

# Nimitz sailor who died on hiking trip recalled for his proficiency, care for others

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(Photo: USS Nimitz Public Affairs Office)

USS Nimitz sailor Nuclear Electricians Mate Second Class Jeremiah Adams, 24, died doing what he loved best — hiking through the woods during his time off from working on the Bremerton-based aircraft carrier.

"It didn't matter what the weather was going to be like, or if he was the only person going out. He went almost every single weekend. That was his passion," said Kristi, a Nimitz sailor who helped search for Adams. She agreed to be interviewed by the Kitsap Sun under the condition her last name was withheld from publication.

Kristi first met Adams after he started dating her roommate, another Nimitz sailor. They all worked in the ship's reactor department, but in different divisions.

**Previously:** [Missing Nimitz sailor found dead in Olympic National Forest \(/story/news/local/2018/05/13/uss-nimitz-sailor-found-dead-olympic-national-forest-buckhorn-wilderness/605932002/\)](#)

Adams' shipmates described him as the kind of person who would go out of his way to lend a hand or try to cheer someone up if they were having a bad day with a barrage of jokes and sarcasm.

Within the reactor electrical division, Adams was tasked with performing maintenance on the various components that helped distribute electrical power generated by the ship's two nuclear reactors throughout the carrier. Adams enlisted in the Navy in 2013 and came aboard the Nimitz in May 2015. He hailed from Aurora, Illinois.

Reactor Electrical Division Officer Lt. j. g. Carolyn Ross said he was highly-skilled.

"I trusted Adams implicitly," Ross said. "I never felt like I needed to have someone second-check his work or verify his process because he always knew the right answer and gave 100 percent effort for every task."

The division's former leading petty officer, Nuclear Electricians Mate Second Class Wesley Bailey, said Adams taught him, even though he was senior to him.

"Losing him feels like I just lost a brother," he said. "Definitely won't be the same without him."

**More:** [New commander coming to Navy Region Northwest this summer \(/story/news/local/navy/2018/05/06/new-commander-navy-region-northwest-summer/567202002/\)](#)

Despite his technical expertise and work ethic, Adams tried to accomplish his work under the radar, Ross said.

"He worked so hard because he wanted the job done correctly," she said. "He never did the work in order to receive accolades or awards."

The division's former leading petty officer "would go out of her way to praise him... and put him in for awards as a friendly way to push his buttons," Ross said.

While the Nimitz was deployed last year, Adams received a Sailor of the Day award in September 2017 and was named the reactor department's Junior Sailor of the Year for 2017.

In his downtime, his shipmates said Adams was laid back and easy going. If he wasn't hiking, he was studying something, Bailey said.

"Mathematics, electronics, biology, you name it, this kid had probably studied at one point in his off time," he said.

**More:** [Public comments lead Navy to tweak SEAL training proposal \(/story/news/local/2018/04/18/public-comments-lead-navy-tweak-seal-training-proposal/508567002/\)](https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/local/2018/04/18/public-comments-lead-navy-tweak-seal-training-proposal/508567002/)

The Nimitz will be holding a closed memorial ceremony for Adams with full honors, including a rifle salute, Monday afternoon at Naval Base Kitsap-Bremerton.

Fellow sailors participated in the search-and-rescue campaign for Adams, who was last heard from Friday, May 4, before he left for a day hike on the Olympic Peninsula. When he didn't show up to work aboard the carrier the following Monday morning, it triggered a week-long effort to locate his whereabouts. Crews focused their efforts on the Olympic National Forest's Buckhorn Wilderness after Adams' car was discovered parked in front of the Lower Greywolf trailhead, which is south of Blyn, near Sequim in Clallam County.

While they mourn him, they are also recovering from the toll the search for Adams took on them.

As someone with eight years of search-and-rescue experience and paramedic training, Kristi said she tried to compartmentalize the task of locating a missing person from the fact that the search was for one of her friends.

"That kind of helped me cope with it throughout the week," she said. "But then as it started getting towards the end of the week, I started to realize, 'Hey, this is my friend and if we don't find him, he's gone forever.'"

**Watch:** [USS Bremerton returns to namesake city for deactivation \(/videos/news/2018/04/26/uss-bremerton-returns-namesake-city-deactivation/34291653/\)](https://www.kitsapsun.com/videos/news/2018/04/26/uss-bremerton-returns-namesake-city-deactivation/34291653/)

As the week progressed, she said it became more difficult to keep a positive frame of mind.

"You could see it in everyone's faces that they were starting to lose hope, and everyone would look to me like 'Is it possible you could still save him at this point?' and I totally felt like I could have," she said. "Afterwards, that's when I realized there was nothing I could have done at all. That was a little hard to swallow."

When search-and-rescue crews recovered Adams' body and brought him out of the wilderness, Kristi and other Nimitz sailors were standing by the trailhead.

"We all stood around a campfire and had a moment of silence for him," she said. "We shared stories about him to keep his spirit alive."

The next morning, sailors from the ship's reactor department gathered together at an officer's house to comfort each other in the wake of the news.

"That was a raw moment. Working on the ship with these people, you never see them show emotion like that. It's our jobs, it's work. You do the work, you get it done, you go home at the end of the day. You don't really see that kind of emotional connection," she said. "It makes me happy that there was so much love and support for him."

Adams' childhood friend Colleen Hill, from Illinois, said he was "a soul unlike any other."

"He was the person I would go to anytime when I wasn't feeling good or needed someone to talk to, so to have that person removed, I didn't really know what to do," she said. "He was definitely one of the best friends that I've ever had and I loved him very much."

Hill described Adams as someone who was more about the journey to get somewhere, rather than dwelling on the past or being solely focused on what's around the next corner.

"He always told me to live my life and you can't reflect on the past and be upset about it. You have to keep going," she said. "So that's something I'm trying to remember."

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