



Winter 2016



Greetings from the Sterett Association

As I finally start to draft this newsletter I am aware of the winter storm which brought so much hardship to the eastern seaboard areas of our Country.

While we can marvel at the beauty of winter as in the picture above, we know it's not so beautiful when we have to travel or when your car and house are buried in it.

Hopes are all of you come through this winter safely and unscathed.

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

The Angel of the Pacific

Those who have attended reunions know we have had the pleasure of having some of our honorary crew in attendance. These honorary crew are Vietnamese refugees, referred to as "Boat People" who risked their lives escaping from the communist regime in Vietnam. They boarded small overcrowded boats that were barely

seaworthy in the hopes of being rescued at sea. Many were attacked and robbed by pirates in the South China Sea.

Sterett encountered and rescued three boatloads of refugees, one in 1982 and two others in 1983. Had it not been for the establishment of the USS Sterett web site, that might have been the end of the story. Fortunately, it was not.

The founders of the Sterett Association, **Elden Miller** and **Dave Wolf** received the following letter February 10, 1998:

Hello Mr. Elden Miller and Mr. Dave wolf.

I broke in to tear when I found out that the CG-31 was decommission and classified for scrap.

She and her crews gave me another chance to live on June 22, 1982 after encounter level 9 storm about 135 miles Southeast of Vungtao, Vietnam.

I always refer to her as an Angel of the Pacific.

If not for her I would not be here today and achieved the things that I had accomplished.

My name is James Dinh or Chien Dinh as known when she rescued me. I remember everything about her just like yesterday. I live on her helicopter port for three days before we said faraway.

One of the young sailor had become friend with me during the time I seek refuge on her had gave me 2 pictures of the ship and a can of cocktail as I was sent to shore on a small fishing boat. With out the language, I still understand his advise that I will be ok and going to have a great future ahead of me. I still regreded that I has forgot his name. It was more than 15 yrs ago, but it still vividly live in my memory.

I now 29 yrs old married and have 3 beautiful children, I came to the US and lived in North Dakota in 3/2/83, I had a wonderful foster parent, friends and neighbor in Fargo.

I graduated from NDSU in 95 as Aerospace Manufacture Engineering and recently move to Everett, Washington to work for Boeing.

I would like to talk to any sailors that serve during 1982 and any other refugees that you known involved in the rescue that became such a big part of my life.

James Dinh Q.



James Dinh at the Tacoma reunion

Following this, Le Phung was located and received this letter from James:

Hello Phung.

I remember a lot of people on the boat (first boat that got rescued). My Vietnamese name was Chien Dinh. I was the mechanic of the boat, and the one who first sighted the airplane that spotted us. It was only one airplane, but it circled back to take the picture of the boat the 2nd time. You must be right about the year. Phung you must kept a diary about the journey. I remember most of every things but not the name of the places. For example the name of the beach that the Sterett drop us into the wooden boat that took us ashore. I remember Phanatnikhom refugee camp and Galang in Indonesia. We sure endured a lot of hardship and sacrifice to achieve our freedom. I hope I could remember who you are right now, but I know you will help me to remember. Please keep in-touch, and if you know any of the people on the our first or second boat please spread the words. Maybe we can reunited someday.

I wish you and your family the best Christmas and Happy New year. Remember we always said " The Earth is round and some day we will meet again".

Regards,

James Dinh

Shortly thereafter, Tracy Lee wrote the following:

Hello,

My name is Trang (Traci) Lee. I am the daughter of Ut Lee. We were rescued by this "Wonderful Angel" around 1982. They took us to Thailand and took care of my family and others. I am now 22 years old and was looking all over for this ship. Please tell me where I can contact George Sullivan and others who rescued use. I can not express all my gratitude in writing. Thank you USS Sterett for saving our lives!!!

Traci Trang Lee

We look forward to reuniting with other Vietnamese honorary crew.

The following video covers the reuniting of a family of refugees with the Captain and crew who saved them at the 2011 reunion.

Grab a tissue and check it out.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVICxnMNj-U>

DD 407

A few months back I received the following from Sam Lewis:

Some of you might find this entertaining, my dad (JC Lewis) was on USS Sterett (DD407) in WWII. He's 88 years old and he still loves to ride dirt bikes! We just went riding this weekend in Kentucky. Hope I can do half what he still does when I'm his age! He does get really tired by the end of the day, but hey, how many WWII vets still can do that!? They just don't make 'em like that anymore! LOL



Not Sterett related but here's more proof the WWII vets are nothing short of amazing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdcj3rG7IWk>

The following excerpt from "Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal" is a quote from Charles Calhoun, II (Captain Cal), DD 407 Gunnery Officer:

"The repair supervisors at Nouméa, determining that the Sterett needed structural work, made plans to send her back to Pearl. "No sooner had the repair team left," Cal Calhoun wrote, "than we were told that Admiral Halsey himself was coming aboard to inspect our damage." No one could have failed to recognize the bushy eyebrows, the strong chin, or the direct gaze that bespoke confidence and strength. "He shook hands with each of us," Calhoun wrote, "and asked to be shown all of our battle damage." Halsey listened intently as Captain Coward cataloged the cost, human and material, extracted by each hit. "From time to time he simply shook his head as we described events," Lieutenant Calhoun wrote. By the end of the briefing, Halsey had tears in his eyes. In a low voice, he told Coward and his senior officers how proud he was of them. "I wish I could recall his exact words," Calhoun wrote, "but I do remember some of his thoughts— he regretted that he had to send destroyers against battleships but was sure that the small ships would do their utmost; he was amazed that any destroyer could absorb eleven shell hits (three of which were fourteen-inch projectiles) and still steam away from the action under her own power; he was profoundly moved by the many stories of heroism, and by the mute but eloquent evidence of punishment and sacrifice that was apparent at every turn as he toured the ship. Finally he thanked us, with a sincerity that added a special quality to his words, and said, 'God bless you!' We stood there filled with admiration, respect, and pride and watched him climb into a waiting jeep and drive off. It was an unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime occasion. To those of us who witnessed it, Admiral Halsey's name will always lead the list of inspirational combat leaders of World War II."

Hornfischer, James D. (2011-01-25). Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal (Kindle Locations 7047-7061). Random House Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Sterett Shipmates in the Spotlight

The following tribute was discovered on Facebook:

Mark Scherer

Firefighter Mark Scherer is a Garaway graduate. Mark graduated as an Ohio Peace Officer in 1988 and served in law enforcement until 2004. He started with Baltic Fire & Rescue 1989 & also with Killbuck Fire Department reaching ranks of Captain. Mark also served in the United States Navy from 1990 to 1994 serving aboard the USS STERETT (CG-31). Mark with his wife Ann and daughter Reba moved to the village of Sugarcreek in 2012.

Congratulations to the Scherer's as they have bought a house in the township! In his spare time Mark fires up his smoker, and smokes some delicious meats. Thank you for your service not only for our country but for Sugarcreek and the surrounding communities.



Our thanks as well for a job well done.

Small World:

Thanks to Shipmate Mark Eshbaugh for contributing the following:

So I have an "It's a small world" story. Back in the Summer of 2006, I took a week off of work and planned a motorcycle trip on my Harley Davidson from San Jose, CA to Portland, Oregon to visit my Nephew. I was on Highway 5 North somewhere a little past Sacramento when I noticed a couple Harleys coming up behind me pretty fast. I moved over and when they passed me, we waved and so I pulled in behind them. After about an hour I noted I was getting low on gas and I guess they were too and we all pulled off at the same off-ramp. They went to one gas station and I went to another. After I gassed up, I rode over to where they were having some lunch. I parked and asked them where they were headed and they said Washington, I recall one guy was going to visit family. That's when I noticed they both had Base Stickers on their left forks and I remember I had one too at the Naval Base 32nd st. They said they were both Chief Petty Officers, and I think one was a Gunner's Mate and I don't recall the other guy's rate. I said I was in the Navy on a ship a long time ago, back in the mid-1970's. They asked what ship and I said it was probably a ship they hadn't heard of, the USS Sterett. They both looked at each other and I'll never forget the looks on their faces. They said they both were stationed on the Sterett when it was home-ported in Subic Bay. We all laughed and couldn't believe it! It really

is a small world! We rode together all the way past the border into Oregon and somewhere South of Portland it was time for me to take another exit so I waved and saluted them as I got off the highway. I never got their names but I hoped they had a good trip as well.

It would be nice to close this story out. If this encounter seems familiar to you, let us know.

Retirement

Congratulations to our Association Treasurer, Don Hageman, on his retirement from government service effective 26 January.

Take a well deserved break, Don, then get busy on that To Do list Marybeth has ready for you.



Sterett Passings:

We learned the following Sterett shipmates have crossed the bar:

DD 407:

Bill Stella MM2C 1942-1945

DLG/CG 31:

Edward Escoe BM2 1967-1970



George Ness PC2 1968-1970



George Doussett RD3 1967-1969

Stephen Fujii STG2 1972-1974



Jim Kolby STC 1970-1975



Wesley "Pogi" Smith OS3 1988-1990

John Walton (seeking rate and date information)

Keeping Up:

On a recent trip to Hawaii, Glenn Jackson met with Capt. George Sullivan at the Arizona Memorial



Milestones

Sterrett Departs Subic Bay



The large harbor tug WAUWATOSA (YTB-775) escorts the guided missile cruiser USS Sterrett (CG-31) as the ship departs for its new home port at Naval Station, San Diego, California, 05/10/1991

2017 Reunion



The wheels have already started turning towards the 2017 reunion in Nashville, TN. Our reunion coordinator, **Burton Dietz**, has started the search for a great location. The tentative reunion dates are **June 23-25, 2017**. Mark these dates on your calendar and plan to be there.

Lifetime Membership

A proposal to establish a Sterett Association Lifetime Membership was introduced and discussed at the business meeting during the Tacoma reunion. A committee of Association members was formed to determine the appropriate measures used to recognize those who opt in to a lifetime membership. We anticipate the committee will make their recommendations in February. Once approved, the lifetime membership option will become available. Watch for details.

1977 Cruise Book

In 2014, we completed a project to post Sterett cruise books on the web site. Thanks to several shipmates who loaned their books to us and Tom Jacobsmeyer who handled the digital conversion, we got it done. During this several month project we requested information about other DLG/CG 31 cruise books that may have existed. Based on the lack of information, we thought we had them all. Apparently, not so!

Not long ago, through Facebook posts, we learned of a 1977 cruise book. We would like to complete the project with the addition of the 77 cruise book.

If you have a 1977 cruise book, please consider loaning it to the Association so we can get it added to the others.

Contact one of the Association officers.

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>

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