



Spring 2015

## Greetings from the Sterett Association



After a very tough winter for most of the country, spring has finally sprung. Flowers are blooming, birds are chirping and the fish are hungry!

For those still dealing with the cold and snow, relief is around the corner.

This newsletter contains some items of interest for the Sterett community and some updates for the 2015 reunion.

### **Happy Birthday USS Sterett:**

The third Sterett was laid down on 25 September 1962 at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington; sponsored by Mrs. Phyllis Nitze; launched on 30 June 1964, and commissioned as DLG 31 on 8 April 1967, Capt. Edward A. Christofferson, Jr., in command.

# USS STERETT ASSOCIATION



DD 27 (1918-19)



DD 407 (1939-1945)



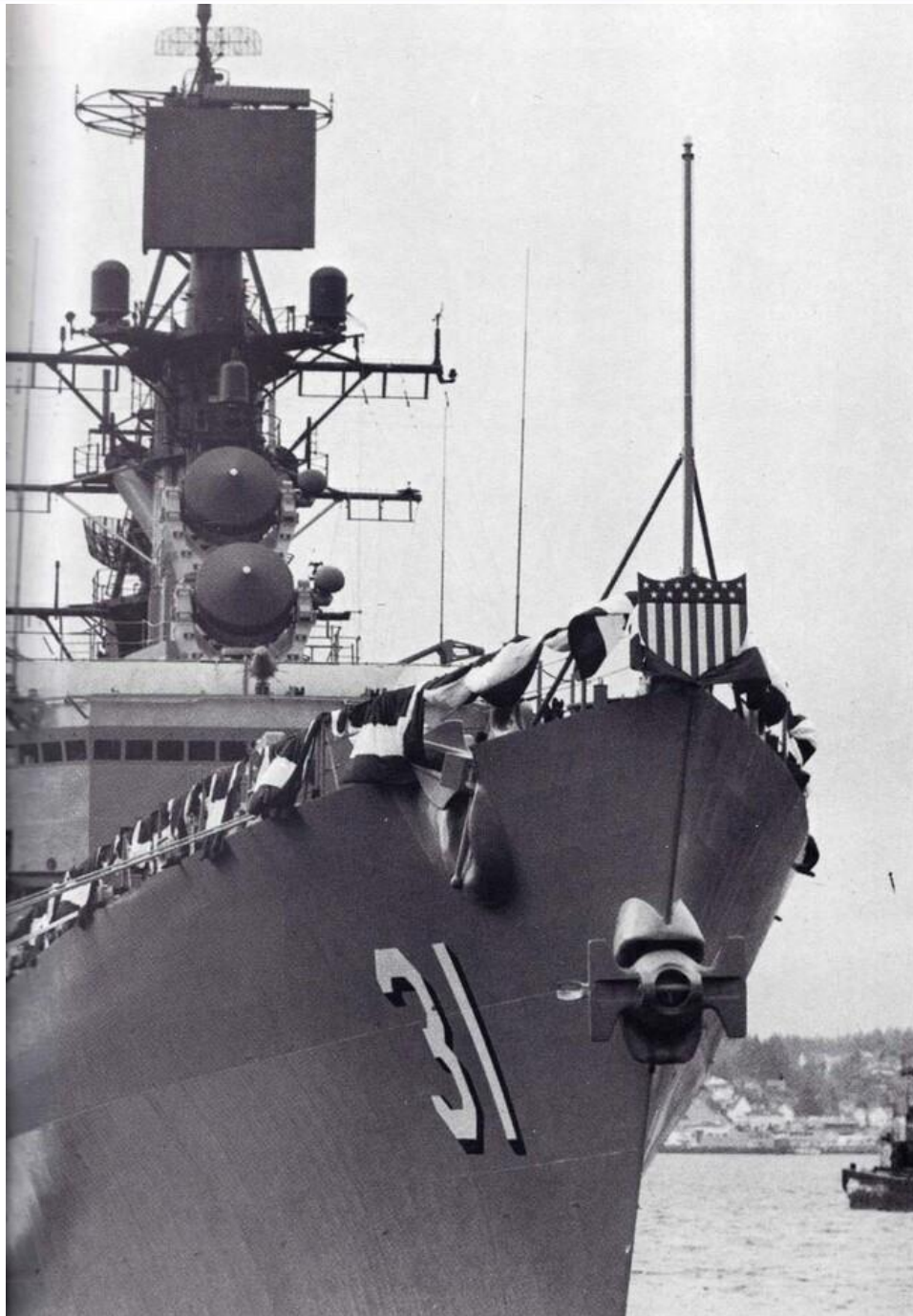
DLG 31 (1967-75)



CG 31 (1975-86)



DDG 104 (Commissioned 2000)



**Sterett at Commissioning**

## **Contacting Sterett Shipmates**

Years ago, shipmates' email addresses and other contact information was available through the website. This policy was changed because of the dangers of ID theft and the proliferation of spam email. It is the policy of the Sterett Association not to publically share contact information of our members without their permission. However, getting in touch with an old Sterett shipmate is still relatively easy.





If you contact an Association officer, we'll first determine if the person you wish to contact has provided his contact data. We will then initiate an email similar to the following:

*The Sterett Association received an email from an old Sterett shipmate of yours that would like to get in touch with you, (name here). We have your email address from the Sterett Association files. It is our policy not to provide contact information without permission. XXXX has asked me to give you his email address as a first step in establishing contact:*

Hopefully, this email address will result in an exchange of messages between shipmates.

Of course, it's always better to catch up with old friends at the Sterett reunions.

## **DDG 104**



The DDG 104 continues to add to the proud legacy of the USS Sterett as evidenced by this international news story:

## **U.S. Navy rescues 2 Saudi pilots who ejected from F-15 aircraft**

**Sat March 28, 2015**

**The U.S. Navy rescued two Saudi Arabia air force pilots from the Gulf of Aden, a U.S. military official said Friday.**



**The pilots had ejected from their F-15 aircraft after it suffered mechanical failure, Saudi officials told U.S. sources. The two were not seriously injured.**

**The USS Sterett, a guided-missile destroyer, coordinated the search, while the USS New York looked for the men. A rescue helicopter flew from Djibouti to retrieve them on Thursday.**

**Three U.S. Navy ships are standing by in the Gulf of Aden for future recovery operations.**

Sterett CO, CDR Theodore J. Nunamaker, had this to say to the Sterett Association:

Thanks very much for the note! It's been very busy out here but STERETT is living up to her heritage of being ready when the call comes and always having interesting deployments.

Appreciate the BZ and I'll pass it along to the crew. Upholding the distinction of the STERETT name is an important part of what we do.

Best Regards,  
CDR T. J. Nunamaker  
Commanding Officer

You can keep up with some of the newest Sterett's activity by checking out the DDG 104 Facebook pages (<https://www.facebook.com/USSSterett>),

## **Agent Orange**

For those Sterett veterans who served in the Vietnam years, the subject of Agent Orange is a fairly common topic of discussion.

**The following is provided for information only. The Sterett Association is not assuming any role as a subject matter expert nor a source of personal or medical advice.**

The Veteran's Administration policy in acknowledging a connection between Agent Orange exposure and certain medical issues or diseases still follows a "boots on the ground" requirement. In other words, if you have evidence you served ashore in Vietnam, you are assumed to have been exposed.

Generally, "Blue Water" US Navy ship personnel are not considered to have been exposed and are not eligible for coverage based on Agent Orange.

The debate about Navy units being exposed to Agent Orange while positioned off shore for gun fire support operations, patrol duties, search and rescue, and other close-in operations is growing as more veterans who served on those units are developing systems consistent with exposure to chemical agents.

Many articles have been written about the blue water Navy's exposure potential. They are too numerous to report here. For the longest time, the VA would not acknowledge any liability for fleet units of Task Force 75 and Task Force 77.



Given prime evidence in the form of official ship's logs and operational summaries, the VA is slowly acknowledging liability. The list of ships and units that qualify for disability claims due to exposure to Agent Orange is growing. Individuals from the various ships and units must provide proof that they are entitled to consideration for disability claims.

An interesting development is a report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) which suggests the distillation process used to generate potable water from sea water did not remove Agent Orange from the water; it actually enhanced the effect of the Agent Orange dioxin by a factor of 10. Many professional organizations believe the IOM report provides strong evidence for extending the presumption of exposure to blue water veterans.

The Veterans Administration has not accepted the findings of this study

For a list of diseases associated with Agent Orange, go to:

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/conditions/>

For the list of US Navy ships considered exposed go to:

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/shiplist/list.asp>

Sterett is not on the list

A long, in depth summary of the Blue Water Navy and Agent Orange debate by the National Center for Biotechnology Information can be found here:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK209605/>

Additional Agent Orange Information:

<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/17744/10-things-every-veteran-know-agent-orange/>

If you feel you do have a disability claim, one of our shipmates advises, " Do NOT go to the VA. Go to the DAV, Disabled American Veterans; they are on your side, and will help all the way.

### **Sterett Passings:**

Larry Burmingham, DLG 31 EN1 70-74, passed away in 2009



Robert Klementz DLG 31 Lcdr 68-70 Weapons Officer

<http://www.beecherandbennett.com/obituary/Capt.-Robert-W.-Klementz-USN/Annandale-VA/1473544>

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Rex Boggess, CG 31 BM3 81-84

## **Binnacle List**

Shipmate Jay Mills posted the following on Facebook on March 24:

Day twenty at hospice center. Getting comfort care. I am now on TPN which is nutrients to strengthen my body. I have been hanging on by the grace of God for over a month without any food except saline. Jesus has some plans in the works. I have complete faith in Him. My goal is to see how I tolerate these nutrients pumped into me and go home to in home nursing care. Possibly get stronger and do things for my family.

Please continue to keep Jay in your thoughts and prayers.

## **Musings**

Sign on, young man, and sail with me. The stature of our homeland is no more than the measure of ourselves. Our job is to keep her free. Our will is to keep the torch of freedom burning for all. To this solemn purpose we call on the young, the brave, the strong, and the free. Heed my call, Come to the sea. Come Sail with me.

**John Paul Jones**



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I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,  
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide  
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;  
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,  
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

**John Masefield**

## **The Battle of Dong Hoi**

19 April 1972

The North Vietnamese began an invasion of South Vietnam toward the end of March 1972; sending troops and tanks across the demilitarized zone between the two countries. In response, USS Oklahoma City with two destroyers; Higbee (DD 806) and Lloyd Thomas (DD 764) were assigned to gun shore bombardment of the invading forces just off the NV coast near Dong Hoi. Even though Oklahoma City carried a Talos missile battery, Sterett was assigned to provide additional anti-aircraft cover with her Terrier system. The frigate also deployed her Light Airborne Multi Purpose System (LAMPS) helicopter to serve as an aerial spotter for the

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bombarding ships. Late in the afternoon the three gunships began a bombarding run traveling parallel to the coast steaming toward the south. NV shore batteries began returning the fire and managed to 'bracket' the ships, but made no hits.

As the bombardment proceeded, a NV MiG was detected among the coastal mountains heading for the bombarding ships. NV aircraft in the past had made feints toward U. S. forces afloat, but this one did not turn back; it bored in on Higbee. This would mark the first time NV aircraft had actually attacked U. S. fleet units. The MiG dropped a 250-pound bomb near the destroyer, but the near miss caused no damage. The persistent MiG circled back and this time scored a hit on Higbee's after five-inch gun mount. The bomb blast, combined with exploding ready ammunition peeled the sides of the mount back like a sardine can. Fortunately the gun mount had just been vacated because one of the guns had a misfire of its powder case and the projectile in the hot barrel was in danger of 'cooking off' and exploding. Four men in the upper ammunition handling room below the mount were the only injuries.



USS Higbee (Photo courtesy of George Elder)

Sterett had fired a Terrier missile at the attacking MiG, but missed. Her second Terrier did not miss. Soon after the MiG had started its attack, a second MiG, descending from the mountains, had started an attack but thought better of it and turned back toward the mountains. For a brief period, however, it was in range of Sterett's missiles and two missiles were loosed at it. The airplane and the two missiles all disappeared from the ships' radars at the same time, and a second Sterett MiG kill was assumed.

Later that day, Sterett launched a second salvo of Terriers at an unidentified target, probably a Styx surface-to-surface missile, destroying it in midair.



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Photos courtesy of George Elder



The following message was received from Commander Task Force 77 on the occasion of Sterett's departure from WestPac and the start of her journey home:

R 2n3322 JUL 72

FM CTF SEVEN SEVEN

TO USS STERETT

INFO CINCPACFLT

COMSEVENTHFLT

COMCRUDESPAC

CIC SEVEN ZERO PT EIGHT

BT

U N C L A S E F T O

AS STERETT DEPARTS WESTPAC AFTER SEVEN MONTHS OF INTENSE COMBAT OPERATIONS, I WISH TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE PERSONAL ADMIRATION FOR YOUR SINGULARLY OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE. YOUR DEMONSTRATED PROFESSIONALISM IN SUPPORT OF TASK FORCE 77 AND 7TH AIR FORCE OPERATIONS IN THE GOT AND OVER NVN IS A SOURCE OF GREAT PRIDE TO US ALL AND IS IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE DESTROYER FORCE. WE OF TF 77 WISH YOU FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS ON YOUR RETURN HOME AND A WELL-EARNED REUNION WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES. COME BACK SOON. COOPER.

BT

### **Voices From the Past**

John King shared the following message he received from a former shipmate.

It's an example of the influence we can have on others without realizing it. It's also an illustration of the positive aspects of the Sterett Association:

Hi mr. King,

I was surprised when I saw you as the vice president of the USS Sterett association. I remember you well. We reported at the same time aboard the ship in Yokosuka in January 1969. I was a tn (stewardsman) then and work in the wardroom. You were an ensign then, and I eventually became the captain's steward. I worked for captain Tyler, captain Hilton, captain Reichert and captain Collins. In May 1975 I left Uss Sterett and went to Aviation machinists's mate school because I change rate. I retired in June 1989 as an Adc. I also retired from the postal service last February 27 this year. I remember those memorable events/years I had aboard Uss Sterett. I still recall when you told me to stay in the navy when our ship went to the Philippines and you saw how horrible was the economy there then. Thanks for the advice, I heed it.

TN Cruz

## **Reunion 2015**

We are 5 months out from our 2015 reunion in Tacoma, Washington - **September 17-20**.

It's destined to be a great event. Don't miss out. Start making your plans now to be there.



If you're not there, you will be the subject of many sea stories!

Watch the newsletters, Facebook and the Sterett web site for updated information about the reunion.

### **Reunion Costs:**

\$80 per member/primary attendee

\$60 per guest

Among other things, the fee covers:

1. Hospitality Room and Refreshments (Soda, beer, snacks; morning coffee and pastries)
2. Association Business Meeting (Room, A/V Equip)
3. Association Dinner Banquet (Food, DJ, Color Guard, A/V Equipment)
4. Memorial Service (Room, A/V Equip)
5. Bus transportation to the USS Turner Joy and Naval Museum

Annual dues for the calendar year 2014 will be included with payment of the reunion fee.

### **Please register as early as possible.**

An accurate head count is essential in arranging the best possible reunion.

### **Feeling lucky??**

All those who register before August 1st will be entered into a drawing for reimbursement of reunion fees for you and 1 guest (if applicable) and two free nights in the hotel.

Only the member/primary attendees' names will be entered. The drawing will be held before dinner Saturday evening September 19th.

Help us put on a great, memorable reunion by registering at <http://www.sterett.net/Reunions/2015-Reunion.html>.... Mail in registrations must be postmarked before August 1st.

### **Who's Going??**

We expect a terrific turnout. A list of attendees will be published in future newsletters as the registration process moves into high gear.

We know for sure the following very special people will be there:



# USS STERETT ASSOCIATION

DD 27 (1916-18)

DD 407 (1919-1945)

DLG 31 (1947-70)

CG 31 (1971-86)

DDG 101 (Commissioned 2000)



Capt. Sullivan



Capt. Genet

## Hotel Information

### La Quinta Inn

1425 East 27th St  
Tacoma, WA 98421-2200

Rooms will be available for \$99.00.

### Reunion Hotel Reservations:

To make reservations at the La Quinta Inn in Tacoma for the Sterett reunion, you can call the hotel directly at (253) 383-0146; use menu option 6 OR call 800 642-4239 and specify event code GRYIIZ or USS Sterett Reunion.

To be guaranteed the discounted room rate of \$99.00, reservations must be made not later than August 17, 2015

General Hotel Information: <http://www.lq.com/lq/properties/propertyProfile.do?ident=LQ685&propId=685>

This will be our anchor hotel where Reunion functions are to be held.

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## Travel to Tacoma

If you're flying to Tacoma, be sure to make your reservations as early as possible to get the best rates.

The destination airport for Tacoma, WA is the Seattle–Tacoma International Airport (SeaTac).

All major US air carriers and many international airlines fly in and out of SeaTac.

See <http://www.portseattle.org/Sea-Tac/Flights-Airlines/Airlines/Pages/default.aspx> for specific airline information servicing SeaTac.

The **La Quinta Inn** is approximately 23 miles (25 mins) from SeaTac via I-5.

There are many types of transportation to and from the airport, including Buses, Shuttles and Courtesy vans. The La Quinta Inn does not provide shuttle service.

## Shuttles:

Shuttle Express  
(425) 981-7000

Capital Aeroporter  
Seattle: 206-244-0011  
Olympia: 360-754-7113  
Tacoma: 253 927-6179  
Outside Western WA: 1-800-962-3579



### **Taxis:**

Yellow Cab

Available on the third floor of the parking garage. Sedans and large vans are available.

Call (206) 622-6500 or you can also visit their website at [www.yellowtaxi.net](http://www.yellowtaxi.net)

### **Car Rentals:**

Like many major airports, the SeaTac car rental facilities are located away from the main terminal.

Upon arrival at Sea-Tac Airport. after picking up your checked baggage:

Exit the sliding glass doors near carousel #1 or #15 and walk to one of the two designated shuttle bus pick-up areas.

Shuttle buses depart frequently for the rental car facility.

If you are returning a vehicle, take SR518 and follow signs for the Rental Car Facility.

### **Driving:**

For those driving to the reunion, use the following directions to the hotel once in the general area.

**Driving Directions from the North:** Head south on I-5 to Tacoma. Take exit 135, Portland Avenue exit. Go straight ahead 2 blocks, across Portland Avenue. The hotel is on your right.

**Driving Directions from the East:** I-5 S-bound: exit 135-Portland Ave.: I-5 N-bound: exit 134-Portland Ave., turn left.

**Driving Directions from the South:** Head north on I-5. Take exit 134, Portland Avenue exit. Turn left onto Portland Avenue. Turn left onto 27th Street. The hotel is on your right.

**Driving Directions from the West:** I-5 S-bound: exit 135-Portland Ave.: I-5 N-bound: exit 134-Portland Ave., turn left.

### **Saturday Tour**

Saturday Afternoon Group Tour to the **USS Turner Joy** and the **Puget Sound Navy Museum** (The Puget Sound Naval Shipyard is not accessible).



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Our group tour will depart by bus at approximately 11:30 from the La Quinta Inn for a drive to Bremerton and the USS Turner Joy Museum Ship.

The USS Turner Joy (DD-951), famed Navy destroyer from the Vietnam War, is now maintained and administered by the Bremerton Historic Ships Association. The museum ship and memorial honors not only the men and women of our modern US Navy, but also recognizes the accomplishments of those who help build and maintain the Navy's ships as well. An active and educational facility makes the USS Turner Joy a unique and lasting legacy to Puget Sound's maritime heritage.

Sterett and Turner Joy are forever linked in an incident that is less known than the Gulf of Tonkin Incident. In June 1982, Sterett, in company with Turner Joy and Lynde McCormick were making a transit from Thailand to Subic Bay following Exercise Cobra Gold. As they traveled around the southern Vietnamese island of Con Son, they took machine gun fire from a small boat. One round struck the Turner Joy and penetrated the superstructure. Lynde McCormick fired some 50cal rounds over the boats and Sterett fired a couple of illumination rounds. The ships remained in the area overnight until first light determined the boat that fired was an alleged "fishing boat" and posed little threat.

<http://www.ussturnerjoy.org/>

Following the tour of the USS Turner Joy, we will travel a short distance to the Puget Sound Navy Museum.

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The Puget Sound Navy Museum collects, preserves, and interprets the naval heritage of the Pacific Northwest from 1840 to the present for the benefit of the U.S. Navy and the people of the United States.

Beginning with approximately 600 objects, the Museum's collection now numbers more than 18,000. Building 50 provides the Museum with 7,909 square feet of exhibition space and 4,392 square feet of collections storage.

<http://www.pugetsoundnavymuseum.org/>

#### Tour Fees:

The Association will provide bus transportation.

Admission to the USS Turner Joy Museum is \$10 prepaid. The fee can be paid as part of the reunion registration process.

There is no admission fee for the Puget Sound Navy Museum.

**Tour sign up must be completed during the reunion registration.** We apologize for this inconvenience but we must avoid the situation we had in Branson with late sign ups which compromised our tour bus arrangements.

#### Saturday Lunch:

A box lunch will be provided by the Association.

The time and location for lunch will be determined based on weather and time available.



## Things To Do

The **Tacoma, Seattle and Puget Sound** area abounds with interesting things to do and see.

We encourage all our reunion guests to arrive early and stay beyond the reunion to take advantage of all the area offers.

A few suggestions:

American Car Museum <http://www.lemaymuseum.org/>

Tacoma Art Museum <http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/>

Seattle Asian Art Museum

Museum of Glass <http://museumofglass.org/>

Pike's Place Market <http://www.pikeplacemarket.org/>

Seattle Space Needle <http://www.spaceneedle.com/home/>

Center for Wooden Boats <http://cwb.org/>

Museum of Flight <http://www.museumofflight.org/>

Gig Harbor - Discovered in 1840 and incorporated in 1946, Gig Harbor is one of the most picturesque small cities in America. It is located on Gig Harbor Bay in Puget Sound across the Narrows Bridge from Tacoma. <http://www.cityofgigharbor.net/>

Whale Watching – there are a number of whale watching tours available, both from the US and the Canadian side. Be sure to have a valid passport if you plan to cross the border.

Washington State Ferry:

The Washington State Department of Transportation runs numerous ferry routes around the Puget Sound area. Looking for a leisurely way to spend a few hours?

Check it out at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/>

The Washington State Department of Transportation also hosts a great web site for general tourist information. See: [http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Ferries/visitorscenter/tourist\\_info.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Ferries/visitorscenter/tourist_info.htm)

This article from 2013 lists the 25 most attractive tourist attractions in Washington (according to the source): <http://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/news/2013/08/23/the-list-top-tourist-attractions-in.html?page=all>

## Reunion Registration:









## We Need Your Help!

What do you do these days? Where has life taken you after Sterett?  
How did your Sterett tour influence your life?

You might be surprised to discover what you do holds interest to others.

I know those that attend the reunions do a lot of catching up about their lives since their Sterett days.  
Let's start sharing some of that in the newsletters as well.

Your life is more interesting than you realize.

Send your stories to me at [shayes@cableone.net](mailto:shayes@cableone.net)

We really do want to hear from you.

For the Sterett Association:

Steve Hayes