

USS STERETT ASSOCIATION



Winter 2014



Greetings from the Sterett Association

Hope you are all staying warm during this rough winter that has impacted the entire country. Definitely one to remember.

This newsletter contains a few items we hope will be of interest to our Sterett family.

Correction:

One of the pictures from the 2013 Branson Reunion was misidentified.

No harm was done to either marriage in the production of the newsletter.

The picture is repeated here with the correct identification.



Marcella Thayer and Larry Motz with wife Mary Ellen's arm

Reunion 2015

Shipmate Bill Mallow is busy doing the early work to get a specific location lined up for our 2015 Reunion. Bill, together with the Association Officers, have developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) which lists all the major requirements needed for our reunion. The RFP is being distributed to Seattle area hotels. Prospective hotels have the opportunity to respond with their offers for room rates, meeting facilities, banquet facilities and catering services. A short list of potentially favorable hotels is formed and the Reunion Coordinator will visit and check out each one and submit his findings and recommendations. The final selection will be made by a majority vote of the Association Officers.

The dates for the reunion have not been finalized. We are looking at September 18-20, 2015 but it's possible room rates may be more reasonable after October 1. The final dates will be published as soon as possible.

The Seattle location makes it very convenient to jumping across the border and paying a visit to Vancouver, British Columbia. Passports are required so you might want to think about getting or updating one.

I recently ran across a poem that was written for a reunion of Navy aviators. I was touched by the words and am repeating it here, with slight modification:

THE REUNION

Autumn leaves rustling, together to the appointed place, the old warriors come.
Pilgrims, drifting across the land they fought to preserve.
Where they meet is not important anymore.
Greetings echo across a lobby.
Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close.

Embraces, that as young men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly.
But deep within these Indian Summer days, they have reached a greater understanding of life and love.
The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous, remembering.
On the table someone spreads old photographs, a test of recollection.
And friendly laughter echoes at shocks of hair gone gray or white, or merely gone.

The rugged slender bodies lost forever.
Yet they no longer need to prove their strength.
Some are now sustained by one of "medicine's miracles," and even in this fact, they manage to find humor.
The women, all those that waited, all those who loved them, have watched the changes take place.
Now, they observe and listen, and smile at each other, as glad to be together as the men.
Talk turns to war and ships and foreign lands. Stories are told and told again, reweaving the threadbare fabric of the past.
Mending one more time the banner of their youth.
Once more, they are on the sea again, chasing the wind, feeling the exhilaration of the salt air on the senses.

Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken, wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, move silently among them.
Their presence is felt and smiles appear beneath misty eyes.
Each, in his own way may wonder who will be absent in another year.

The room grows quiet for a time.
Suddenly an ember flames to life. Another memory burns.

The talk may turn to other wars and other men, and of futility.
So, this is how it goes. The past is so much the present.

In their ceremonies, the allegiances, the speeches and the prayers, one cannot help but hear the deep eternal love of country and comrades they will forever share.

Finally, it is time to leave.
Much too soon to set aside this little piece of yesterday, but the past cannot be held too long, for it is fragile.

They say "Farewell"..." See you another year, God willing." Each keeps a little of the others with him forever?

(Found on VO-67 Reunion site, written by Rachel Firth)

Sterett's Humanitarian Service

We have been fortunate to have some of the Vietnamese boat people who were rescued by Sterett in 1982 and 1983 attend our reunions. These are emotional events for them and for us, especially the first time they are able to attend and reunite with the people that helped them. They look at Sterett as the "Angel of the Pacific".

I received the following email recently:

In 1983, the USS Sterett rescued my mother, Luu, and more than 145 Vietnamese from a small boat on their way to seek refuge in Thailand. The engine, however, had died and the boat was quickly taking on water. After 7 excruciating days stranded on the unforgiving waters, the USS Sterett came to the rescue and changed my mom's life forever. She is the 2nd person from the right in the attached photograph.



I was born shortly after my parents, Luu and Tri, arrived in Illinois. My younger brother, Andy, was born in 1987. Since landing in the States, we've lived in Illinois, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Georgia. We've been happily living in Atlanta since the mid 90's.

Our family is so grateful to be in this amazing country and we're extremely proud to be Americans. We cannot imagine what our lives would be like anywhere else. Because of the men and women of the USS Sterett, my mom was able to experience freedom, achieve her dreams and raise a healthy, happy family in a country full of opportunities.

We just wanted to take the time to express our appreciation to all the people who proudly served aboard the USS Sterett. Thank you so much.

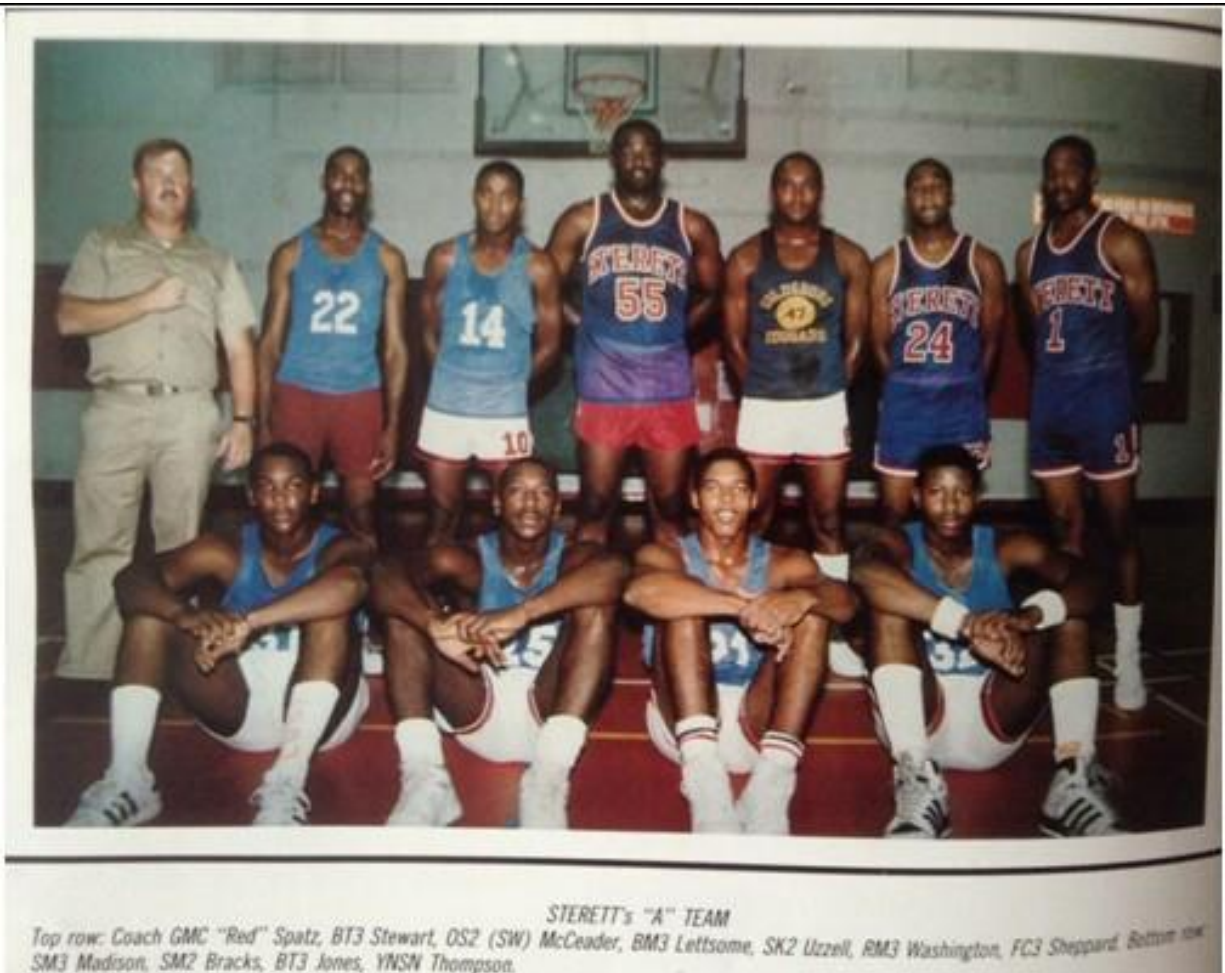
Sincerely,
Andre

We don't often think about it but the time we spent in the Navy, at sea, did touch lives.

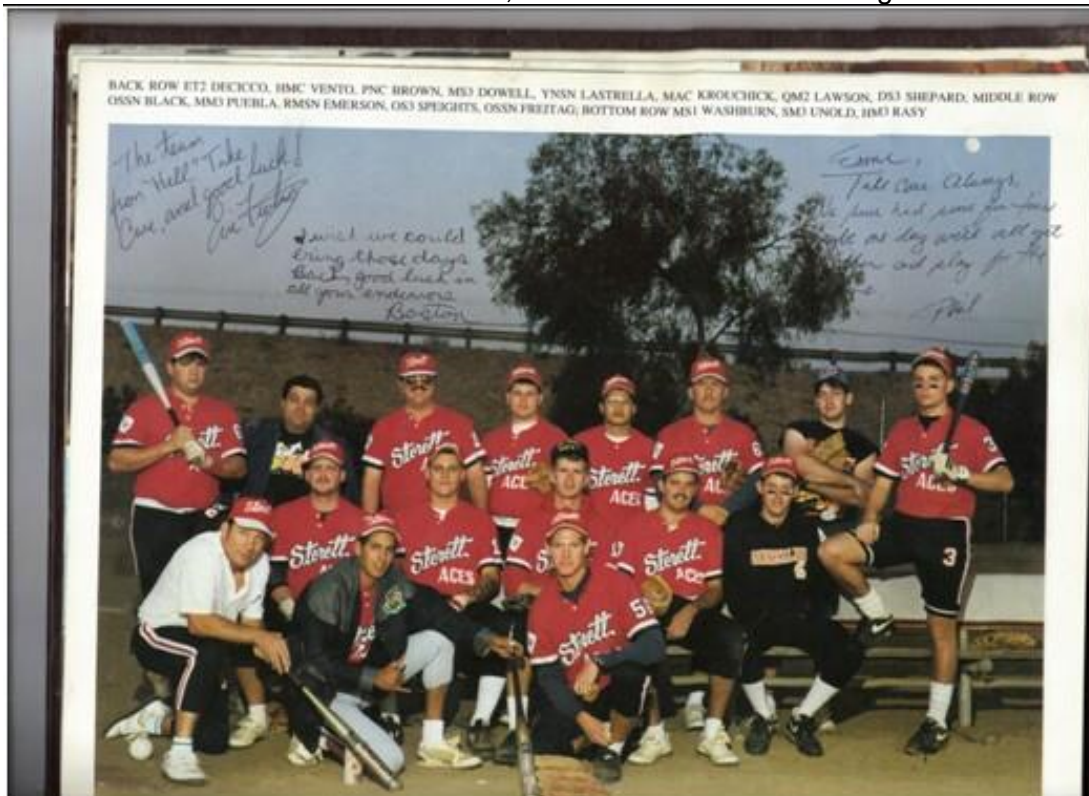
Facebook

Facebook continues to be an excellence source of Sterett related news and information. There's lots of good discussion and pictures from former crewmembers. There was a recent exchange about the dominance of the Sterett's sports teams in Subic and throughout Seventh Fleet.

Sterett's record of excellence was not restricted to at sea operations.



The Sterett softball team was also dominant, both in PI and after returning to the United States.



Robert Emerson, “This was the Sterett Softball Team from the Philippines and also in San Diego after we changed home ports. We had a lot of fun and were the Team to beat in the Philippine days from 1990 thru 1991. We finished second in the Surface Line Week Competition upon return to the US. I miss these days and these guys.”

Captain Genet

Another recent Facebook subject of discussion was the merits of having served under Capt. Richard Genet in 1986-1988. By all comments, Capt. Genet was a great CO and was loved by his crew. I managed to contact Capt. Genet and learned he and his wife Karen would be traveling along Interstate 10, passing within 3 miles of my home. He and I met and spent a very nice hour discussing Sterett, the Sterett Association and the 2015 reunion.

I fully understand why his crew thought so highly of him.

I am pleased to say Capt. Genet plans to attend the 2015 reunion. He is hoping many of his crew will attend as well.



Cruise Book Project

The project to convert all of Sterett's cruise books to a digital format for posting on the web site is well underway. We currently have six books complete, three more in the conversion process and one other has been promised.

These ten cruise books are:

67-68, 68-70, 72, 73, 75-76, 1979, 81-82, 83-84, 87-88, 90-91

If other Sterett cruise books were published, please let us know.

Many thanks go to those Sterett shipmates who have loaned their cruise books to the Association for conversion. We believe this is a worthwhile undertaking for the enjoyment of our Sterett shipmates.

Special thanks to **Tom Jacobsmeyer** (DLG 31) for his tireless efforts in doing the actual conversion. These books are not being scanned. Tom is taking digital images of each page in order to produce the sharpest, most complete images without damage to the book binding.

Our webmaster is looking into methods which will provide the best presentation for the cruise books. We hope to have them posted in the near future.

Be assured, we have verified there are no copyrights associated with Navy cruise books.

DDG 104

CDR Stewart Bateshansky, CO of DDG 104, will complete his assignment the end of March and will likely be heading east to Washington, DC for a year of school.

Cdr. Bateshansky embraced the Sterett legacy and has been a strong supporter of the Sterett Association. He personally took charge of several DD 407 and DLG/CG 31 artifacts and ensured they have a respectful place in Sterett. We thank him for that.

I speak for all the members of the Sterett Association in wishing CDR Bateshansky fair winds and following seas as he takes the next step in his US Navy journey.



Sterett Plaque

Another recent item on Facebook was interesting.

Shipmate Jerry Vincent told the following:

“A few years ago, while on a ride with The Legion Riders, I was surprised by this at Camp Rilea. Just south of Astoria, Or on hwy 101. A Sterett plaque at a National Guard Training Camp.”



According to the LtCol who runs the training center, no one knows where the plaque came from and it has been there at least 15 years.

Mike Smith

Mike Smith, who was highlighted in an article about Boy's Town in the Fall, 2012 newsletter continues to achieve:

W. Mike Smith, '67, was recently appointed to the Board of Directors for Boys Town of Washington D.C. Smith has been a strong supporter of Boys Town and the Boys Town National Alumni Association.

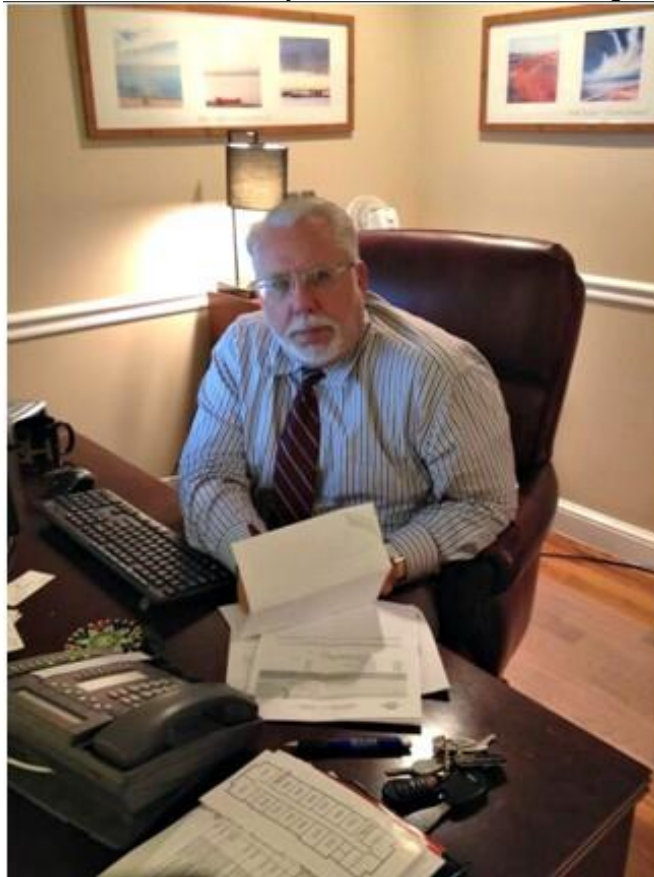
He is the first Boys Town Alumni to be appointed to the Board of Directors for a remote site. He served on the board of the BTNAA from 2009-2011 representing Region 4.

During his time on the board he was Chairman of the Veterans Memorial Committee that was responsible for the expansion of the Veterans Memorial at Boys Town to recognize those alumni who were killed in action or died while serving in uniform. Smith is a regular attendee at all conventions and mini-conventions and is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Boys Town National Alumni Association Scholarship Fund.

Smith is presently a Vice President in Alexandria for Skyline Ultd Inc. He is a former Contracting Officer with both the Department of Defense and USDA and is a Viet Nam veteran with over 25 months of service in the Gulf of Tonkin, with the U.S. Navy.

He served for 13 years with the Iowa Army National Guard. In addition, he was a Senior Contracts Manager for Boeing on the Program Support Communications Network contract for NASA at Marshall Space Flight Center for 8 years; and another 5 years on the Reserve Component Automation Systems contract in Washington D.C. where he oversaw the procurement of over \$900M in hardware for the Guard and Reserve.

He holds certifications as an Advanced Specialist in Contract Management from the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama, and as a Certified Logistics Manager from the Logistics Management Institute in Fort Lee, Va. During his military career he was awarded the Navy Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal. Smith brings a strong commitment to Boys Town's program of care to the Washington D.C. board and will serve them well bringing his alumni perspective to the program. Smith and his wife Cindy live in Falls Church, Virginia.



Congratulations to Mike for this honor.

DD 407

We could write volumes about the history of the DD 407 in WWII. However, this message from Admiral Bull Halsey serves as an example of the 407's and other Tin Cans outstanding performance in the heat of battle.

“IN TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO FOUGHT IN THE BATTLE OF GUADALCANAL
NOVEMBER 13–15, 1942”

“To the superb officers and men on the sea, on land, in the air, and under the seas who in the past five days have performed such magnificent feats for our country. You have won the undying gratitude of your country and have written our names in golden letters on the pages of history. No honor for you could be too great, my pride in you is beyond expression. Magnificently done. May God bless each and every one of you. To the glorious dead, hail heroes—may you all rest with God.”

WILLIAM F. HALSEY
Admiral, U.S. Navy

Vietnam Action

Recently, **Rick Allard**, one of Sterett's Air Intercept Controllers, has been exchanging memories and information about the role Sterett and the embarked helicopter detachments played during the Vietnam war with **Ron Milam**, a member of HC-7 and the squadron historian.

HC-7 was the Navy's only dedicated combat search-and-rescue helicopter squadron throughout the war. Although based ashore at Naval Air Station Atsugi, Japan, HC-7 provided detachments aboard ships deployed in the South China Sea and Gulf of Tonkin areas.

During the Vietnam War, Sterett's primary mission was as an Anti Air Warfare screen to protect US Naval forces in the Gulf of Tonkin from air attack. Her secondary mission was to provide search and rescue (SAR) of downed air crews. Sterett performed both missions superbly. The first SAR mission occurred shortly after Sterett took up her first line period in August 1968 and was the first rescue of an American pilot from inside North Vietnam.

During this line period the embarked helicopter unit was HC-7 Det 110.



The following is an after action report of the rescue by Ltjg J.E. Wiant, the pilot of the rescue helo.

STATEMENT OF LTJG J.E. WIANT,
LTJG. USNR, PILOT OF BIG MOTHER 74.

At 1730 on 31 August 1968, I received "SAR ALERT" over the 1MC aboard the USS STERETT. At 1733, we were manned and I executed an ASE off take off without incident.

ASE came on the line after about 1 ½ minutes in the air. I proceeded to my orbit point and awaited my rescap. We were given a position of the pilot in relation to the USS STERETT locating him about 62 miles inland from our present position. A "straight line" route was impossible due to AAA sites and other fortifications.

We examined the charts and decided on a route well to the south over the Vihn Hills and west to the mountains where we turned north to the SAR location.

We sighted our A-4 escorts and I started my penetration at 5,500' on a heading of 270°. Prior to crossing the beach, I called for IFF and lights off. The crewman handed us our armor and I authorized them to clear their weapons. As I crossed over the beach, I called "feet dry" and turned UHF communications over to my co-pilot.

Following the rescap vectors and interpreting our Flak charts, we proceeded to the ground without opposition or incident. The communications were very cluttered until we came under the direct control of the on scene commander. He switched us to guard and everyone also to SAR primary. At this time, Big Mother 74, the on scene commander, and the downed pilot were the only ones on guard and communications were excellent.

I turned east on my first approach and the on-scene commander flew by my starboard side in a dive and marked the spot by voice call and a steep pull-out. We marked it as 18° 45' and 105° 20'. I had the survivor localized now and called for a smoke marker as I began my decent and approach. At this point, we received very heavy 85mm and 100mm AAA fire and I worked to the north. Rescap suppressed the fire sufficiently enough for me to make a high speed 270° approach into what wind there was. He was about 2000' in a bamboo grove at the foot of a ridge.

The survivor did an excellent job of calling us over him. We started receiving small arms fire at this time and I had to increase my hover altitude due to the dead leaves coming up.

We used the forest penetrator and my crewman put it at about 10 feet from the survivor. He made his way to the penetrator and attempted to deploy the seats and experienced problems so he detached it and hooked himself on by his D-ring. The high speed hoist performed as advertised and when SMELLIE called "survivor clear" at 1825, I exited the area. We were in the hover about three minutes and received small arms rounds through the after fuel cell, cabin deck, part of fuselage skin, and number two main rotor blades. The self sealing cell worked satisfactorily and we headed south along the route we came in on. At this point, it was suggested I use a route into Thailand, and declined because I was not informed of the Air Force SAR elements airborne ready to escort us to NAKHON PHANOM. I also considered our available SAR A/C and decided that if I went to Thailand our SAR assets would be greatly impaired.

We started out at 6300' and received 37mm, 55mm, 85mm, and 100mm fire throughout the entire route. A-4 rescap did an outstanding suppression job and got several secondaries. My co-pilot fired at M-16 at several people on the deck as I broke hover but I had to make him stop because the empty cases were bouncing off of the windscreen

into my face.

My crewman expended M-60 ammunition throughout. They each had their weapons jam at least once.

Through evasive maneuvers, excellent rescap and on scene commanders from VA-94, we made it "feet wet" with only a few more scratches and dents from flak bursts.

We landed back aboard the USS STERETT at about 1915 without incident and the survivor, LCDR Harvey EIKEL, USN, from VA-93 received medical attention. The success of this mission can be best attributed to the state of readiness the SAR posture is continually in. The fast reactions of the on scene commander, the rescap, and the coordination by the USS STERETT. The high degree of coverage and professionalism exhibited by my crewman and co-pilot were without exception. J.E. WIANT, JR.

Ron Milam provided this photo taken while he was embarked aboard Sterett. Ron still has a Sterett patch he picked up while aboard.



Navy Tradition

There's been loads of discussion in recent months and years about the changes that have taken place in today's Navy. Most of the discussion centers on how easy things seem to be and today's "soft" Navy. I have no doubt the old salts that preceded us had similar misgivings about "our" Navy.

Imagine - racks with lights and curtains!!

Change is the only constant that remains through the generations of sailors.

It's true that we came through a time when certain time honored traditions were still alive in the Navy and most of us are proud to have had an opportunity to be part of them.

The following letter was written by retired Lt. Cmdr. Thomas Sousa and published in Navy Times. Whether you agree with the points made or not, I think the article is well stated.

An obituary for Navy Tradition (USN, retired) — 1775-2013:

In a press release from Washington D.C., the Navy Department announced the death of Navy Tradition today after a long illness.

Navy Tradition was born into a world of turmoil and revolution in 1775. Starting with nothing as a child, Navy Tradition evolved to become an essential part of the most powerful Navy the world had ever seen. He was present when James Lawrence ordered “Don’t give up the ship” as he lay mortally wounded on the deck of the Chesapeake. He witnessed cannon balls bouncing off the copper-shielded sides of the USS Constitution, “Old Ironsides.”

He fought pirates off the Barbary Coast and suffered with his shipmates on the battleship Arizona during the attack at Pearl Harbor. He fought his way across the Pacific with Nimitz and saw MacArthur fulfill his promise to return to the Philippines. Navy Tradition was there when sailors fought bravely to save the frigate Stark after it was hit by a cruise missile and witnessed the launch of Tomahawk missiles from the battleship Missouri at the outset of Desert Storm.

Through all the strife, good times and bad, Navy Tradition was there to support his shipmates and give a balance to the misery that sometimes accompanied a life at sea. Be the nation at peace or at war, Navy Tradition made sure that we always remembered we were sailors.

He made sure that promotions were celebrated with an appropriate “wetting down”; crows, dolphins and wings were tacked on as a sign of respect from those already so celebrated; chiefs were promoted in solemn ceremony after being “initiated” by their fellow brethren; and only those worthy were allowed to earn the title “shellback.”

But in his later years, Navy Tradition was unable to fight the cancer of political correctness. He tired as his beloved Navy went from providing rations of rum to its sailors to conducting Breathalyzer tests on the brow. He weakened as he saw “Going into harm’s way” turn into “Cover your backside,” and as “Wooden ships and iron men” morphed into “U.S. Navy, Inc.”

A lifelong friend of Navy Tradition recalled a crossing-the-equator ceremony during World War II: “ I had to eat a cherry out of the belly button of the fattest sailor on the ship. It was disgusting. But for that few minutes, it took our minds off the war and to this day it is one of my greatest memories.”

In lieu of flowers, the family of Navy Tradition has asked that all sailors who have earned their shellback and drunk their dolphins; who remember sore arms from where their crows were tacked on and were sent on a search for “relative bearing grease” or a length of “water line”; who’ve been through chiefs’ initiation or answered ship’s call in a bar fight in some exotic port of call, to raise a toast one more time and remember Navy Tradition in his youth and grandeur.

Fair winds and following seas, Shipmate. You will be missed.

Sterett Association Support

Why pay 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 start up costs, etc.

The Sterett Association has been a strong organization since its inception. We can only remain strong with the continued support of our members.

Please take a moment to visit the Sterett web site and update your membership.

<http://www.sterett.net/join-association.html>

**You talkin to me? You got somethin to say?
Bring it on!**

The Sterett Association welcomes any and all input from its members and supporters. Please don't hesitate to submit comments or other items of interest for inclusion in our web site or our newsletters, including pictures. We want to hear from you.

For the Sterett Association:

Steve Hayes