

USS STERETT ASSOCIATION



Greetings from the Sterett Association

I hope you have all survived the summer months. It's definitely been a hot one around most of the country.



In the months following our reunions, we usually go through a quiet period until we start working up towards the next great get together. However, there are always things going on with your Sterett shipmates. I intend to try and keep you posted on anything I hear about.

Web Site:

We are going through a transition on our website upkeep. Mike Garrity, who has been doing a great job taking care of the site for several years, will have to bow out of this responsibility. We were unable to identify anyone at the Biloxi reunion that wanted to step up and take the reins. Therefore, we are in the process of having a commercial outfit takeover the site. The site will be updated shortly.

Ship's Store:

The ship's store is back up and in good hands. Ron Malcolm took custody of the store in May and is doing a great job. He has already sold out the brushed brass CG 31 lighters. Of special note, Ron made some inquiries through Zippo, located a vendor that has a licensing agreement with Zippo for the art work of decommissioned US Navy ships. Ron was able to special order a run of the CG 31 original ship's store style brushed chrome lighters.





These are now available. Check the web site web site for information. We expect these lighters to go fast so don't miss out.

Other items available are DLG 31 and CG 31 ball caps, windbreaker jackets, Sterett lapel pins, commemorative photo book from the 2007 reunion and DDG 104 Christening and a photo disk from the 2009 reunion.

The Association Ship's Store was established as a convenience and service to members.

Therefore, items offered for sale are limited to current members. If you've allowed your dues to lag, now is a good time to catch up.

DDG 104 News

Congratulations are in order to CDR. Rich McDaniel who assumed command of the DDG 104 in March.

Also congratulations to CMDCM Chris Benavides, who is the new DDG 104 Command Master Chief.

Capt. McDaniel and Master Chief Benavides strongly support the Sterett Association. Besides Master Chief Benavides, we have two new members of the Association from the crew of the DDG 104: Petty Officers Perez and Andrieux. Welcome aboard!

Honorary Crewmembers Update

One of our "Honorary Crewmembers", Liennhu Doan and her family, who we met at the reunion in May, recently paid a visit to San Diego and to the DDG 104.

The ship gave them a VIP reception, including a reserved parking spot, reception in the wardroom and a tour of the ship by Captain McDaniel himself. Local TV also covered the event. All this on a Sunday. Captain McDaniel also presented a copy of the Sterett Squadron print by Peter Hsu, Sterett ball caps and coins.

Liennhu sent the following message to Captain McDaniel:

"Dear Commander McDaniel,

Our family returned to Denver after a week of vacation from South California Monday, August 8th. On behalf of my family, I would like to thank you for your generosity in allowing us to touring your beautiful ship - the USS Sterett DDG 104 on Sunday July 31st, and giving us the opportunity to personally shake your hand.

It was our greatest honor to meet you along with your wonderful and friendly staff. You made me feel so touched with your welcoming reception and TV coverage. I was not expecting any of that

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and was totally speechless when I was interviewed by ABC 10 News. My heart is still pounding when I look back; remembering what happened that day.

I thought of my father and wished he was still here when walking up the gangway for the first time after 28 years. I feel so fortunate and want to thank you the Lord and our saviors again who gave us the opportunity to live and to be here today.

In a million years, I never thought that I will be able to reunite with the men who saved our lives almost 3 decades ago which happened on May 22nd of this year and recently able to step on a similar Sterett ship that rescued us on July 23rd, 1983. This is like a dream come true.

It was my greatest pride to show my three children and retelling them my journey to America for which Sterett was a MAJOR part of my history. I told them over and over, I wouldn't be here if I was not picked up by the USS Sterett CG-31 ship.

Once again, THANK YOU:

- 1) For everything you have done to make the visit happen so memorable
- 2) For the beautiful Commemorative Drawing for the Christening of USS Sterett (DDG-104), May 19, 2007 by Peter Hsu; the special DDG-104 caps and coins
- 3) For allowing us to be part of Sterett family.



Our thanks to Capt. McDaniel and the crew of the DDG 104 for making Liennhu's visit so special. It's very obvious the crew of the DDG 104 is aware of and embraces the legacy of the Steretts that preceded her.

I was recently contacted by a gentleman named Jeff from Virginia who had been trying to find information on the details of his wife's rescue with her family when they escaped Vietnam in 1983. His wife was only 8 months old at the time. I sent him the pictures of the group of refugees I had. The family identified the baby in this picture as his wife.

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They claim this is the only picture that exists of her as a baby.

There's a twist to this family's escape and rescue. When the family left Vietnam, the mother and father were in two different boats which became separated shortly thereafter. The mother and her children were rescued by Sterett. The fate of the father was unknown for 9 months. Eventually, through the Red Cross, the father was located in a Indonesian camp and the family was reunited and was settled in Australia, where they live today. Jeff and his wife met at George Mason University. Seems an uncle sponsored her to attend college in the US. I am hoping to learn more about this family experience.

2013 Reunion

The next Sterett Association reunion will be held in Branson, Mo. October 11-13, 2013.

Branson is a great destination and has a multitude of things to see and do. It's becoming the "go to" place for military reunions.

Shipmate Ralph Camp has stepped up and offered to assist in the planning for the reunion.

Ralph and his wife were in Branson and attended a planning conference this month.

It's never too early to plan so mark October 11-13, 2013 on your calendar's and make plans to attend.

Association Membership

A number of Association members have let their dues slip. We encourage everyone to keep your dues up to date. We have a strong Association but it can only remain strong if the members keep current. Attendance at our reunions and access to ship's store items require a current membership.

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I took the liberty of rewriting the Why Become a Member piece so well written by Denis LaCrosse a few years ago. Some food for thought.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER?

If your Sterett tour was nothing special and was just like other Navy tours you had, there is no good reason for you to become a member of the Sterett Association and no reason to read further.

However, if you have ever allowed your mind to drift back to your Sterett years and started to think about some of your shipmates and thought about all the things you did back then and you suddenly realize there's a smile breaking out on your face, or you feel nostalgic about the good old Sterett days, and then read on.

There are many of your former shipmates out here who feel the same way. A lot of them are Sterett Association members.

I see activity on two different Sterett Face Book pages. On them, former Sterett crewmembers share messages, pictures and memories of days past. Days spent in Subic Bay, Yokosuka, Pattaya Beach, Hong Kong, Sydney, Perth and even Shanghai. Also a few days spent at sea! Whether you spent 4 years, 6 years or had a full Navy career, these are days that most of us cherish. These are the years we grew up, found out who we were and formed the attitudes that made us who we are today. For most, the people we spent so many days with helped to mold us into the men we have become. Special times, special people.

With these thoughts in mind, the Sterett Association serves an invaluable service. It is an organization made up of people just like ourselves who have fond memories of our Sterett years. The Sterett Association provides the opportunity to locate former shipmates, correspond with them and, every two years, visit with each other face to face at the reunions. The hours I have spent discussing old times over a few drinks at the reunions have been some of the most enjoyable times I have had. Hearing about some long forgotten "liberty events" bring rolls of laughter that literally can hurt. Looking across the room and seeing a former shipmate that you spent liberty time with many years ago will warm your heart.

A Sterett crewmember who attended the 2011 reunion for the first time had this to say, *"I honestly had a great time. The hotel and casino was great but seeing all my old shipmates was the icing on the cake. I wish I hadn't waited so long to attend a reunion."*



His is a fairly typical reaction. Personally, I have enjoyed each of the Sterett reunions I have attended so much that I won't miss another, as long as I am physically able to travel.

Why dues??

Like any organization, the Sterett Association has operating costs. The Association is a registered Non-Profit organization and all Association officers serve voluntarily. The membership dues of \$20 each year take care of operating expenses like maintaining and hosting the web site, providing inventory for the ship's store, covering reunion startup costs, etc.

For those that do attend a reunion, your membership dues for the following year are included with the reunion fee. However, you must be current to register for the reunion.

Reunion fees are based on actual estimated costs for the reunion events which include the banquet, tour transportation, DJ, hospitality room and refreshments, audio and visual equipment, and a myriad of other fees and charges.

The location of the reunions is selected at the reunion business meeting. We do try and move the reunion site around the country to accommodate travel expenses. However, if you plan early, travel can be less expensive.

So, why become a member?

Being part of the Sterett Association will provide you the opportunity to reconnect and remain in touch with old shipmates who share that special feeling about the USS Sterett. It will also give you a chance to spend a couple of days rubbing elbows with old friends who have gone on to different things in life but will always be part of your life back in the day.

Visit the Sterett Association web site at <http://sterett.net/public/> and click on the Join or Renew Membership link.

See you in Branson.

Steve Hayes

President, USS Sterett Association