



USS SAM RAYBURN (SSBN 635) REUNION STARTING SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2017 ENDING THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2017

Location

Branson Missouri at the Grand Plaza Hotel,
245 N. Wildwood Dr. Branson MO 65616.

Hotel reservations

Contact the Hotel at **417-336-6646** ask for **group Sales** and give them the group code of **"SAMRAY"**. The cost for the hotel standard room is \$93 + 11.6% tax for \$103.78 per night. The Hotel has a full complementary breakfast on the 9th floor between 0630 and 0930. When I say full complementary I mean almost everything you can think of for breakfast. Our meeting room is also on the 9th floor. So when you get your breakfast you can come into our hospitality room and set with your fellow shipmates if you would like to.

Activities

Branson is know as the Family version of Las Vegas. There are over 100 shows a day in and around the Branson area. When I was visiting for the first time to Branson this fall I was blown over by the variety of thing to do in Branson. The town of Branson is very pro military. The week before we arrive for our reunion is know as Veterans Week. Every year Branson proclaims a Veterans Week. It is of course the week that Nov 11 falls on, which is Veterans Day. If you have the opportunity to be in Branson this week you are treated like royalty (just ware something that shows you are a veteran). There are veteran parades and special shows for veterans. If you served in the military during the late 60's and 70's you probably never experienced such an out flowing of good will as you will see in Branson.

We have captured the ability to partake in

some of the shows we feel will interest you most. First is the **Showboat Branson Belle**. It has received the Certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor. This means it consistently receives high reviews from travelers. My personal experience is it is a **MUST SEE**. The Branson Belle is claimed by its owner to be the largest vessel on a land locked lake in the USA. It was launched in 1994 and has been offering lunch and dinner cruises that delight folks ever since. At this point we have targeted the Dinner Cruise for Monday 13th starting at noon. The cruise on Table Rock Lake and the show last about 2.5 hours. I recommend you show up a minimum of 30 minutes before the sailing time. The audience usually start showing up an hour before and enjoy the shopping and pre entertainment show on the Belle. Depending on the number of people who want to enjoy the cruise and lunch we can make the reservation for approximately \$52 per person. The final price will be announced after we have an estimate on the number attending

Another event we have planned is the **Clay Cooper Show**. We only have one opportunity to attend this show during our reunion. When I visited Branson this past fall the Clay Cooper Show was recommended to me. I had no idea who he was. I was pleasantly surprised by the show and highly recommend it as a family event. The Clay Cooper Theater was formally the Osmond Family Theater and became The Clay Cooper Theater in 2010. This is not to say Clay is new to Branson. Clay is celebrating his 31st season in Branson. He has been performing for Branson audiences since he was 16. The Show we are lining up is for 1000 hrs on Tuesday 14 November. It



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will end around 1230.

Finally we are also planning to take in one last show. I was impressed with the energy of the **#1 Hits of the 60 Show**. This is all about the music when most of us were in the service. They sing and dance to over 100 different songs that will have you on a trip down memory lane. It is a revisit to the British Invasion, Motown, California Surfin' and the Age of Aquarius. They also have a special tribute to the Veterans. Like I mentioned, I was very impressed with the show and the trip down memory lane. We have chosen to attend this show on Tuesday starting at 1400 hours. This is the same day and at the same theater as the Clay Cooper Show. You will have a 2 hour break between shows so you can go eat lunch. There are a number of great places to eat lunch near the theater. I will suggest some options before we depart for the show. Like most shows it last about 2.5 hours. This is the least cost of all the shows we are planning for but I think it will be the most fun.

We should be able to finalize the pricing and timing of all the shows in May. We will need to do that to get tickets for the shows. As I previously mentioned, this is around the special Veterans week and reservations go pretty fast.

SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

First: and foremost is call the Grand Plaza Hotel and make your room reservations. As I mentioned if you have the opportunity to arrive early to enjoy some of Veterans week just let the hotel know when you will be arriving. I talked with the hotel the third week of Feb and they already have approximately 12 Rayburn guest registered.

Second: Fill in the attached reunion reservation sheet. Let us know what show you plan

to attend. This sheet will also be available on the Sam Rayburn Website For all you Golfers we have set up a time for golf, but we need an estimate of who is interested in Golfing. When I was there last fall I had the opportunity to play at the **Pointe Royale Golf Course**. It is a great course and not that expensive for a resort. Many of the homes around the course are owned by the stars that put on many of the shows in Branson. You never know who you might see. The greens fees are in the range of \$50. I enjoyed the course so much I played there twice.

Additional Fun Things to Do

When you are visiting Branson keep in mind there is lots going on all the time. As I previously mentioned there are over 100 shows a day going on. If you would like to attend some additional show take a look at the Branson Tourism Center Website. If you find something that really tickles your fancy go for it. The hotel does have a desk that can help you make show reservations. They can usually get you a discount. You can let them know what show you are interested in and they can help out with the reservation. You can call before you arrive or after you get there. If you only want a couple of tickets you can usually get in but if you want a group of tickets you better call early. Also if you would like to set in VIP seats you better call early.

Shopping is the next most popular thing to do in Branson. Good luck if you guys can keep your Significant Other out of the stores. Remember Christmas is just around the corner and Branson is ramped up for the season. Like I once heard "*If you cannot find it in Branson then it is not made*". To make it worse the Tanger Outlet center is almost across the street from the Hotel. I tell Dawn (SO) she can shop all she wants (it's the buying I have a problem with).



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Please review the registration page and print it out. Fill it in, and total the cost. Make check payable to: **Sam Rayburn Association**.

Get a stamp and make an envelope out to
Tom Sprague
551 Hays Country Acres Rd
Dripping Springs, TX 78620

Put everything in the envelope and drop it in the US Postal System (pray). If you put your email address on the form I will send you an email reply to let you know I received your registration. *If you would like to tip me please put in cash so no one can trace it.*

Next, in your spare time, visit the Branson Tourism Center website.

<http://www.bransontourismcenter.com/>

Take a look at the additional things you can enjoy while in Branson. I did not what to over extend you with a bunch of shows. I am leaving lots of time for you to look up some additional things you might like to see or do. Remember when looking at the show schedules be sure to view the time you will be in Branson. Like I previously mentioned there are more than 100 shows a day going on. There are even some restaurants that have a seating time for lunch or dinner and a show is included.

When I was in Branson back in October 2016 I was able to take in a number of shows. The first one was the Showboat Branson Belle. I was so impressed by the venue I new we had to include this in our package. Next I went to the Presley's show. This is country entertainment at its best. For all you older / retired folk it reminded me of Hee Haw. The Presley family is one of the original performing acts in the Branson area. They date back to performing in a cave before Branson was even built

up. They established a theater in Branson and pretty soon other theaters sprang up around them. More than 40 years later the Presley's still play to a packed house. They are a combination of foot stomping music and comedy.

Next we went to see SIX. Yes that is the name of the show because there are 6 brothers that sing with no accompaniment. Although when I was there it sounded like they had an orchestra back up. That is how good these guys are. They got their start on the Donny & Marie Show in 1978. The group has seen great success in Branson. SIX was awarded Branson's Best New Show in 2007 and Best Show of both 2008 and 2009. SIX performs the songs of popular artists and then ends on a spiritual note.

Finally we went to the Dixie Stamped. I am not sure how to describe this show. It is in an enclosed arena. There are two locations for the Dolly Parton Dixie Stampede. One of course in Branson and the other in Dolly Wood, Pigeon Forge TN. The one in Branson opened in 1995. This is a show of horsemanship with a story. It is quite a production. You are ushered in to your seating, filling the arena in about 15 minutes. Before you know it servers are taking your drink order and the next thing you know you are getting fresh cooked food put on you plate. Be sure to wash you hands before coming in because your hands are you eating utensils. The food is very good and more than you can eat, and the show is unbelievable. They are quite fast at moving people. I guess this is true of many of the shows. If you visit the Dixie Stampede I recommend you come one hour early. I hear the pre show is quite entertaining. I missed the pre show.



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What can you do to make it a success?

People have asked me if they can help with Reunion. My response is of course. I have never turned down help. I am hoping to make this a Reunion you will not forget. Since Bran-son is touted as the Family version of Las Vegas I am in the process of finding some talent to entertain us. Initially I am keeping the things I am looking for a little close to the chest. I want it to be a surprise. The one thing I am willing to share is the attempt to find a Disc Jockey for our banquet. At St Mary's we had a DJ that really hit the spot. Some folks got up and had a good time dancing and it was hard to bring it to a close. I am hoping to find some one that will be able to bring the same vitality to this reunion. Personally I do not know any DJ people. I have asked around and I have some leads but no results as of this Newsletter. If you know of a DJ type of person please let me know. We are hoping to get someone in the area so we do not have to pay for their transportation or hotel cost. Send me an email or give me a call. (tmsprague48@gmail.com) or 858-755-6071. If I am not able to answer the phone leave a message and I will call you back as soon as I can. Thanks in advance for your help

Next is help with our 50% 50% drawing. As you are aware, we have a raffle at the banquet. From the first day until the end of the reunion folks will be selling raffle tickets. Please consider purchasing as many as you can. At our reunion in St Mary's the winner walked away with over \$900. After the winner was announced we kept drawing tickets and the winner would go to the table in the back and chose a gift. This was a lot of fun and I think almost everyone walked away with a prize. You might ask "*where did all of these*

things come from"? Well that is pretty easy to explain. We had some very dedicated folks that went around and asked merchants for donations. You would be surprised many local merchants want to participate in assisting military organizations. Well I NEED HELP with getting these items. Some of you might be down sizing and have some fantastic treasures you are not sure what you will do with. Might I suggest you donate them to the prize table. Other of you may know some merchants in your area that you would not mind approaching. My wife visits Fredericksburg TX on a regular basis and she know many of the merchants. She has more that a dozen that donate to a silent auction we participate in every year. If you are a little shy at approaching merchants I have made up a form letter explaining our reunion and thanking the merchant for supporting our efforts. The letter can be used as a introduction as to what you are expecting. If you would like a copy of this letter please send me an email and I will send you a PDF version of the letter. All you need to do is print it out and give to the merchant.

I want to thank everyone in advance for the help I expect to see from everyone. If you have any suggestions for the Reunion please contact me. Remember our target is to have a lot of FUN. To have FUN you have to become involved. The more you become involved the more FUN you will have. That I promise you.

Tom Sprague Reunion Coordinator
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