

USS STERETT ASSOCIATION



SUMMER 2020

Greetings from the Sterett Association,

It is with great sadness that we pass along news of the death of CAPT H. E. Reichert, CO, USS Sterett DLG-31, 1972-1974.

Captain H. E. Reichert, U.S.N. (Ret.), died July 3, 2020. Captain Reichert was born in Philadelphia, PA, on September 6, 1926, to his parents Harry and Viola Reichert. He married his childhood sweetheart, Betty S. Reichert, daughter of the Reverend Doctor William R. Shaffer and Katherine Stevenson Shaffer of Philadelphia, PA.

Captain Reichert enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1944, was commissioned an Ensign in 1948, and served for 32 years until his retirement in 1978. Captain Reichert graduated from Villanova University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration and from George Washington University with a Master's Degree in Business Administration. He also graduated from the U. S. Naval Intelligence school as a "Translator/Interpreter" in the Russian language and later was an instructor at the facility. He also served as an Intelligence Officer and Briefer on the Supreme Allied Commander's staff, Atlantic Fleet. He later served in intelligence positions for the U.S. Navy in Yokosuka, Japan and the U.S. Army in Hokkaido, Japan. Captain Reichert was a veteran of World War II, Korea, the Cuban Conflict, and the Vietnam War. He served one year "In Country" Vietnam as Assistant Chief of Staff for Personnel and eight years on several ships as either Executive Officer or Commanding Officer (USS Saufley and USS Sterett). It was during his command of the Guided Missile Cruiser Sterett, while affording missile protection to another cruiser and two destroyers who were conducting shore bombardment of enemy positions off Vietnam, that Captain Reichert received the Silver Star, the third highest military decoration the country can award, for gallantry in action in the Gulf of Tonkin for destroying two North Vietnam aircraft and two PT Boats, the first to ever attack a U.S. Naval formation.



Captain Reichert was a volunteer for the Red Cross and the Coronado Hospital. He was an active member of the First United Methodist Church, San Diego, where he served on the Board of Trustees and the Foundation, taught Sunday School, served as Head Usher for church services, was a church liturgist. He took part in the church's Homeless Feeding program, Chain Gang (making repairs to church property), and twice in charge of the annual Fundraising Program. Captain Reichert is survived by his daughter, Christine (husband Bill Palmer) of Spring Mills, Pennsylvania, two sons, Kurt and Carl (wife Anita Schurkens Reichert) of San Diego, and daughter, Katherine (partner Paul Kalashian) of Texas. He is also survived by four of five grandchildren, Ashley / husband Seth Snyder, Seth Reichert Palmer, Carley Reichert, and Nicholas Reichert, and by one great-grandchild, Theo Snyder, son of granddaughter, Ashley. First grandson Kevin Reichert pre-deceased Captain Reichert in 2008. Due to COVID-19, a private family interment will be conducted at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. The family requests that any memorial donations be directed to Hospice, San Diego, or the First United Methodist Church, San Diego.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings STERETT Family,

It's summertime and while we should be maximizing our time outdoors, we find ourselves wearing masks and practicing social distancing. We are truly in uncharted waters. Although we might be feeling at times like we may be "making circles in the water" and have no clear tasking, we must stay focused on our next port of call - San Antonio - now 14 months away. I am anxious to hear "liberty call, liberty call" so I can drink to the foam with each of you!



Often throughout my naval career I heard that communication is paramount. During these times, I can totally agree with this bold statement, especially when the membership is scattered all over the US, Japan, the Philippines and Germany. One method of communicating with you has been done through the newsletters. Immediate Past President Steve Hayes (2011-2019) had been its Chief Editor since 2011, coincidentally crafting 31 newsletters during his tenure. Steve is the only member who served on both DLG-31 and CG-31 at the beginning and towards the end of his career, so I have often wondered if reaching the 31 total was his goal before passing on the baton. Regardless, we will always be grateful to Steve for not only imparting and exchanging information via the newsletters, but for leading us for eight wonderful years. Well done Steve - I cannot say it often enough!!! Vice-President Burton Dietz has graciously stepped in as Chief Editor. I think you will agree that Burton has done a great job so far.

Our website continues to grow. Limiting some pages to the general population was made in an effort to value the annual dues paid by our 285 members. Our hope is that many join, or re-join, the Association so we can continue to expand, prosper, and meet up as we continue to move our reunions around the country hopefully to a place near you. The 2023 reunion site will be selected during the general membership meeting while in San Antonio, Texas, 16-19 September 2021. Thank you to those of you that have made recommendations in improving our website. I am working on a couple more projects including refining the ship pages, and merging the DLG-31 and CG-31 pages, after all, it is the same ship.

Another way we get information out to you has been via our Facebook page, which now has over 800 members. I have emphasized periodically, that membership to the Facebook page doesn't signify membership of the USS STERETT Association. We will continue to post information in Facebook such as welcoming new members, sharing STERETT-related information, and reminding everyone of our heritage, in hopes of attracting members, but more importantly, to keep members for many, many years to come.

Lastly, it has been a labor of love leading the Association! I couldn't have done it without the Board of Directors and the advice of our Past Presidents. And, we couldn't have gained 145 members since Jacksonville without everyone pitching in, which includes thirteen from USS STERETT DDG-104 - the future of the Association. Sadly, we have lost seven members since May, but we continue to press forward and I am anxiously looking forward to what awaits us over the horizon...Oh by the way, Happy Birthday DDG-104 – safe deployment!!!

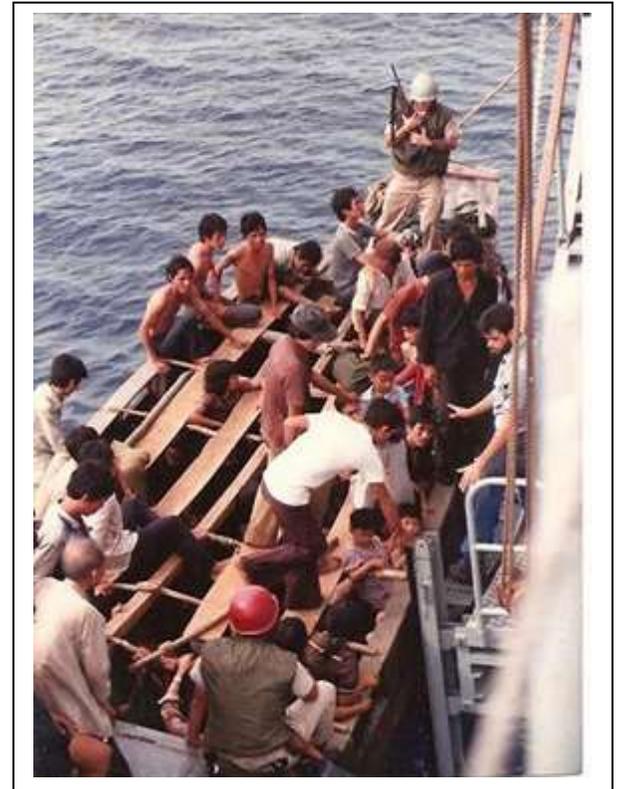
Be well and Godspeed, Chuck Bond

OPERATION BOAT PEOPLE (1979, 1982 & 1983)



BOAT PEOPLE

All was Quiet when a small boat was spotted. It was crowded with Vietnamese refugees. All we could do for them was give them some food, fuel and water. The smiling faces showed it was enough.



OPERATION BOAT PEOPLE (1989)



THE ANGEL OF THE PACIFIC – LienNhu Doan

My name is LienNhu Doan, I was 20 years old when my parents decided to risk everything and flee the country in 1983.

Right after the Fall of Saigon in 1975, due to my father's background with the US Military, he was sent to what they called a "reeducation camp". After 8 years living like a prisoner, almost facing death, he was released from the camp. On July 14, 1983, our family of 8, boarded a rickety fishing boat with 165 other refugees seeking a new life through the Saigon River to escape political and economic hardships. After several days of vast ocean and rolling storms, the group were suffering from starvation and dehydration. Some were even beginning to hallucinate, but for a day or so, some thought they may have seen or heard airplanes flying nearby. As our hopes began to fade, the sound of a roaring engine screams across the sky as a US Navy plane spotted our boat. We could not believe it. After two hours, we saw a humongous ship approaching our boat out of nowhere! It turned out to be the USS Sterett CG31 – a Belknap-class destroyer leader/cruiser commanded by Captain George Sullivan. To this date we still refer her as The Angel of the Pacific. The crew rescued all 173 people aboard the tiny fishing vessel that was stranded hopelessly in the South China Sea.

The Captain of the Sterett took the refugees to a processing center in Thailand, then Bataan, Philippines where we spent 8 months to learn English. In Summer 1984, our family was sponsored by the Lutheran Ministries Church and moved to Tampa, Florida where they reside now except my younger brother Felix Nguyen Phuoc has relocated to Edmond, OK, and myself to Denver, CO due to spouse's job transfer.

Below is a snapshot of the Bangkok Post on Sterett, Sunday July 24, 1983 regarding the rescues:

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US Navy rescues 262 boat people

RESCUERS and winchmen of Patuya's donation launch got a surprise yesterday afternoon when 200 Vietnamese refugees came ashore after being picked up by a US Navy ship, the USS Sterett, on Wednesday.

The Vietnamese men, women and children, some wearing sailor hats and sporting wide smiles, drew a sizable crowd of onlookers as they were taken on board from a Phnom Penh refugee camp, Chon Buri.

According to Higin Hoo, 43, a former Vietnamese navy commander, the refugees left Vietnam in two boat loads.

The first boat, which he piloted, left the Saigon River at midnight on July 14 with 173 on board.

The second boat set sail from Rach Gia Province on the west coast of southern Vietnam on July 16 with 89 refugees aboard.

A US naval source said it was believed that a third load of 80 Vietnamese refugees was still out in the Gulf of Thailand.

The source said that if they could be found they would be picked up by outgoing US naval vessels and taken to the Philippines.

Chu, who speaks good English, said that before his boat was picked up by the USS Sterett his engine broke down on July 10 and later the hull cracked and the boat began taking on water.

He added that when the ship's gunners realized the refugees had to bail out water with buckets.

Most of the people on his boat were residents of Hu Chi Minh City, Chu said, adding that those on the second boat were Chinese-Vietnamese.

Chu claimed that he received training in San Diego, California in the early 1970's along with two Thai navy officers whom he said he would like to contact.

The source said the refugees were given three meals a day while on board the Sterett.

Left: Crewman of the USS Sterett lower a gangway to meet the Vietnamese refugees whom they found adrift in the Gulf of Thailand on Wednesday.

Above: Smoke billows from one of the boats as it drifts near the Sterett. It was used to prevent it being spotted by shipping.

● More pictures, Page 3.

Our family picture standing on CG31 after the rescue: From top left is my father - Lu Vinh Nguyen Phuoc - who has passed in 2010, my eldest brother – Larry Nguyen Phuoc, my cousin – Quoc Ho. From bottom left is my mother – Nga Le Nguyen Phuoc, my younger sister, LienNhi Vu, myself – LienNhu Doan, my youngest sister – LienNhu Laihuyen, my younger brother – Felix Nguyen Phuoc, my cousins Tu Phan, Anh Thu, and youngest brother in blue t-shirt is Louis Nguyen Phuoc



From left to right: My beloved cousin – Tu Phan, youngest sister – Liennhu Laihuyen, me – Liennhu Doan, eldest brother – Larry Nguyen



After 28 years searching, almost 3 decades, we have finally found and reunited with our life saviors, Captain Sullivan and his crews for the first time in Biloxi, May 2011.

Sterett Reunion – 2011, Biloxi, MS



Sterett Reunion – 2013, Branson, MO



Sterett Reunion – 2017, Nashville, TN

From left to right: Captain Sullivan, my mother – Nga Le Nguyen Phuoc, me – Liennhu Doan and Mr. Steve Hayes (Sterett Association – President)



Sterett Reunion – 2019, Jacksonville, FL



The original family members who got rescued by USS Sterett CG-31 and attended the Reunion in Jacksonville, FL – September 2019. **From left to right** is my mother – Nga Le Nguyen Phuoc, my younger sister, LienNhi Vu, my eldest brother – Larry Nguyen Phuoc, myself – LienNhu Doan, and my youngest sister – LienNhu Laihuyen

THE CAPTAIN'S CORNER



It has been 2 years since USS Sterett (DDG 104) returned from deployment, and once again, our mighty namesake is steaming the waters of the western Pacific. On 7 April, the Dauntless Crew and the “Plague Doctors” of HSM-35, embarked for a pierside sequester due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Since then, we have knocked out all of the training, exercises, and underways required for our certification for deploying with the USS Nimitz, USS Princeton, and USS Ralph Johnson and the rest of Carrier Strike Group 11.

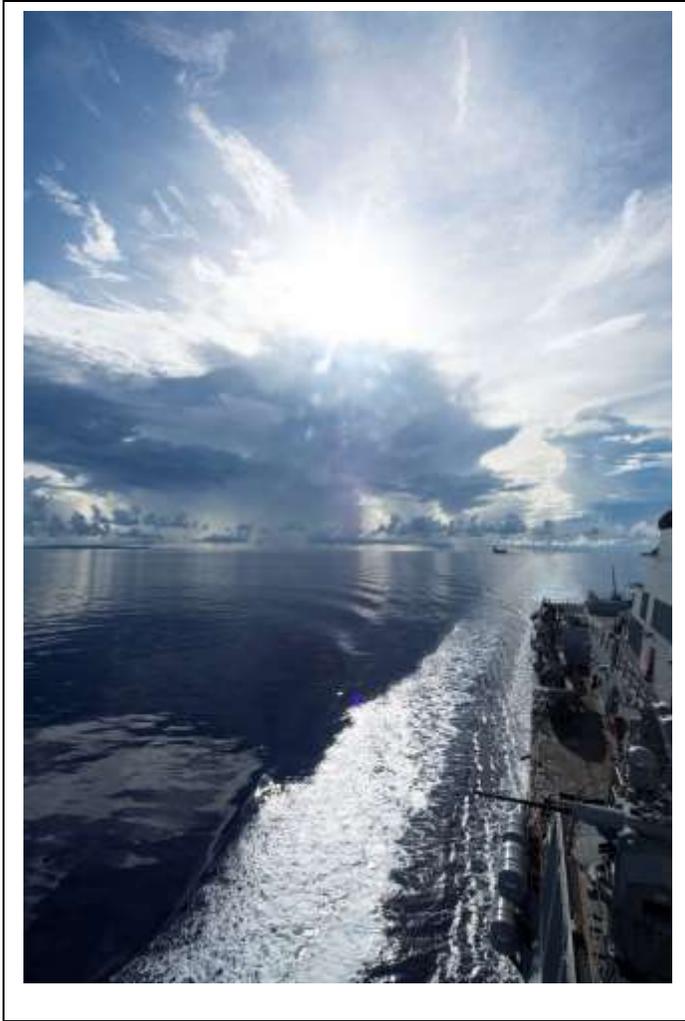


Even though we are isolated from the rest of the world, we continue to practice what we can to prevent the inadvertent spread of COVID. So you'll see masks on faces on some of our social media posts. But even a global pandemic cannot stop our screws from turning. We have conducted over 50 damage control, medical, combat systems, and intel collection trainings in total since the beginning of deployment to make sure we are prepared for any situation. Our MWR program has put on numerous events, including video game tournaments, bingo nights, and movie nights, to help the crew relax after a long day's work. There are few days onboard more exciting than receiving packages of mail from friends and family after a successful replenishment-at-sea.



Conducting OPS with the Nimitz Strike Group

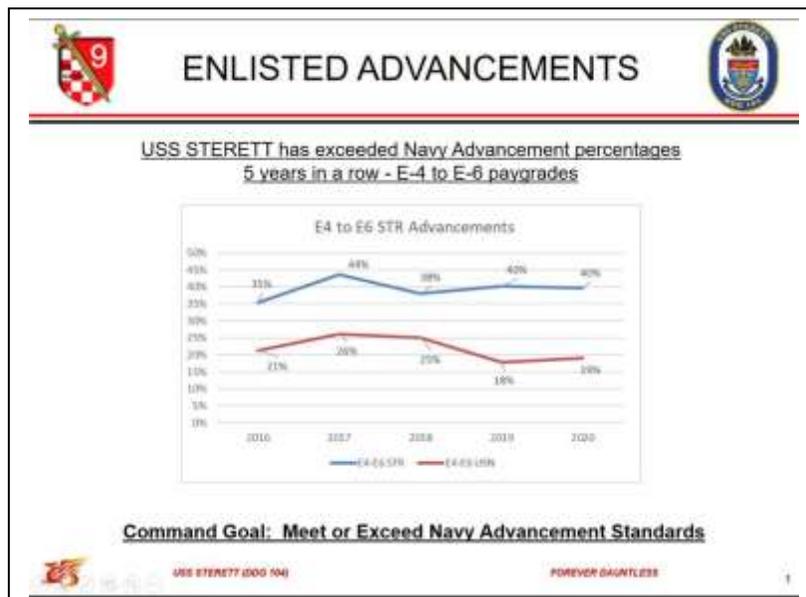
In the waters of the Philippines



Of particular note to the veterans of this great association, Sterett recently transited the Surigao Strait in the Philippines, where the Battle of Leyte Gulf was fought and former host country of (DLG/CG-31), the



third ship to bear the name Sterett. Looking at the calm, crystal blue waters while Nimitz is steaming behind us makes the long days of our training and transit fade into the ripples. Our deployment end date is not yet published, yet we are honored to keep the proud traditions of our warship and our navy alive.



PLEASE WELCOME NEW STERETT XO LCDR AARON JEFFERSON III



LCDR Aaron Jefferson, III, has reported as the Executive Officer onboard STERETT (DDG 104). He hails from Houston, TX, and grew up in the Navy while his father, CDR Aaron Jefferson, Jr, served 22 years as a Chaplain.

After graduating from the Naval Academy in 2007, LCDR Jefferson completed his first two sea tours onboard the USS VICKSBURG (CG 69) as the Electrical Officer and the USS SAMUEL B ROBERTS (FFG 58) as the Auxiliaries Officer and Chief Engineer. He completed shore duty at the University of Colorado NROTC Unit, also earning his Master in Business Administration in 2015.

For his Department Head tours, LCDR Jefferson served as the Chief Engineer onboard USS GRIDLEY (DDG 101), USS PRINCETON (CG 59), and even our very own USS STERETT (DDG 104).

"It is truly an honor to be able to serve alongside the Dauntless Crew as we sail west on deployment. The work ethic and resilience of this crew is no doubt linked to the pride of Sailors who served before us, including the highly active STERETT

Association. I am grateful for this opportunity and humbled by the responsibility. The support I have received so far is un-paralleled. Thank you all!" - **Welcome Aboard Sir!**

BZs TO SHIPMATE FRANK AMES AND FAMILY...

Congratulations are in order for our Shipmate and Board Member Officer-At-Large (CG-31) Frank Ames and his wife Jennifer as their son Austin enters the U.S Military Academy at West Point on his way to becoming an officer in the U.S. Army. BZs to the proud parents and a hearty HOOYAH!



USS STERETT Association

2021 Reunion

The location for the 2021 USS Sterett Reunion has been decided and a contract signed.

Where: San Antonio, TX

When: 16 -19 September 2021



Visit <https://www.sterett.net/reunions/> for updates.

Our anchor hotel will be the **Holiday Inn San Antonio Riverwalk**

Start planning now to join your Sterett shipmates in San Antonio
If you're not there, sea stories about you will be told.

STERETT SHIPMATE PASSINGS

Art Marrs (DD 407)
Mark A. Beaulieu (CG 31)

KC Hendrix (DLG 31)
Kelly R. Crocker (CG 31)
Herbert E. Reichert (DLG 31)

Larry Sullivan (DLG 31)
Stephen R. Layton (DD 407)

**Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!
O Christ! Whose voice the waters heard
And hushed their raging at Thy word,
Who walkedst on the foaming deep,
And calm amidst its rage didst sleep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!**