a junior officer who is just there to observe and assist the much higher ranking senior officer – in the Navy the XO acts as the deputy commander, ready to take over immediately if the Commander is injured or not available for any reason.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Missoula, baby! GO GRIZ!

<sup>6</sup> The head of command training for the Navy would do well to video tape the bridge while these two are out at sea and use it at all the Navy command leadership schools – to demonstrate how it is supposed to be done.



CDR Christopher D. Ivey briefing DOCA members outside on the stern of the USS Spruance (DDG 111).



On the stern of the USS Spruance (DDG 111), looking towards the bridge.



On the stern of the USS Spruance (DDG 111), looking at the missile platform.



CDR Christopher D. Ivey briefing DOCA members on the bridge of the USS Spruance (DDG 111).

## **Tuesday, May 23: NAB Coronado**

### **HQ CNAF (Commander, Naval Air Forces), NAVAIR Briefing**

We next received a Naval Aviation briefing at headquarters, Naval Air Forces, based at NAS North Island in Coronado, California.. The mission of Naval Air Forces is to "man, Train, and equip deployable, combat-ready Naval Aviation forces that win in combat. The Commander of Naval Air Forces (COMNAVAIRFOR), Vice Adm. Kenneth Whitesell, is also dual-hatted as Commander, Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet. The staff is made up of approximately 515 officer, enlisted, civilian and contractor personnel. The position is colloquially known throughout the Navy as "**the Air Boss,**" mimicking the nickname given to the officer who commands the air department on an aircraft carrier. Naval Air Forces has approximately 3,800 sea-based and shore-based aircraft that perform strike/fighter, electronic attack, airborne early warning, maritime patrol and reconnaissance, anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine/sub-surface warfare, strategic communications relay, search and rescue (SAR), helicopter mine countermeasures, training, and logistical support missions. These assets include 11 aircraft carriers and approximately 100,000 active and reserve military personnel, as well as Department of the Navy civilians and contractors. Naval Aviation has 28,000 active duty personnel and 8,000 civilians working on North Island.



DOCA members entering Headquarters, Naval Air Forces.



Deputy Public Affairs Officer Steve Fieby explains the history of Naval aviation with a specific focus on San Diego facilities and history.



A scale mock-up of the first naval airplane in the entrance of the Headquarters, Naval Air Forces.



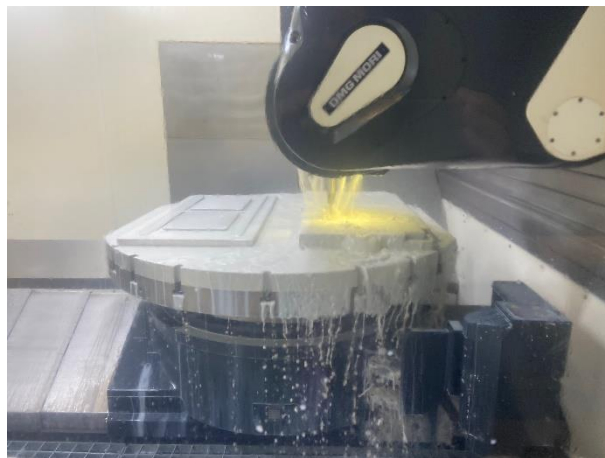
The first two naval aviators, who literally flew the plane "by the seat of their pants) – i.e., no seat belts!

### **FRCSW (Fleet Readiness Center Southwest) Tour**

Next we observed depot maintenance of the F-18s (no pictures allowed) similar to the tour we received in March 2020 at the Ogden depot.

Mark Ohler provided a briefing on the F-18 maintenance and upgrade program noting that now all the F-18 are Super Hornets. The process can take up to one and one-half years. Mr. Ohler noted that corrosion is a major problem when out to sea.

We also received a tour of the manufacturing shop from Deputy Program Manager Armel "Sam" Recio, who demonstrated how his shop can literally make anything required to keep the mission going.



Manufacturing Shop making, from scratch, a piece of hardware for a naval asset.

## Tour of aircraft carrier CVN-70, USS Carl Vinson



DOCA members boarding USS Carl Vinson CVN-70

USS Carl Vinson is the United States Navy's third Nimitz-class supercarrier. She is named for Carl Vinson, a congressman from Georgia, in recognition of his contributions to the U.S. Navy. It was launched on March 15, 1980. It has a length of 1,092 and displaces 102,900 tons. The ship has a crew of 6,012, consisting of 3532 ship's company and 2480 air wing.

The Commanding Officer of the USS Carl Vinson is CAPT P. Scott Miller. Along with deployments in Operation Desert Strike, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Southern Watch, and Operation Enduring Freedom, *Carl Vinson* has been involved in a number of notable events. The body of Osama bin Laden was buried at sea in 2011 from the deck of *Carl Vinson*, and that same year, on Veterans Day, she played host to the first NCAA basketball game on an aircraft carrier, between North Carolina and Michigan State.



Entry plank to the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)



DOCA members in the interior of the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)



View from the bridge of the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)



DOCA member Elizabeth Tierney getting ready to steer the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)



DOCA members on the deck of the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70), and receiving a briefing on the catapult system on the deck of the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)



DOCA members observe the exact location on the deck of the USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70) where the deceased Osama bin Laden was laid when taken out of the helicopter; the spot is always painted red due to his blood pooled on that spot and in remembrance of those who died in 9-11 and the role the USS Carl Vinson had in bringing bin Laden to justice.

## **Tour of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM)**

Several MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopter squadrons are located at Naval Air Station North Island. LT Andrew “Moose” Toomey, an instructor pilot with the unit, briefed us about the squadron’s operations. In addition to a training squadron, the squadrons are assigned to be deployed where needed, including being attached to Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9 and the Sixth Fleet. DOCA members were able to observe ongoing training missions from the top of a very large hanger (4 stories high). At the same time DOCA members were able to observe Ospreys during their training missions.





DOCA member Sunny Jha sitting in a helicopter (being observed by his brother, AJ Jha).



DOCA members' view of training operations by the Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron

### **Wednesday, May 24: Headquarters, Naval Surface Forces**



On the next day we went to the headquarters of Naval Surface Forces and received a welcome and mission briefing from Vice Admiral Roy Kitchener.



Admiral Roy Kitchener provides a mission briefing to DOCA member.

Vice Admiral Roy Kitchener, Commander, Naval Surface Forces, provided a detailed and frank briefing to DOCA. Admiral Kitchener discussed the effects of the 2017 collisions of Navy ships<sup>7</sup> and the steps the Navy has taken to better train Navy personnel when out at sea. Admiral Kitchener went on to discuss the fact that China is our number 1 priority, and that we can't build ships fast enough. Admiral Kitchener stated that the military has shifted the whole footing to wartime focus, and that we are building more lift ships, with logistics a big issue now. Admiral Kitchener stated that there are approximately 92 ships in the Pacific and 70 or so in the Atlantic. The Navy is definitely in war fighting mode, focused on providing a presence and global force management. To do its job it needs 75 mission-capable ships. Interestingly, Admiral Kitchener stated that destroyers are the center of gravity. Admiral Kitchener is concerned about modernization, recruiting, and retention.

When asked about how DOCA members should respond to those who quote President Washington's Farewell address warning against foreign entanglements, Admiral Kitchener discussed the need for foreign alliances and the many nations who provide warfighting assistance, logistical support, and modern bases which we can use. Admiral Kitchener went on to discuss our military and mission interconnections with Japan, Australia, South Korea, and New Zealand. Admiral Kitchener briefly discussed the Taiwan situation and

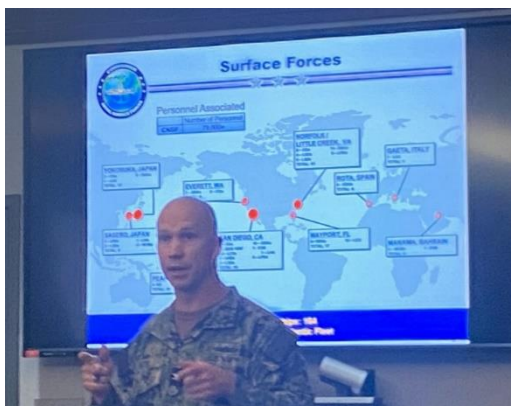
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<sup>7</sup>The fatal collision of destroyer John S. McCain with the tanker Alnic MC on August 21, 2017, stunned the U.S. Navy. It came just two months after another U.S. 7th Fleet destroyer, Fitzgerald, was involved in another deadly collision.

noted that our military is prepared for anything that might occur relating to Taiwan, if tasked to do so.



Admiral Kitchener receives a DOCA challenge coin from DOCA President John Caccamo.



Naval Surface Forces briefier, CAPT Andy Koy, provides additional information to DOCA members, and is thanked by DOCA President John Caccamo

Following Admiral Kitchener's presentation, CAPT Andrew (Andy) Koy of the Commander's Action Group, provided an overview of the placement of the various US Navy surface ships throughout the world. This slide provides an overview of the Navy Surface Forces, consisting of 79,000+ personnel on 164 total surface ships, 90 in the Pacific fleet and 74 in the Atlantic Fleet. Locations include Yokosuka Japan, Sasebo Japan, Pearl Harbor HI, Everett WA, San Diego CA, Norfolk/Little Creek VA, Mayport FL, Rota Spain, Gaeta Italy, and Manama Bahrain.

CAPT Koy also described the Navy's readiness challenges which were listed as –

- Quality of Life
  - Mental Healthcare
  - Administrative Burden
  - Work/Life Balance
- Retention/Recruiting
- Ordnance
- Shipyard Maintenance – Industrial Base

### **Naval Base Point Loma**



CAPT Ken Franklin, Commander, Naval Base Point Loma, and Greg Sullivan brief DOCA members

CAPT Ken Franklin, Commander, Naval Base Point Loma, and Greg Sullivan, Deputy Public Works Officer and Environmental Manager describes Point Loma, with special emphasis on a beach that was created on site that has had a substantial beneficial effect on the environment and is also used as a beach for Navy personnel, resulting in a great morale and wellness site. While receiving the briefing we were able to observe a submarine during a training exercise.

Naval Base Point Loma is located in Point Loma, a neighborhood of San Diego, California. It was established on 1 October 1998. Located in beautiful San Diego, California, Naval Base Point Loma (NBPL) is one of the most diverse and challenging Naval bases in the CNIC inventory. Consolidated under Commander Navy Region Southwest, the six installations that make up Naval Base Point Loma are the Naval Submarine Base; Naval Mine and Anti-submarine Warfare Command; Commander Third Fleet Headquarters complex; Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command Headquarters; SPAWAR Systems

Center and Fleet Intelligence Training Command Pacific, forming a highly technical hub of naval activity.

Naval Base Point Loma provides support to 70 U.S. Pacific Fleet afloat and shore based tenant commands headquartered on the base. Submarine Squadron 11 (CSS-11) consisting of 5 Los Angeles-class submarines are also stationed at Point Loma.

In addition, Point Loma houses the Naval Consolidated Brig, located at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. Embedded inside Naval Base Point Loma are also Cabrillo National Park and the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, which averages more than 1.2 million visitors annually.



A submarine passes by Naval Base Point Loma e.

## **Submarine Training Facility, San Diego (STFSD)**

The Submarine Training Facility, San Diego (STFSD), located at Naval Base Point Loma provides basic training through advanced individual and unit instruction designed for qualifications and certification necessary of the officers and enlisted in the submarine and surface communities.

### **Tour of Firefighting Trainer and Water Simulator**

It should come as no surprise that fire and flooding in a ship is one of the most serious risk throughout the Navy. In order to properly train all Navy personnel will be assigned to go out to sea, every sailor must be trained to fight the three types of fire that may exist on board a ship, and also be trained to deal with a major water leak. At this training facility, we are allowed to observe ROTC cadets get drenched in water while trying to repair a major leak. We are also able to enter the firefighting training building where all sailors are obligated to

be certified in fighting fires. It should be noted that this building does not houses simulator, but actually produces fire that the sailors have to put out.

DOCA members next went to a Submarine Control Room Simulator which is capable of tilting 30° to the port side, 30° to the starboard side, 45° downward, and 45° upward. Many of the DOCA members were allowed to "drive" the submarine and feel what it's like when a submarine dives or makes an emergency surfacing.

## **Submarine tour of the USS Alexandria**



USS Alexandria (SSN-757) (Wikipedia photo)

Approximate 25 of our DOCA members were allowed to tour the USS Alexandria (SSN-757). USS Alexandria (SSN-757), is a Los Angeles class nuclear-powered attack submarine and the third vessel of the United States Navy to be named for both Alexandria, Virginia, and Alexandria, Louisiana.

The Alexandria hosts 16 officers and 127 enlisted personnel. It is 362 feet long and has a beam of 33 feet. According to Wikipedia, it has a test depth of over 757 ft (231 m) and has four 21-inch bow tubes, and is capable of firing 10 Mk48 ADCAP torpedoes, Tomahawk land attack missiles block 3 SLCM range 1,700 nmi (1,956 mi), Harpoon anti-surface ship missiles range 70 nmi (81 mi), and mine laying Mk67 mobile mine and Mk60 captor mines.

Because the ship's name for two different cities name Alexandria, its motto is "Twice as Strong."



First DOCA group headed into USS Submarine Alexandria

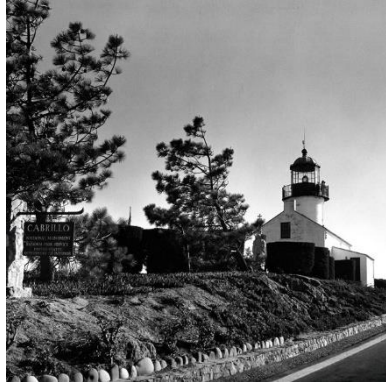


Second DOCA group headed into USS Submarine Alexandria



Third DOCA group headed into USS Submarine Alexandria

Our other DOCA members did an alternate tour to the Cabrillo Monument and Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery.



Old Point Loma Lighthouse



Statue of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo

Cabrillo National Monument is at the southern tip of the Point Loma Peninsula in San Diego, California, United States. It commemorates the landing of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo at San Diego Bay on September 28, 1542. It is run by the National Park Service.

The Old Point Loma Lighthouse was built in 1854. During World War I and II, military facilities on Point Loma provided vital defense. Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo led the first European expedition that explored what is now the west coast of the United States.

Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery is a federal military cemetery in the city of San Diego, that is spread out over 77.5 acres has over 120,000 internments. It is located on the grounds of the former Army coastal artillery station Fort Rosecrans. Fort Rosecrans is named after William Starke Rosecrans, a Union general in the American Civil War. Fort Rosecrans is administered by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

*DOCA's 41 participants: Jamie Auffenberg, Cheryl Ball, David Ball, Chris Bley, Kenneth Bley, Lynn Boughey, Bruce Burda, Frank Caccamo, John Caccamo, David Cline, Cassie DeYoung, Douglas DeYoung, Chris Fortune, George Gallian, Don Grant, Johnna Grant, David Hanson, Douglas Hubert, Garry Hubert, Ann Jackson, AJ Jha, Sunny Jha, Tatiana Kain, Zeev Kain, Jewel Lee Kenley, Bill Klein, Douglas Lempereur, Joel Lipman, Edward Lyle, Bill McCann, Louis McCann, James Negrelli, Bob Rogers, Ted Sobieski, Charles Steinmann, Pat Steinmann, Elizabeth Tierney, Tom Tiernay, Bob van Schoonenberg, Jill Walker, and Ted Westerman.*

*Report prepared by DOCA member Lynn M. Boughey*