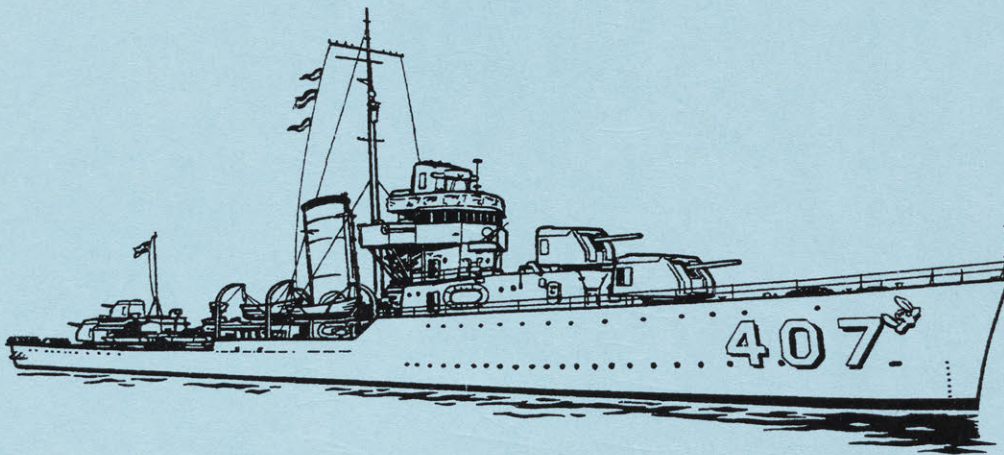
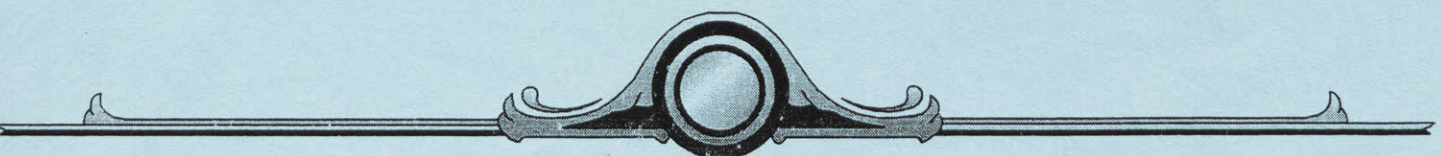
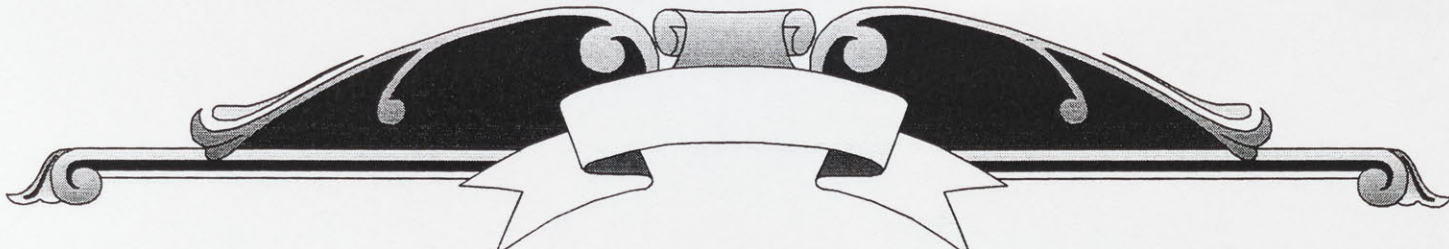


USS STERETT
DD 407



19th Reunion
May 1999
San Diego, California





WELCOME

WELCOME TO THE THIRD USS STERETT REUNION TO OCCUR IN SAN DIEGO. JUANITA AND I, WITH THE TREMENDOUS ASSISTANCE OF OUR SON JOE AND HIS WIFE PATSY, HAVE ATTEMPTED TO SCHEDULE A PROGRAM THAT INCLUDES ENTERTAINING ACTIVITIES AS WELL AS LEAVE SOME TIME FOR YOUR INDIVIDUAL RECREATIONAL WISHES.

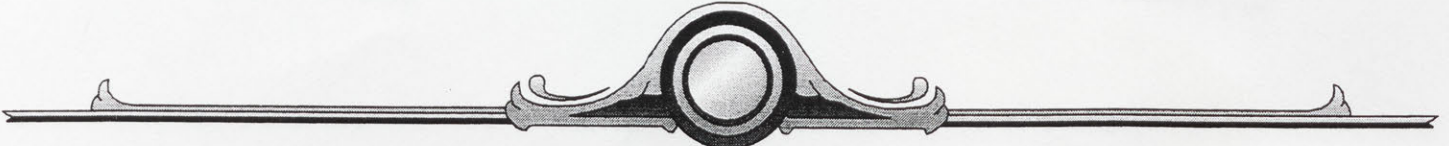
TO THOSE SHIPMATES WHO HAVE DEPARTED THIS EARTH SINCE OUR LAST GATHERING, WE WISH "BON VOYAGE."

TO THOSE WHO, BECAUSE OF HEALTH PROBLEMS, COULD NOT ATTEND, BE ASSURED THAT YOU ARE IN OUR THOUGHTS.

SOMETIME DURING THIS REUNION SERIOUS THOUGHT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE FUTURE OF OUR GROUP. IN ORDER TO EXPECT DISCOUNT PRICES FROM HOTELS AND OTHER INVOLVED IN REUNION ACTIVITIES, WE NEED NUMBERS. AND OUR NUMBERS ARE DECREASING.

IN THE MEANTIME, ENJOY SAN DIEGO IN SPRINGTIME, HAPPILY MINGLE WITH SHIPMATES, THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS, AND HOPEFULLY TAKE HOME FOND MEMORIES OF MAY, 1999.

Jim Botkin



USS STERETT DD407



SAN DIEGO, 1999



**18TH REUNION
HOILDAY INN SAN DIEGO BAYSIDE
20 MAY THRU 24 MAY 1999**

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

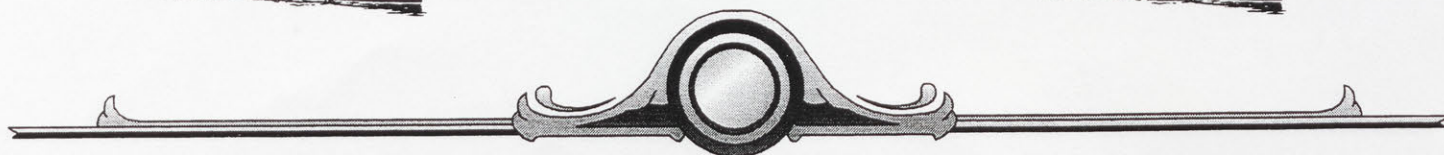
Thursday, May 20	Early Afternoon Registration and Hospitality 6:00 to 7:00 pm – Special Reception by Hotel
Friday, May 21	Tour of San Diego Zoo (Buses load at 9:00 am)
Saturday, May 22	Harbor Cruise with Catered Luncheon And Memorial Service aboard. (First Buses leave 10:00 am)
Sunday, May 23	4:30 pm – Group Pictures...do NOT be late!! C.O.P. Evelyn (Chief Official Photographer) Will tolerate no tardiness. 5:30 pm Cocktails – Harbor View Room 6:30 pm – Gala Banquet and Live “Golden Oldies” for listening and dancing.
Monday, May 24	Bon Voyage Brunch – Poolside (**Editor’s Note: Jim & Juanita’s 52nd Anniversary)

SPECIAL NOTES

Old Town Tour.....details on arrival

**Complimentary Continental Breakfast each morning
(7:00 – 8:00 am – Hospitality Suite)**

**** Editor was cautioned against speaking of the anniversary.....and didn’t!!**



USS STERETT DD 407

1999 REUNION ATTENDEES

EARL & RUBY ANDREWS
JIM & JUANITA BOTKIN
ED & GLADYS BREHIO
BILL BRADSHAW
CHARLIE AND DENISE BROWN
BOB BURNS
DON BURNS
CAL & BETSY CALHOUN
ROSELYN CORBETT
JIM & DOTTIE CREEL
HANK & FLORENCE DAHL
MARIE DASSO
BILL & MARTHA DEUEL
OTIS & ELEANOR ERISMAN
DAVID & MARJORIE FRAGA
JOYCE FORSTROM
FELIX & EVELYN GEBERT
GENE & CONNIE GOMEZ
OMER & PENNY GRIFFIN
MALCOLM &
MARGARET HALFORD
TERRI HAKEY
WILLIE "RED" HAMMACK
ELDON HANTELMAN
PATRICIA HAYDEN
JOHN & DEE HURST
HAROLD IVIE
GEORGE JACKSON
HENRIETTA JACOBSEN
J. D. & GINA JEFFREY
STEVE LAYTON
VERLON & EMILY McCARROLL
ART MARRS
FRANK & SHIRLEY MINER
PATRICIA NORTON
KEN O'CONNOR
MEENA ORTNER
DON & CATHY PARKER
HELEN RANUM
JIM RICE
AUGIE & ANGIE ROBERTS

JACK & PAT SHELTON
ERNEST & FELICIA SMITH
BILL STELLA
WALT, BILL & LAURIE STEVENS
RICHARD TERRANO
RICK & FRAN UBRICK
JO VUTERA
JOE & BETTY WALTHER
GEORGE & LOIS WOLFE
LEN & KAY WOODS

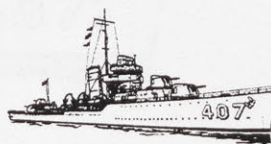
GENEROUS DONATIONS

(** UNABLE TO ATTEND)

OMER GRIFFIN
JOHN HURST
JAQUES HUTCHINS**
C. A. KILMON**
MARY KRAMER**
STEVE LAYTON
AUSTIN "DOC" LEA**
ANDY LIESINGER**
JOHN MARDEN**
BILL MEYERS**
JACK SOLLOWAY**
RICHARD TERRANO
JIM THOMAS**

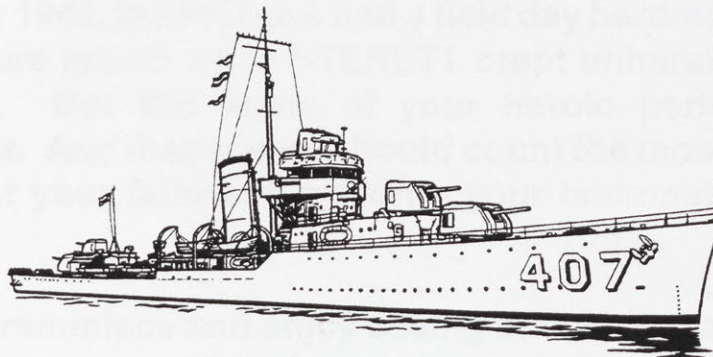
DRAWING DONATIONS

AUDREY O'CONNOR**



D.D.-407 U.S.S. STERETT

Destroyer Class:	Benham
Commissioned	08/15/1939
Length Overall	341'
Extreme Beam:	35'6"
Mean Draft:	10'9"
Standard Displacement tons:	1859
Normal tons:	1728
Designed Complement:	Off.: 9; Enl.: 175
Armament:	Primary: (4) 5"/38 caliber
Armament:	Secondary: (4) .50 caliber
Torpedo Tubes:	(16) 21"
Designed Speed:	38.5 knots
Designed Shaft Horse Power:	50,000
Screws:	2
Engine Manufacturer:	Wstsh.
Type:	Turbine
Fuel (oil) tons	483



From the Desk of Captain John E. Bennett USN (RET)

550 San Mario Drive
Solana Beach, California 92075
Fax/telephone: (619) 755-0501
e-mail: deepsub@earthlink.net

13MAY1999

To the men who manned the great ship STERETT in WWII:

I am honored to be able to express a few thoughts about you fine ship. I sincerely regret that my health precludes my attending your reunion next week as I would really like to thank each of you, personally, for what you did for our country as STERETT crew members. As a junior officer aboard USS SAN FRANCISCO during those dark days early in the war, I was a close witness to STERETT'S magnificent performance in combat against our ruthless enemy. In addition, as OOD, I observed your station keeping, shipshape appearance and seamanship between actions. You were the "small boy" we most enjoyed high lining ice cream to when alongside underway. Destroyers were the jacks-of-all-trades who could do anything asked of them and then some. You were in the forefront in battle and took the brunt of enemy fire. Your selfless actions saved other ships, including mine, from additional damage. We were always proud to be in the same Task Group with STERETT and were chagrined to receive all the glory from the media and uninformed public when we both returned to Mare Island in December 1942 for major battle damage repairs. Because FDR had mentioned SAN FRANCISCO in a radio address after the night battle of Guadalcanal 12-13 November 1942, the PR boys had a field day herding reporters aboard us off Treasure Island while STERETT crept unheralded up the bay to Mare Island. But WE knew of your heroic performance and we appreciated it. And that's what should count the most: the respect and admiration of your fellow Navymen – your teammates. And you had ours.

As you reminisce and enjoy seeing old shipmates again...and just might tell a sea story or two, let me toss out a couple you may not have heard. Pat McGann, the Gunnery Officer of the USS LAFFEY, told me a few years ago that after his ship was sunk the night of 12-13 November

'42 off Guadalcanal, he and about 50 other survivors on rafts drifted close to the burning USS CUSHING which had been abandoned but was still afloat. Some LAFHEY sailors boarded CUSHING and, finding the fires diminishing rapidly – and since they had a good cross-section of rates, they discussed the possibility of taking over CUSHING and sailing her out of there. They finally decided not to risk the danger of exploding ammo and went back into the water where Higgins boats rescued them the next day. Had they successfully manned CUSHING and sailed her down to Espiritu Santo, I wonder how the Navy would have sorted it out! Would the former skipper, if he survived, have resumed command?

After SAN FRANCISCO'S supposed repairs in Mare Island, we returned to the Solomons and bombarded Munda a few times, then were sent urgently up to the Aleutians where our codebreakers had determined that the Japs would strike next. As OOD on the midwatch one night, I heard bits of voice transmissions coming over the bridge TBS speaker. I recognized some call signs of ships we had left in the South Pacific so I knew atmospheric conditions had produced skip distance radio reception. It became apparent that a battle had just taken place and finally the commander asked all ships to report contacts. Only one ship had one and all other ships were ordered to train on that contact and the closest ship to illuminate. When I heard the next sad report that it was the bow of a ship with the number 50 on it, I realized up in the Aleutians that the good ship USS HELENA had been sunk somewhere in the South Pacific (Kula Gulf, it turned out).

MEN OF THE STERETT – I SALUTE YOU

Jack Bennett

WAR DIARY

U.S.S. STRETT (D.D.-407) South Pacific Force

November 1, 1942 to November 16, 1942

November 1

En route to Guadalcanal with Task Force 65.

0800 Lat. 14-31.7S; L. 167-17.6E.

1200 Lat. 14-04.5S; L. 166-34.2E.

2000 Lat. 12-52.2S; L. 165-13.8E.

Noon to noon - 248 miles - course 329&176 T.

Task Force 65 - Organization:

C.T.F. 65 - Rear Admiral Callagan.

T.G. 65.1 - Captain Reifsnider.

HUNTER LIGGETT BARNETT PRES. HAYES

T.G. 65.2 - Col. Jeschke.

Landing Group - Eighth Marines.

T.G. 65.3 - Rear Admiral Scott.

Screening Group:

ATLANTA FLETCHER AARON WARD

LARDNER BENHAM STERETT

GWIN WALKE McCALLAN

T.G. 65.4

Support Group.

SAN FRANCISCO HELENA BUCHANAN

LAFHEY

T.G. 65.5 - Captain Ashe.

Eastern Transport Group:

NEVILLE HEYWOOD FOMALHAULT

MANLEY McKEAN

T.G. 65.6 - Col. Sturgis

Eastern landing group:- Fifth Marines (detachment of).

147th Infantry.

246th Field Artillery.

500 Acorn personnel.

Two (2) companies - 2nd Raider Battalion.
T.G. 65.7 - Rear Admiral Tisdale.
Eastern Screening Group:
PENSACOLA CUSHING PRESTON MUSTIN ANDERSON

MISSION: Reinforce Guadalcanal Garrison/Establish new beachhead at Aola Bay.

November 2

0800 Lat. 11-05S; L. 163-31.4E.

1200 Lat. 10-20.7S; L. 163-20.7E.

2000 Lat. 10-33.3S; L. 162-35.3E.

Noon to noon - 300 miles - course 318 T.

1600 Task Group 65.7 joined.

1700 Formed approach disposition w/HELENA, WALKE and STERETT in van.

2000 Received radio report that a Japanese force of 4 cruisers and 17 destroyers were headed for Indispensable Straits. The transports screened by destroyers were ordered to retire. HELENA, PENSACOLA, SAN FRANCISCO and six destroyers, including STERETT (screen commander) proceeded at 22 knots to intercept the enemy. Heavy rain most of night.

November 3

Japanese force retired, contact not established. The enemy, however, landed troops and equipment at Koli Point, Guadalcanal Island. Task Force 65 ordered to rendezvous and carry out mission on morning of November 4th.

1600 Entire Force, less one transport and one destroyer formed up and started approach with STERETT in van. Passed crippled CONYNGHAM that had been in collision with FULLER. Support Group now composed of HELENA, SAN FRANCISCO, BUCHANAN, LAFFEY and STERETT.

2000 Went to General Quarters and so remained until 0600 Nov. 4th.

0800 Lat. 10-59.9S; L. 161-17.9E.

1200 Lat. 11-10.1S; L. 162-17.8E.

2000 Lat. 09.58.5S; L. 161-46.8E.

November 4

Operating with Support Group in Indispensable Straits covering approach and entrance of our Force.

0630 Entered Sealark Channel.

0810 Went to General Quarters, enemy shore battery at Kokumbona opened A/A fire on our planes and enemy shore batteries at Koli Point opened fire on our landing boats, loaded with troops. Our destroyers bombarded Koli Point. SAN FRANCISCO, screened by STERETT, proceeded to Kokumbona and shelled area for 35 minutes, silencing battery and starting fires. Then proceeded to Koli Point.

1008 SAN FRANCISCO, HELENA and STERETT opened fire on enemy positions at Koli, each ship had its own plane for spotting.

1048 Ceased firing, having expended 503 rounds, 5"/38, no casualties. Large fires were started and our spotters repeatedly reported direct hits on enemy concentrations, dumps and buildings. Fires burned throughout day.

1100 Secured from G.Q. and set 2 MS and Baker.

1150 Went to General Quarters and screened transport group. Received report 12 enemy planes headed for this vicinity.

1310 Resumed "2 MS", attack failed to materialize.

1800 Stood out through Sealark Channel, patrolling Indispensable Straits.

November 5th

Operating in STRATES with support group. Received word a Japanese force of 27 bombers and 24 fighters were headed this way. No air coverage is available for our transports.

1050 went to G.Q. and formed close A/A screen about our transports group off Aola Point. The enemy bombed our air field at Lunga but did not approach this force.

1225 Secured from air alarm and transports resumed unloading.

1230 Task Group 65.1 screened by T.G. 65.3 departed.

1330 GWIN reported to this group. Patrolled Indispensable Straits.

November 6th

0215 Went to General Quarters and Support Group, with STERETT in van, took approach disposition and headed for Sealark Channel. Report received that two enemy cruisers were headed for Guadalcanal from westward and enemy planes were headed for Henderson Field. Our Support Group and motor torpedo boats headed for enemy, who retired before we could make contact. Shore battery played searchlights and opened fire on planes. One of our planes dropped one 500 lb. near CL, no damaged claimed.

0330 All clear.

0400 Mission completed, Task Force 65 departed for Espiritu Santo. The Support Group five miles astern, toward possible enemy.

0800 Lat. 09-52S; L. 161-35.7E.

1200 Lat. 10-09.9S; L. 162-32.2E.

2000 Lat. 11-46.6S; L. 162-56.2E.

November 7th

0800 Lat. 14-07.6S; L. 163-19.2E.

1200 Lat. 14-14.1S; L. 164.12.6E

2000 Lat. 14-22.5S; L. 166-19.8E.

Noon to noon - 264 miles - course 158 T.

November 8th

0600 Entered Segund Channel, following heavy units. Fueled from tanker.

1000 Anchored in berth C-1 Received ammunition and provisions.

1700 Held C.O.'s conference.

November 9

1200 - STERETT and six other DDs in "C" berths dragged. GWIN and Laffey had minor collision. GWIN's bow was dished in and her wildcat was disabled.

2000 - CO's conference in CUSHING (CDD-10).

November 10

0520 - Task Group 67.4 Sortied.

SAN FRANCISCO; T.G.C. Rear Adm. CALLAGHAN.

PENSACOLA HELENA CUSHING (CDD10)

PRESTON BUCHANAN LAFFEY

GWIN STERETT

0800 Lat. 15-51S; L. 167-07.SE.

1200 Lat. 15-22S; L. 166-09.5E.

2000 Lat. 14-13.7S; L. 164-39.1E.

1800 PENSACOLA, PRESTON, and GWIN departed to join T.F. 16.

November 11

0500 Rendezvoused with remainder of Task Force 67.

Task Force Commander - Rear Admiral Turner.

Transports - 67.1

McCRAWLEY (Flag) PRES. JACKSON

CRESCENT CITY PRES. ADAMS

Landing Group 67.2

ATLANTA - R. Adm SCOTT.

MAURY - AARON WARD (CDS12)

BARTON - FLETCHER

LARDNER - McCALLA

Support Group 67.4

See November 10 plus PORTLAND, JUNEAU, SHAW.

MISSION - to reinforce our land forces in Guadalcanal, protect our transports and destroy enemy forces as opportunity offers.

1135 Went to General Quarters - Japanese reconnaissance planes sighted our force but remained out of range.

1200 Secured.

1840 General Quarters, Condition Affirm.

2000 Formed battle disposition.

2200 Support Group 67.4 entered Sealark Channel and headed Westward toward SAVO Island in search of enemy forces.

0800 Lat. 11-39.8S; L. 162-56.9E.

1200 Lat. 11-25.8S; L. 162-23.9E.

2000 do

Noon to noon - 324 miles - course 316 T.

November 12

STERETT in Support Group in Battle Formation searching SAVO Island area for enemy forces. Order in column: BUCHANAN, CUSHING, LAFFEY, STERETT, SAN FRANCISCO, HELENA, PENSACOLA, PORTLAND, JUNEAU, AARON WARD, FLETCHER AND LARDNER. 500 yards between D.D.'s, 700 yards between types and cruisers.

0550 BUCHANAN had sound contact and delivered attack.

0600 Secured from night general quarters, Transports anchored and began unloading, screened by cruisers at 3,000 yards, and by DDs plus ATLANTA and JUNEAU at 6,000 yards.

0730 Enemy shore batteries began firing on our HIGGINS boats loaded with troops. No direct hits observed. HELENA, SHAW, and BARTON were designated and began shore bombardment.

1010 SOME of our cruisers and destroyers opened fire on Douglas transport and 8 Grumman fighters.

1230 CUSHING and BUCHANAN ordered to destroy enemy landing boats to westward. They destroyed about 25 craft. BUCHANAN was hit in after stack by a 5"/38 during the T.B. attack killing 5 men and damaging stack.

1320 Air alarm - general quarters - condition affirm - transports got underway, formed 3 columns, base course 340 T. Combatant ships formed close screen 1,000 yards. Maneuvered by turn signals.

1406 Sighted formation of 21 enemy bombers standing in from north over Florida Island. STERETT reported sight contact to O.T.C. over T.B.S. Attacking planes made one circle over Florida Island, then fanned out and started approach 50 to 100 feet off water. STERETT was in perfect position in direct line of approach between planes and our transports. Began tracking and had fire control solution well before planes came in range. During the approach our fighter planes destroyed some of the attackers. One of our Higgins boats hit one plane with .50 cal. machine gun fire.

1413 Surface craft opened fire. STERETT shot down two with 5"/38 and two with 20 m.m. machine gun fire. These four are definite. We most probably damaged a fifth with 20 m.m.

1417 ceased firing. 20 of the 21 torpedo bombers were shot down. Many of them before they could release their torpedoes. Three torpedoes were sighted by us and easily avoided. We had to maneuver radically to miss hitting one plane that crashed and went up in flames close aboard. One burning plane crashed into SAN FRANCISCO and did minor damage. One of our fighters crashed in sea close to our formation, pilot was rescued. No other damage was sustained by surface units. At same time a formation of high level bombers and Zero fighters headed for this force were engaged by our fighters. They never reached their objective. All told 52 enemy planes were engaged and 32 of them shot down. The water was one mess of burning planes. STERETT suffered two personnel casualties, not critical, one from shrapnel, one from bullet wound in chest.

1450 Secured from air attack and transports resumed unloading.

1830 transports got underway and stood out through Lengo Channel. Task Group 67.4 covered sortie, departing through Sealark Channel. Covered transport group until 2200 in Indispensable. Straits then we reversed course, through south to west and headed for Lengo Channel and the enemy. PENSACOLA, GWIN and PRESTON were sent ahead of transports to protect them and then join Task Force 16.

2000 Task Group 67.4 went to General Quarters and formed battle disposition. Order in column: - CUSHING (CDD10), LAFFEY, STERETT, O'BANNON, ATLANTA (R. Adm. Scott), SAN FRANCISCO (R. Adm. Callaghan O.T.C.), PORTLAND, HELENA, JUNEAU, AARON WARD(CDD 12), BARTON, MONSSEN and FLETCHER.

(Action Report – night of November 12-13, 1942 appears below)

November 13

1700 Conducted Burial at sea services. Buried 28 late shipmates.

0800 Lat. 09-51S; L. 161-06E.

1200 Lat. 10-52.1S; L. 161-12.8E.

2000 Lat. 12-27.5S; L. 162-51E.

November 14

0800 Lat. 13-52.5S; L. 166-08.9E.

1200 Lat. 14-40.3S; L. 167-02.2E.

Noon to noon - 377 miles - course 123 T.

0955 HELENA reported periscope.

1016 STERETT had sound contact.

1352 FLETCHER had sound contact.

1635 Stood in to Segund Channel and fueled from tanker.

2030 Minor fire on tanker - sent our fire & rescue party & prepared to cast off.

2040 Secured.

November 15

0130 Received orders from Comairsopac, to report on board CURTISS. The "Staff", despite the fact that they had a dispatch report on the battle damages to STERETT, wanted to know if vessel could return to Guadalcanal and join R. Adm. Lee's force.

0400 Returned on board ship.

0800 Cast off from tanker and moored alongside TANGIER for emergency battle repairs.

1100 Transferred 13 seriously wounded cases to SOLACE.

1330 Attended conference held by R. Adm. Turner in McCAWLEY, regarding engagement November 13th.

2030 Went to General Quarters - Jap submarine shelled harbor leisurely for half hour. No damage, nuisance value only.

November 16

Undergoing emergency repairs alongside TANGIER. Transferred all unsafe (overheated and flooded ammunition to shore station).

ACTION REPORT

DD407/A16-3
(005)

U.S.S. STERETT

November 20, 1942.

From: The Commanding Officer.
To: The Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.
Via: (1) The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. HELENA (Senior Officer Task Group 64.7).
(2) The Commander, South Pacific Force.

Subject: Report of Action on Night of November 12-13, 1942.

Reference: (a) U.S. Navy Regs., 1920, Arts. 712 and 874(6).
(b) PacFltConf.Ltr. #24CL-42.

1. As directed by references, the following is submitted:

I. COMMENTS ON AND SUMMARY OF OUTSTANDING EVENTS:

Task Group 67.4, consisting of thirteen ships listed below, on the night of November 12-13, 1942 stood in from the Eastward through Lengo Channel, Guadalcanal Island area to contact and destroy a Japanese force reported standing in from the Westward. The immediate mission of the enemy force was to bombard our forces on Guadalcanal Island, preparatory to landing large troop reinforcements and to recapture this vital air base.

The STERETT, equipped only with F.D. and S.C. radars made contact with only two enemy groups, estimated course about 110 speed 23 knots. These later proved to be the right and center units of three groups. Sight contact revealed two cruisers (probably both CL's) and three destroyers in the right wing. The center force was later estimated to consist of two battleships and two or three heavy cruisers.

During the battle, the STERETT engaged three enemy vessels; a light cruiser, a battleship and a destroyer. Numerous 5 inch direct hits were made on the bridge and forward structure of the cruiser. Fires were started. This cruiser was later destroyed by other unit or units of our force. The STERETT fired a salvo of four torpedoes at the battleship scoring two positive hits. Bridge structure of battleship was hit with several salvos of 5 inch. The enemy destroyer was blown up by two torpedoes and two 5 inch salvos. This destroyer did not get a chance to fire a single shot at STERETT and was seen to sink.

The explosion on the enemy destroyer illuminated the entire area. This occurred about 0220 and caused resumption of heavy cross-fire from sharp on our starboard bow and on our port beam. It was during the next few minutes that the STERETT received most of her damage. It is believed that all our units had started retirement prior to this last engagement and it is quite definitely established that the enemy ships at this time, were confused and fired at their own units. At 0230 the STERETT was burning fiercely aft, both after guns were disabled and when it was certain that the two remaining torpedoes could not be fired STERETT retired at high speed.

The STERETT had received eleven direct hits and fragments from several near misses. Serious fires had started in #3 and #4 handling rooms and up through the mounts; several compartments were on fire. Over twenty percent of our ship's company had been killed or seriously wounded. Yet the STERETT managed to retire at flank speed (a short time later boilers #1 and #2 had to be secured and speed was limited to 23 knots) and about 0615 joined up with remainder of our retiring force. This can be attributed only to the high state of training for battle; the prompt action on the part of the gunnery officer in flooding all magazines aft and ordering all power to mounts #3 and 4 cut; to the prompt and efficient action of the damage control officer and his repair parties and the coolness and efficient co-operation of every officer and man in the ship.

II. PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS:

(a) Air reconnaissance indicated that a strong Japanese force from the West would arrive Guadalcanal area about midnight November 12-13, 1942. Contact was first made by S.C. radar in HELENA.

(b) See below.

(c) Wind was force 1. Sea was smooth (area nearly landlocked). Visibility about 5000 yards for ships; about 15,000 for prominent land objects. This was before any fires or firing. Moonset was at 0248 this morning, but the sky was 8/10 overcast.

III. CHRONOLOGICAL LOG OF BATTLE:

November 12

2000 - Ship at General Quarters; Material Condition Afirm.

2203 - Task Group 67.4 completed covering retirement of transports group. Reversed course through South and headed for Lengo Channel, course 270° T, speed 18 knots. In battle formation, in column in following order van to rear: CUSHING (Comdr. Stokes), LAFFEY, STERETT, O'BANNAN, ATLANTA, SAN FRANCISCO, (Admiral Callaghan, O.T.C.), PORTLAND, HELENA, JUNEAU, AARON WARD (Capt. Tobin), BARTON, MONSSEN, FLETCHER. Distance between D.D.'s 500 yards. Distance between types 700 yards. Distance between cruisers 700 yards.

November 13.

Served hot soup and coffee to all hands in relays. Making transit of Lengo Channel.

0026 - Changed course to 275° T.

0028 - Changed course to 285° T. Received "Condition Red" over warning net from Guadalcanal. Enemy planes coming in from North, Distant 26 miles.

0130 - Received T.B.S. report of contact with enemy ships. Picked up enemy ships on our F.D. radar on our port bow, 14,500 yards, and began tracking nearest large unit.

0148 - Received order to commence fire, odd numbered ships to starboard, even to port. Had a complete fire control solution of heavy unit on port bow but immediately ordered action starboard in order to avoid any confusion or undue concentration of targets. Our course was then 000° T, speed 18 knots. We had sight contact of three ships on our starboard bow and one to port. One of the ships to starboard appeared to be the size of a cruiser. Shortly after sight contact ComDesDiv 10, in CUSHING, leading destroyer, turned to left apparently to parallel enemy track. LAFFEY followed and STERETT had started left when O.T.C. ordered ComdesDiv 10 to resume column formation. Some ships commenced fire immediately. One enemy ship to port played searchlight on our formation.

0149 - Opened fire on largest vessel in starboard group, range 4,000 yards, opening. This target was sharp on bow and silhouette too vague for torpedo attack, The order for leading destroyer to resume column prevented this unit from making a coordinated torpedo attack at this time. Shortly after STERETT opened fire to starboard, an enemy large ship on port hand began firing at our cruisers and opened a searchlight. This made it more difficult, to see our target. Fire control radar was of great assistance at this time. Thirteen salvos were fired at this target. Fire broke out on target illuminating forecastle of cruiser. Two turrets could be definitely seen forward. Several observers insist they saw three turrets forward. Only two stacks were sighted but there could have been three. Best estimate is that this was of the NATORI class.

0151 - Received hit on port quarter cutting starboard cable to steering gear and rudder was momentarily jammed. Ship was maneuvered by engines. During this period O'BANNON came up on our starboard hand and STERETT checked fire. The cruiser was burning fiercely forward at this time. Several minutes later there was a heavy explosion in this cruiser. It is believed she blew up, probably due to fire from some other ship in our group. The CUSHING and LAFFEY were under heavy cross fire during this period and sight contact of them was lost.

0155 - Received order over T.B.S. from O.T.C. to "Cease Fire".

0205 - Under heavy fire from port. Numerous near misses and many shells passed overhead. About this time foremast was hit disabling S.C. radar, emergency identification lights, and T.B.S. transmitting antenna, and wounding 1 officer and 2 men in gun director. Temporary emergency lights and antenna were rigged. Ordered action port and designated KONGO class battleship as target. This target was plainly visible, illuminated by starshells and by flare from a burning ship to the southward. Closed range to 4000 yards, then 2000 yards. Fired full salvo of four torpedoes, normal Spread shortly thereafter, and opened fire with 5"/38 on bridge structure. Two torpedoes were seen to hit, causing two explosions aft. A number of direct 5" hits were observed. This battleship had been under fire by other ships in our force. A few minutes later, saw men abandoning battleship going over the side fore and aft. STERETT was then within 2000 yards of battleship and under heavy cross fire.

0220 - (approx.). A Jap destroyer of the FUDUKI class was silhouetted, 1000 yards on STERETT's starboard bow, target angle 120°. Immediately ordered torpedo battery to fire two torpedoes and 5 inch battery to open fire on destroyer. Two torpedo hits were definitely scored. Only two salvos of 5 inch had been fired and were hitting squarely when the torpedoes hit the destroyer causing large explosions lifting ship out of water and starting fires forward and aft. This destroyer positively sank almost immediately.

0227 - Received numerous hits on port quarter. STERETT was thoroughly illuminated when enemy destroyer to starboard exploded. Enemy salvos from relative bearing 280° (approximate) struck port side of #3 handling room, gun shelter and #4 handling room. These hits started fires in each of the stations noted, causing detonation of several 5# ready service powder tanks in each handling room and inflicting severe casualties to both material and personnel. Both after guns were thus put out of action. Later inspection revealed two 4 or 5 inch shell hits in the hull which passed through #4 handling room, one hit of the same size in #3 gun shelter and three hits closely grouped in #3 handling room. These latter were of undetermined caliber, the holes made by their entry measuring 15 inches across the smallest diameter; only small fragments of these were recovered. A second salvo of 5 inch struck the ship in the quarterdeck area, one pierced the corner of the port inboard torpedo tube, while the others passed through the midships clipping room, causing 6 personnel casualties, but little material damage other than holes in the superstructure and damage to the starboard torpedo tube nest. This hit also caused a fire on the quarterdeck. Nearly complete 4 inch projectile was recovered in #4 upper handling room. Word was passed immediately to guns #3 and 4 to flood both magazines and handling room, and the repair party was dispatched to the scene of the fires. Power was ordered cut out to guns #3 and #4 in order to prevent fires and explosions from severed electrical leads. Ready service ammunition, much of it on the verge of explosion from the heat of the fires, was dumped overboard from both handling rooms. Hoses and CO2 extinguishers were quickly brought into action and the fires brought under control. Personnel casualties were then carried to the battle dressing station and turned over to the Doctor.

0230 - STERETT was burning fiercely aft and was at this time completely separated from own force. Colors and after part of ship were illuminated. Only two guns were serviceable. Two torpedoes were still in the starboard nest but one 5 inch hit had put this battery out of commission. When torpedo officer stated that it was impossible to fire this battery, STERETT retired at high speed, slowing from time to time to reduce 'draft' when fire appeared to be getting out of control. Remainder of our force had already retired. D.R.T. had been disabled during afternoon air attack. Ship was headed east to clear area then South until close to Guadalcanal shore.

0255 - Headed for Lengo Channel course 090° T.

0258 - Avoided what may have been a torpedo that crossed our bow port to starboard. Increased speed to 23 knots to clear area then maneuvered toward Lengo Channel running at 10 to 23 knots depending on condition of fire art. Boilers #1 and 2 were secured about this time due to failure of firemain forward and loss of cooling water to forced draft blowers and loss of ventilation blowers in this fireroom. Transformers had been grounded when firemain carried away. Temporary firemain jumper was quickly rigged.

0311 - Heard and sighted heavy explosion in large ship bearing 345° T. That ship was burning from stem to stern but did not sink at this time. Six or seven burning ships were in sight during our retirement.

0300 - Reported by T.B.S. to HELENA.

0327 - Rudder jammed at full right. Backed full both engines to avoid going ashore on Guadalcanal Island.

0332 - Went ahead using trick wheel and rudder director from bridge.

0345 - Entered Lengo Channel.

0415 - Proceeded at 23 knots to overtake own forces which had gone out Sealark Channel.

0425 - Crossed 100 fathom curve to eastward of Leugo Channel.

0600 - Joined HELENA, SAN FRANCISCO, JUNEAU, O'BANNON and FLETCHER.

IV. SPECIAL COMMENTS ON ENEMY FORCES:

(a) STERETT encountered two groups of enemy ships, on roughly easterly heading making twenty three knots. These groups consisted of two battleships, five cruisers, two or three were heavy, and about three or four destroyers. One or more searchlights were used first by the enemy, then several starshells or aircraft flares high over the area between the forces, and

thirdly a form of firecracker or sparkle effect with brilliant white flashes fired low between the two forces with apparent intention of blinding our cruisers.

(b) -

(c) -

(d) When STERETT was under heavy fire, the majority of shells fell over or short or astern. No hits were received below waterline. What hits were received were quite effective except for low order burst in one 4. inch projectile recovered (see above), and two 5 inch projectiles which went through ship without exploding.

(e) Unable to estimate total damage to enemy. A cruiser and a destroyer were seen to explode. Two battleships were seriously damaged. When STERETT left area seven ships were seen burning fiercely.

V. SPECIAL COMMENTS ON OWN FORCES:

(a) See paragraph 3 above for number and type.

(b) Communications were all via TBS. Our transmitter was disabled by hit on mast. Almost impossible to hear TBS on destroyer bridge during height of battle.

(c) No smoke was used.

(d) Torpedo battery functioned perfectly until disabled by enemy gun fire. All six torpedoes were fired with 45 knot speed setting. Gun performance was excellent. Fire control radar was of invaluable assistance against light cruiser. Also 5" ammunition was very effective.

(e) No criticism of gunnery.

(f) Following ammunition was expended:

5"/38 common - 90 rounds

Mk XV torpedoes - 6

(g) Radar search was with FD radar only as directed by Task Group Commander. Two groups at enemy ships were located, first at 14,500 yards.

(h) Engineering department answered every bell at once, including 1 emergency full astern to avoid ramming own destroyer. Performance of medical department was outstanding. Three leg amputations were performed, and one splint compound fracture treated shortly after the battle. Only one wounded man was lost after he had reached the doctor's care, and he had been nearly torn in two.

(i) Summary of own damage:

STERETT received eleven direct hits and fragments from several near misses.

Three hits were from major calibre shells set with instantaneous fuses, possibly for shore bombardment, Two or three hits were 4", source not known. All others are believed to have been 5". Two 5" shells pierced ship completely from port to starboard without exploding.

Hit #1 pierced the hull, port side, at frame 159 about one foot below the main deck and passed through ship diagonally and pierced the starboard hull at frame 166 just below the main deck without exploding. This shell severed the starboard steering gear cable which was then in use. Fragments from bulkheads pierced the starboard degaussing gear cable. Other damage was of minor nature to ventilating system and lockers.

The second shell hit the fore mast below the yard arm, gouging a 6 inch hole in mast. Fragments severed the main stays and cut the mast ladder in two. Several fragments hit the director and slightly wounded five of the personnel. This hit demolished the emergency recognition lights, the S.C. radar antenna and the TBS transmitting antenna.

The third shell, believed to be in the same slave, hit above the yardarm bending the ladder and flying fragments nicked the yardarm and stays.

The fourth shell went through the port side of the hull frame 160, through compartment C-203-L, damaging lockers and exploding 5 or 6 tanks of 5" ready service powder killing six men by burns, concussion and shrapnel. This hit also severed all power leads to #4 handling room, and fragments entered the power panel at the bottom of the shell hoist.

The fifth hit (a 15" hole) pierced the port bulkhead of the crews' washroom, frame 155, destroying the urinals, damaging the flushing system, and piercing the ventilation system, twisting and bending the forward frame to #3 handling room fragments pierced the prophylactic station and sheet metal partitions in head. This hit killed two men.

The sixth hit, a 15" diameter hole through port side #3 handling room, frame 157 caused the ignition of 5 tanks of 5" ready service powder creating fierce fires, bending and gutting the C-103-L bulkhead by the gun crews' passageway. Fragments and shrapnel tore and twisted a transverse frame, pierced holes in after deck house; severed battle, lighting general power and general lighting cables. The ammunition joist and bulkhead were pierced by numerous pieces of shrapnel. The center column cable trunk and projectile hoist were also pierced by fragments. This hit killed about five men.

The seventh hit shattered the port side superstructure deck after deck house piercing the armor shield of gun mount number 3 in numerous places, killing and severely burning several men.

The eighth hit pierced the port side of gun mount #3 and continued on through the starboard side, fragments damaging rammer motor and killing one man.

The ninth hit shattered the shield and O.D.D. desk destroying it and fragments hitting the starboard torpedo tube killing one man.

The tenth hit pierced the lower after corner of the amidships clipping room, making a hole about 14" in diameter, severed upright in clipping room, cut the sprinkling system pipe from #1 engine room, bent frame of WT door, fragments setting off numerous pieces of small caliber and 20 mm ammunition. Fragments passed through clipping room and carried away roller path shield to #1 torpedo tube.

The eleventh hit pierced door and adjacent section or inboard barrel of port torpedo tube, fragments piercing machine shop, #4 barrel and torpedo air flask in starboard tube, damaging trainers seat of starboard tube, and severing gland exhaust line from forward engine room. It killed two men and seriously injured two men.

Many fragments or shrapnel also pierced the trainer's sight window on gun #4, shattering the telescope glass. Origin of these fragments is undetermined. Probably they came from a near-miss.

At the close of the action the conditions on board the ship were as follows:

1. Gun #3 and 4 were out of commission.
2. Fires burning in #4 handling room, compartment O-203-L, #3 handling room and -103-L.
3. S.C. radar out of commission.
4. Starboard torpedo tubes out of commission.
5. Port torpedo tubes empty.
6. Engineering plant was intact.
7. Starboard steering gear cable severed.
8. Degaussing cable starboard side severed.
9. T.B.S. antenna severed temporarily out of commission.
10. The emergency power cable to the steering motors was severed.

Following the battle, damage control measures as outlined below were taken:

Fires were fought in C-203-L, #3 and #4 handling rooms with C02 extinguishers and hose led into compartment C-203-L to extinguish burning clothing and mattresses. The after magazines had been flooded. The four holes in the ship's side were plugged and shored. The water was drained from compartment into magazine below and from here pumped out with a portable submersible pump to maintain proper level. About two inches of water was bailed out of compartment C-203-L and #4 handling room.

(j) Casualties to Personnel:

DEAD

Name & Rank	Name & Rank
JACKSON, George R. CTM (PA)	HARM, Harry H. S1c
KOPROSKI, Lawrence J. Sea2c	FRENCH, Loyd J. Sea2c
PETE, Leo J. F2c	NORMANDIE, Arthur N. Sea1c
STAPELTON, James P. Sea2c	WHITE, William J. Sea2c
KOSS, Clifford W. Sea2c	MARTIN, Veron R.E. GM2c
PORCHKE, Robert D. Sea2c	SMITH, Joseph RM3c
FLACK, Perry C. Sea1c	PERRY, Carmen S. S1c
ERBILICK, Kenneth L. Sea2c	KLEPACKI, Alphonse B. SC3c
KULA, Mathew A. SC1c	ROBINSON, "J" "E" Jr. SC2c
TYMAN, Joseph M. Jr. Sea1c	SMITH, Morris E. Sea2c
WALKER, William S. Matt2c	HAZARD, Edward S. F2c
SPAULDING, Ronald G. Cox	SMITH, Dale R. Sea2c
LANCZAK, Chester J. F2c	PIKE, Amos F. F2c
RUTH, Charles D. F2c	LACHAPELLE, Henry D. F2c

SERIOUSLY INJURED AND TRANSFERRED TO HOSPITAL:

Name/Rank/Injury	
NORCROSS, D.W., Sea2c	Multiple 2nd/3rd degree burns
SKUTLEY, R.L., Sea1c	Burns.
LAYTON, S.R., Cox	Burns.
RICH, J.E., S2c	Burns, shrapnel wounds
PARKIS, B.H., MM1c	Shrapnel wounds
RHODES, H.C., TM3c	Shrapnel wounds
TAPLA, C.N., F2c	Shrapnel wounds
SHRIEVES, D.F., S1c	Burns
TERRANO, R.R., EM3c	Shrapnel wounds
MARTIN, L.A., F2c	Shrapnel wounds, burns
HAWKINS, E.J., TM3c	Burns
SEYMOUR, H., S1c	Burns
KELLEY, D.W., S2c	Burns
Lt(jg) J.D. Jeffery, USN	Multiple small shrapnel wounds
HAMMACK, W.R., SF2c	Multiple small shrapnel wounds
SHELTON, J.W., FC1c	Multiple small shrapnel wounds
FORSMAN, C.L., Sea1c	Multiple small shrapnel wounds
BYERS, R.O., BM1c	Multiple small shrapnel wounds

BURNED AND JUMPED OVERBOARD TO EXTINGUISH FLAMES:

GODECKER, Hubert T. RM2c
SIMMONS, Clarence M. GM2c
GRANN, James I. Jr, Sea1c
CARTWRIGHT, William H. GM3c

VI. COMMENDATIONS WHERE MERITED:

During the entire action and subsequent fires all officers and men conducted themselves with the utmost coolness and bravery. There was no panic. There was no confusion, and every officer and man proceeded to do his own job regardless of personnel risk.

The medical department was remarkable for the efficiency with which it functioned under difficult conditions. The medical officer and his staff could not have done a better job. They were assisted by CONN, G.E., Y2c, HAMMACK, W.R., SF2c, LOVAS, C.R., MM2c, and BOUDREAUX, F.A., F2c, who cared for the wounded voluntarily in addition to their regular duties and watches until reaching port, getting no sleep for at least 48 hours.

THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS DESERVE SPECIAL COMMENDATION:

Lieutenant C.H. Calhoun, U.S.N., gunnery officer, for the accuracy of his control of the gun battery, and the fact that, as we were retiring from the battle area, he proceeded aft and personally checked the work of fire fighting parties. At great risk he entered the smoke filled handling rooms #3 and 4 and saw that the after magazines were properly flooded.

Lieutenant (jg) G.W. Hanna, USNR, first lieutenant and damage control officer, for the manner in which he directed the damage control parties and the removal of the wounded, without thought to his own safety.

Ensign P. Hall, U.S.N., assistant first lieutenant for his courage in personally supervising the fire fighting below decks, despite the dangers of smoke, gas, and overheated powder.

THE FOLLOWING MEN DESERVE SPECIAL COMMENDATION:

ROBINSON, J.A. SF1c - During action #3 handling room was hit and set on fire and 4 shell holes put in compartment C-203-L. ROBINSON led fire party to extinguish fire and later patched holes and shored up bulkheads. He worked continuously all night and the next day reinforcing shores and operating pumps. It is recommended that this man be advanced to Chief Shipfitter for his efficient work in handling men and directing the repair party under dangerous conditions.

MORRIS, D.B. MM2c - for heroic action under extremely hazardous conditions helping fight fire and shoring bulkheads.

BLANKENSHIP, H. CCM(AA) - for his cool and efficient work in fighting fires in #4 handling room and his leadership in directing the fire party to successfully extinguish the fire which helped the ship continue its fighting efficiency.

SPENCE, M.R. Sealc - for his assistance in removing casualties from gun #3 and getting #7 life raft into water for men from gun #4 who were thrown over the side.

MAYEFSKY, Jospeh, Sea2c - for assistance in removing casualties from gun #3 and getting #7 life raft over the side to men of gun #4.

KOEAK, J.J. Sea2c - for assistance in removing casualties from gun #3 to wardroom and assisting in getting life raft #7 overboard.

TALBOT W.W. CEM(AA) - for his tireless effort and continued excellent performance of duty which was responsible for repairing the sick bay and other electrical units necessary to carry on the fighting efficiency of the ship.

WELLER, L.A. Sea1c - for gallant action under extremely hazardous conditions. After #3 handling room was hit he led hose into #4 handling room and shoring bulkheads.

DEAN, J.D. MM2c - rendered valuable aid in putting out fire in compartment C-203-L and handling room or No. 4 gun.

KELLY, B.A. Sea1c - for fine assistance in handling casualties of gun #3 and getting life raft over the side.

WHOLLEY, J.B. F3c - for assistance in handling casualties of gun #3 and getting life raft over the side.

HODGE, H.J. CGM - for his immediate courageous and efficient action after the ship was hit by enemy shells. HODGE immediately ascertained the damage done, took charge in the vicinity of #3 and 4 handling rooms, fought the fire, removed wounded, and personally removed ready service ammunition which was sizzling hot and on the point of exploding (some of this powder did explode in mid-air after it was thrown overboard).

FRAY, V.W. WT2c - for his assistance in righting the fires in handling rooms #3 and 4, including his help in removing burning mattresses, clothing, and overheated ready-service powder.

BURRIS, G. Sea1c, LASTRA, L.J. Sea2c, and HOMER, F.A. Seac2c - for their assistance in running hoses into #1 handling room, for removing burning material from vicinity of fires, and for assisting HODGE in handling ready-service powder which was close to the point of explosion.

KENNUM, L.G. CTM(AA) - for his assistance in fighting the fire on gun #3 and in #3 handling room, and for his heroic action in entering the flames from this

handling room in order to operate the magazine flooding valves, which operation doubtless saved the ship.

SEYMOUR, H.A. Jr. Sea1c - for his courageous and unselfish action when after being severely burned in gun #4. He immediately, with complete disregard for his own safety, broke out fire hose, coupled it together (judging from the present condition of his hands this was really remarkable) and fought fire on #3 mount. He also helped extinguish fires on clothing of SEUTLEY and NORCROSS, and assisted in removal of wounded from gun #3.

SKELTON, J.W. FC1c - for his cool and efficient performance of duty as rangefinder operator when after being painfully struck by shrapnel he (although he could in no way determine the extent of his wounds except to feel blood soaking his shirt) calmly identified silhouettes as they appeared, gave target angles and speeds, and ranged under the most trying conditions.

BYERS, R..O. BM1c - for his cool and efficient performance of duty as director trainer when after being struck in the neck by shrapnel he stuck to his post until ordered by the gunnery officer to leave during a lull in the action.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that: All TBS orders be paralleled by C.W. radio.

A spare temporary emergency identification light string be ready to run up with a halyard for night action.

A cease firing gong contact maker be installed on the bridge for use of the captain in stopping gun fire, with a sounder in the gun director in addition to those already mounted in gun shields.

The flagship must be equipped with the most modern radar.

Consideration should be given to locating remote control release to magazine flooding and sprinkling valves on the top aide. It is very difficult to operate them in smoke and flames.

J. C. COWARD

Copy to: Cominch (direct)
Comdespac (direct)

U.S.S. HELENA 10-s

FIRST ENDORSEMENT
CL50/A16-3/(0011)

November 21, 1942.

From: The Commanding Officer, U.S.S. HELENA.
To : The Commander south Pacific Force.

1. Forwarded.

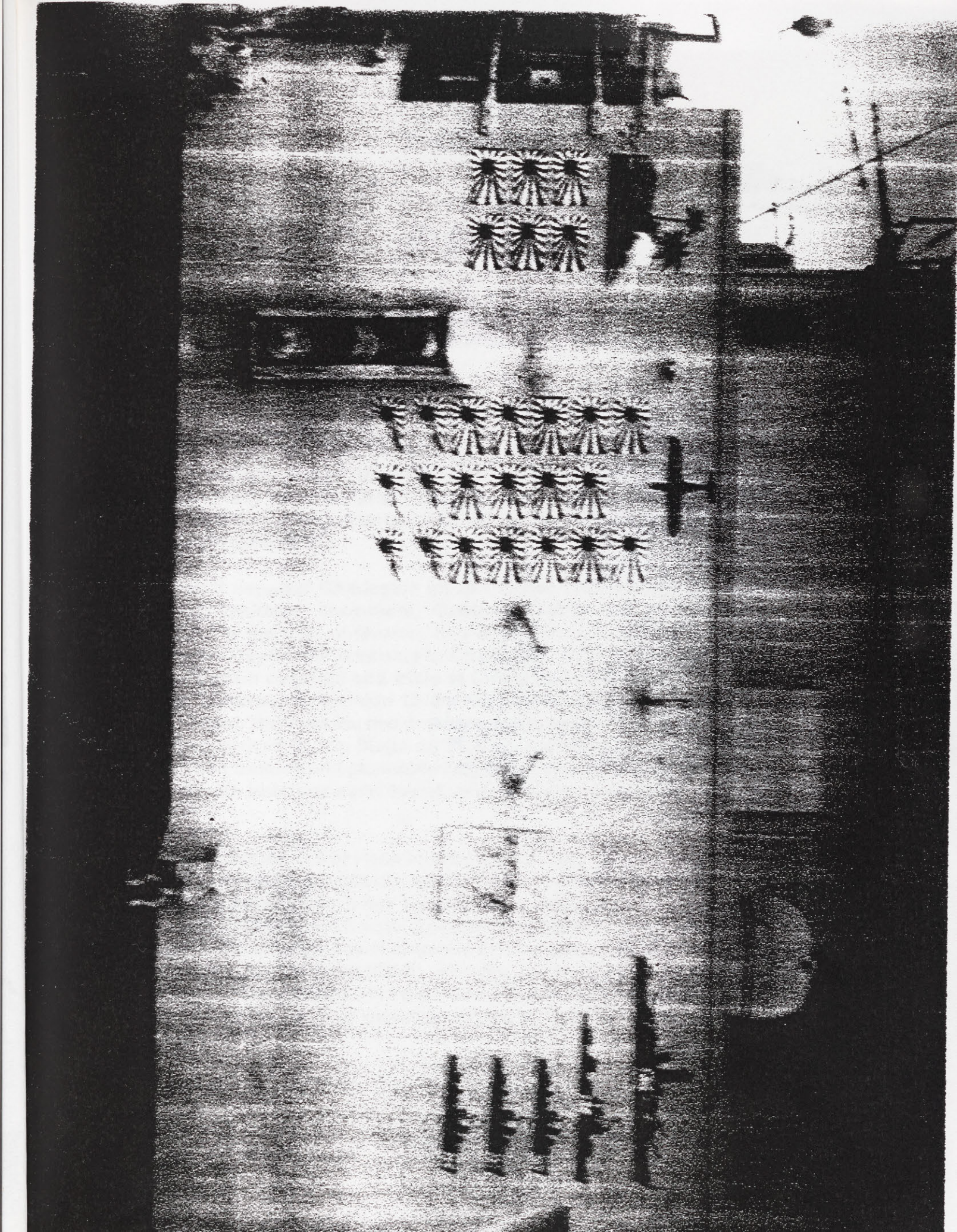
/s/ GILBERT C. HOOVER

(Information source: National Archives. Compiled by Scott Davis, 2120 Sunset Avenue, Morro Bay, California 93442. See www.geocities.com/Pentagon/5133/dd407.htm)

BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL
TRAINING
BULLETIN

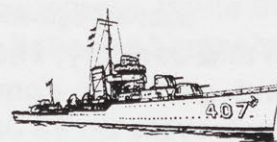


RESULT OF TRAINING: VICTORY





DD-407



STERETT II

**This brief history of the Sterett's activities has been copied
from the DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN NAVAL FIGHTING SHIPS**

**(DD-407; dp. 1,500; l. 341'3 5/8"; b. 35' 6"; dr. 17'8"; s. 40.7 k. (tl.); cpl. 251; a. 4 5",
4 40mm., 8 21" tt., cl.Benham)**

The second Sterett (DD-407) was laid down on 2 December 1936 at the Charleston Navy Yard; launched on 27 October 1938, sponsored by Mrs. Camilla Ridgely Simpson, and commissioned on 15 August 1939, Lt. Comdr. Atherton Macondrayin command.

Sterett departed Charleston on 28 October 1939 in company with two other newly-commissioned destroyers, Mustin (DD-413) and Hughes (DD-410), for shakedown in the Gulf of Mexico. She visited Vera Cruz, Cristobal, Mobile, and Guantanamo Bay before returning to Charleston on 20 December. She underwent post-shakedown overhaul and trials at Charleston until departing on 4 May 1940. Assigned to Destroyer Division 15, Sterett rendezvoused with Hammann (DD-412) at Guantanamo Bay, and the two destroyers steamed for San Diego, via the Panama Canal. They arrived in San Diego on 23 May; and, for a month, Sterett divided her time between training and planeguarding Enterprise (CV-6). On 24 June, she sailed for Hawaii with Enterprise and five other destroyers, and arrived at Pearl Harbor on 2 July.

She operated out of Pearl Harbor for the next 10 months, participating in a number of exercises and patrols. When Mississippi (BB-41) exited Pearl Harbor on 14 May 1941, Sterett was in her screen. The warships transited the Panama Canal and arrived at Norfolk on 28 June. Sterett next screened Long Island (CVE-1) during the escort carrier's Bermuda shakedown cruise. Sterett concluded 1941 engaged in neutrality patrols with Wasp (CV-7). After the Japanese attacked the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Sterett sailed from Bermuda with Wasp and an assortment of cruisers and destroyers to counter possible action by Vichy French ships anchored at Martinique.

Sterett spent the early months of the war patrolling off the eastern seaboard. In mid-January, she sailed to Argentina, Newfoundland, to meet Task Force (TF) 15 and escort a convoy to Iceland. The convoy was transferred to two British destroyers on 23 January 1942 and she put into HvalfJordur, Iceland, on the 26th. Sterett returned to the United States at New York on 9 February and stood out again on the 15th to meet the liner Queen Mary off the Boston breakwater and escort her into the harbor. After two trips between Boston and Casco Bay, Maine, Sterett joined Wasp as part of her escort to duty with the British Home Fleet. The task group entered Scapa Flow, Orkney Islands, on 4 April minus its commanding officer, Rear Admiral John W. Wilcox, who was lost overboard during the passage.

While Wasp made her first aerial reinforcement of embattled Malta, Sterett trained with the British Fleet out of Scapa Flow. The destroyer was with Wasp on her second run to Malta, 29 April to 15 May, and, after returning to Scapa Flow, headed for the United States. The task group made Norfolk on 27 May 1942. On 5 June, Sterett put to sea bound for San Diego, where she arrived on 19 June. She stood out again on 1 July and, as a part of TF 18, steamed, via Tongatabu, to the Fiji Islands. She was assimilated into Rear Adm. Richmond K. Turner's South Pacific Amphibious Expeditionary Force and practiced invasion techniques at Fiji until 1 August.

Sterett spent the rest of 1942 and all of 1943 supporting the Allied forces as they struggled up the island staircase formed by the Solomons Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago. The Solomons invasion fleet, guarded by three carrier task groups led by Saratoga (CV-3), Enterprise, and Wasp, arrived in the Solomons late on 6 August. Early the next morning, the carriers catapulted their planes into the air for strikes on enemy installations and troop concentrations; and, afterward, the fleet softened the beaches with its big guns. As this overture neared its end, the Marines stormed ashore at Guadalcanal, Gavutu, Tulagi, and Tanambogo. Meanwhile, Sterett and the Wasp carrier group zigzagged into a rain squall, successfully dodging an 18-plane raid launched from Rabaul on New Britain.

For the next three days, the Wasp unit guarded the supply lines to Tulagi. From there, Sterett sailed east of San Cristobal to screen Long Island while she launched 31 Marine planes for use on Guadalcanal. Rejoining Wasp immediately, Sterett remained with her until DesDiv 15 was detached on 10 September 1942. Five days later, the carrier, Sterett's long-standing companion, was at the bottom of the Pacific.

For the next month, Sterett escorted convoys and reinforcements to the Solomons and between the islands of that group, splashing at least one Japanese bomber. Following duty escorting Bellatrinc (AK-20) and Betelgeuse (AK-28) to Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides and guarding the latter all the way to Noumea, New Caledonia, she returned to Guadalcanal accompanying two transports,

McCawley (AP-10) and Zeilen (AP-9), loaded with troops and equipment. While the transports unloaded, Sterett fired on enemy bombers and shore batteries harassing Henderson Field on Guadalcanal.

The destroyer returned to the New Hebrides and, after refueling, put to sea on 31 October to protect still more reinforcements to Guadalcanal. The convoy arrived at Aola Bay early on 4 November. Sterett covered the establishment of the beachhead and later joined San Francisco (CA-38) and Helena (CA-75) in a highly successful shore bombardment. Two days later, she retired to Espiritu Santo.

There, she met another convoy and escorted it to Lunga Point, Guadalcanal. As the troops were landing on the morning of the 12th, Sterett took up station to meet expected air raids. Just after noon, she received word that a large flock of Japanese planes had been spotted by a coastwatcher on Buin. In less than an hour, the attackers swooped in low against the dark background of Tulagi and Florida islands. Sterett directly in the line of the enemy's approach, shot down four torpedo bombers while dodging at least three torpedoes. By 1450, 32 of the attackers were splashed by anti-aircraft fire and American aircraft. The remainder retreated. The transports resumed their unloading, and Sterett enjoyed relative quiet for the rest of the day.

That evening, after shepherding the transports east to safety, Sterett joined the van of the cruiser-destroyer force under the command of Rear Admiral Callaghan and steamed back through Lengo Channel to intercept Vice Admiral Hiroaki Abe's raiding force. Sterett and her colleagues in the van, followed by five cruisers and a rearguard of four more destroyers passed Lunga Point abeam, increased speed and, upon reaching a point about three miles north of Tassafaronga, changed course. As the warships sped toward Savo Island, their radar screens were dotted by echoes from the enemy ships. Helena reported first contact at 0130 on the 13th, and soon all American ships were receiving reflections from the Japanese ships. The two forces were closing each other at a combined speed in excess of 40 knots.

The American warships threaded their way into the enemy formation, and a deadly crossfire immediately engulfed Sterett. At 0150, Admiral Callaghan ordered odd ships in column to open fire to starboard and even ships to engage the enemy to port: Sterett fired on a cruiser to starboard and, in turn, took a terrific pounding from battleship Hiei on her port side. Soon her first target was enveloped in a large explosion and sank, a victim of the combined fire of the Americans.

At this point, the battle degenerated into a swirl of individual duels and passing shots. Sterett turned now to the giant tormenting her port side, let fly four torpedoes, and peppered her superstructure with 5-inch shells. Though the battleship neither sank nor sustained severe damage, Sterett had the satisfaction of

scoring two torpedo hits before a third target crossed her bow. At the appearance of an enemy more her size, Sterett tore into the destroyer with her guns and launched two torpedoes. Before the Japanese destroyer could fire a single shot at Sterett, she was lifted from the water by the exploding torpedoes and rapidly settled to the floor of "Ironbottom Sound."

By this time, Sterett had undergone a brutal beating from Hiei and various other enemy ships. Thus, at 0230, with the Japanese retiring toward Savo Island, Sterett, her after guns and starboard torpedo tubes out of commission, began to withdraw. She had difficulty overtaking the rest of her force because of her damaged steering gear and the necessity to reduce speed periodically to control the blaze on her after deck. However, by dawn, she was back in formation on the starboard quarter of San Francisco.

Before heading for Espiritu Santo on the 13th, she delivered her parting shot to the enemy by depth charging a sound contact, possibly the submarine which, about an hour later, would sink Juneau (CL-52). Sterett arrived in the New Hebrides on 14 November, underwent emergency repairs, and departed from Espiritu Santo 10 days later. Visiting Pearl Harbor along the way, she steamed into San Francisco Bay and entered Mare Island Naval Shipyard: where she remained for two months. Sterett set sail from San Francisco on 10 February 1943, joined Nassau (CVE-16) at Pearl Harbor, and together they entered Espiritu Santo on 8 March. Upon her return to the Pacific theater, Sterett resumed her original assignment guarding convoys to the Solomons-Bismarcks area and patrolling the area to prevent enemy reinforcements from being moved into the fray

On 6 August 1943, Sterett was cruising "Ironbottom Sound" in the second division of the six-destroyer task group under Comdr. Frederick Moosbrugger. At 1200, air reconnaissance reported an enemy force of four destroyers delivering troops and supplies to Kolombangara via Vella Gulf. At dusk, the six Americans passed cautiously through Gizo Strait into Vella Gulf. By midnight, the two divisions were skirting the coast of Kolombangara about two miles apart. Radar picked up the Japanese ships heading south at about 30 knots. One division launched eight torpedoes at the Japanese column's port side; then Sterett's division loosed their torpedoes and opened with their guns. Three of the four enemy destroyers took torpedo hits and received the coup de grace from 5-inch guns. Shigure, the lone survivor, retreated at high speed to Buin. At Vella Gulf, Sterett and her comrades accounted for three enemy destroyers, over 1,500 sailors and soldiers, and a large portion of the 50 tons of supplies.

For the rest of August and throughout September, Sterett occupied herself with patrols in the Solomons. On 8 October, she arrived in Sydney, Australia, escorting Cleveland (CL-55). The two warships reached Espiritu Santo on the 24th.

At the beginning of November, she accompanied the assault forces to Bougainville, Solomon Islands; and, between 5 and 11 November, supported the carriers while their planes bombed Japanese ships at Rabaul. She screened the carriers who delivered the 9 December raid on Nauru Island; then withdrew to the New Hebrides until 27 December. In the Solomons on the last three days of 1943, Sterett escorted Alabama (BB-60) to Pearl Harbor and on to the Ellice Islands, arriving at Funafuti on 21 January 1944. Two days afterward, she put to sea with Bunker Hill (CV-17) and Monterey

From 29 January to 7 March 1944, Sterett operated in the Marianas and Marshalls. On the 29th, her carriers' planes struck Roi and Namur islands of Kwajalein Atoll. Next came the 12 February raid on Truk. Five days later, Sterett covered the flattops during raids on Tinian and Saipan. She departed the Marshalls for the New Hebrides, where she joined the Emirau invasion force. Sterett stopped at Purvis Bay, Florida Island, on 4 April and visited Efate on 7 April during her voyage from Emirau Island to the United States.

Sterett stopped at Pearl Harbor on 16 and 17 April and arrived at the Puget Sound Navy Yard on the 29th. She underwent yard work from 24 to 30 April and then moved down the coast on 3 May to San Francisco Bay. Forty-eight hours later, she sailed out for Oahu and reached Pearl Harbor on the 10th. Following 14 days of exercises in the Hawaiian Islands, she sortied with TG 12.1 for the Marshalls. At Majuro from 30 May, she exited the lagoon with TF 58 on 6 June to screen the support carriers during the invasion of the Marianas. Sterett cruised with the carriers from 11 to 25 June as they launched and recovered wave after wave of planes for strikes on Saipan, Iwo Jima, Guam, and Rota Islands, periodically fending off Japanese aerial retaliation.

From 25 June until 7 July, she patrolled the waters around Guam and Rota and bombarded Guam. After covering the carriers during the sweeps over Yap, Palau, and Ulithi, she sailed for Eniwetok en route to Puget Sound. She stopped at Pearl Harbor from 10 to 14 August and headed on to Bremerton, Wash., entering the Puget Sound Navy Yard on the 20th. Completing overhaul and trials up and down the west coast she sailed west on 13 October for the Hawaiian Islands. Sterett sortied from Oahu with TU 16.8.5 on 19 November and, 12 days later, entered Seeadler Harbor, Manus Admiralty Islands. Two weeks before Christmas 1944, she entered Leyte Gulf in the Philippines for patrol and convoy duty.

On the day after Christmas, she started for Mindoro with a supply convoy. Two days later, the Japanese attacked. Early that morning, three kamikazes dove at Sterett's convoy. Antiaircraft fire splashed the first but the second and third succeeded in crashing into merchantmen. Sterett endured the onslaught of the "Divine Wind" until the task unit was dissolved on New Year's Day 1945. On that

date, she returned to San Pedro Bay, claiming the destruction of one enemy suicide plane for herself and assists in eliminating two others. During the next three months, Sterett plied the waters of the South and Central Pacific, primarily engaged in patrol and convoy duty in the Solomons.

13 April 1945, she was off Okinawa, taking part in the conquest of the Ryukyus as a radar picket ship. At Okinawa, Japan hurled a storm of suicide planes at the Navy. Particularly hard-hit were the ships on radar picket duty. On 6 April, Sterett had to accompany her companion ship, Bennett (DD-473), to Zampa Misaki on Okinawa after that destroyer had been hit by a kamikaze.

Three days later, Sterett suffered the same fate. While at picket station #4 northeast of Okinawa, five enemy planes swooped on her, LCS-36, and LCS-24. The first was driven off and later downed, the second was splashed by the destroyer's main battery; but the third, though battered by her barrage, pressed home its attack and smashed into Sterett's starboard side at her waterline. She lost all electrical power, but her 20 millimeter and 40 millimeter guns still managed to bring down the fourth

attacker. The destroyer lost steering and power to all guns and directors, her communications were out, and her forward fuel tanks were ruptured. However, with the fires in the mess hall under control, steering control reestablished aft, and emergency communication lines rigged she moved off to Kerama Retto with Jeffers (DMS-21) providing anti-aircraft cover.

Following emergency repairs at Kerama Retto, she screened TU 53.7.1 to Ulithi, and, from there, she and Rail (DE-304) sailed to Pearl Harbor. After spending the period from 1 to 10 May at Oahu, she moved on to Bremerton, Wash., and more extensive repairs. Through the months of June, July, and the first three weeks of August 1945, she remained on the west coast. Then, from 21 to 28 August, Sterett steamed to Pearl Harbor. Upon her arrival, she practiced shore bombardment and anti-aircraft gunnery for a month. On 25 September, she set sail with Mississippi (BB-41), North Carolina (BB-55), and Enterprise (CV-6).

Sterett transited the Panama Canal on 8 and 9 October and, after a three-day stay in Coco Solo, C.Z., proceeded north. She arrived in New York on 17 October and was decommissioned there on 2 November 1945. Her name was struck from the Navy list on 25 February 1947, and she was sold on 10 August to Northern Metal Co. of Philadelphia for scrapping.

Sterett (DD-407) earned 12 battle stars and the Philippine Republic Presidential Unit Citation for World War II service.



**Reunion 99 extends thanks to friends of the Sterett
who have made the event possible through generous
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