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USS MICHAEL MURPHY (DDG- 112) COMES OF AGE

By George S. K. Rider
USS ABBOT (DD-629)

The date was 6 October 2012. The program was set to begin at 10:00 AM. Michael Murphy's Dad, Dan, helped with our tickets. Also there were his daughter Jenny; a friend, Harry Flynn; and Ted Karras, Rich Baron, Gene Gallagher, and me, USS ABBOT (DD-629) shipmates. We were early. The seats began to fill. A tall, slim U.S. Navy SEAL wearing his trident and rows of ribbons, passed by with his wife and young son in a stroller to honor a fallen



The U.S. Navy's newest destroyer, the USS MICHAEL MURPHY (DDG-112), is the latest of the ARLEIGH BURKE Flt IIA ships. Originally she would have been the last of the class but with the reduction of the new ZUMWALT Class to just three ships, the navy decided to invest in more of the BURKES in an updated form that includes Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) capability. The MICHAEL MURPHY was built by Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, and commissioned in New York City on 6 October 2012. The ship then made a couple of goodwill stops before sailing to Pearl Harbor, her new home port.

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comrade. They became a metaphor for the story of the construction, christening, and the commissioning that was about to occur. A bright future was ahead for the MURPHY and for the tow-headed toddler.

A little more than two years before, on 16 September 2010, I and other shipmates gathered for the USS ABBOT reunion in Portland, Maine. A bus tour took us to the Bath Iron Works where the USS JASON DUNHAM (DDG-109)

and USS SPRUANCE (DDG-111) were nearing completion. My wife Dorothy pointed to the red-leded stern section of another DDG. "MICHAEL MURPHY" was stenciled on her transom. I hadn't known that a DDG was named for Michael. He grew up 20 miles from our home on Long Island. I welled up with tears.

Less than a year later, on 7 May 2011, Ted, Rich, and I and our families attended the MURPHY's christening in Bath. Representatives of the Navy SEALs, Army Night Stalkers, the New York fire and police departments (FDNY & NYPD), and other first responders arrived on a crisp Maine morning. Speakers included Senator Olympia Snow; Jeffery Geiger, President of BIW; the MURPHY's commanding officer, CDR Thomas Shultz; ADM Eric Olsen, Special Operations Command; Assistant Secretary of

the Navy Sean Stackley; and CNO ADM Gary Roughead.

Dan Murphy paid tribute to his son and recounted the incident in Afghanistan in which he fell. The day that the christening took place, 7 May, was Michael's birthday, one week after Bin Laden had been dispatched. Michael's mother, Maureen,

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read the names of all 19 who died that day, then moved to a platform at the ship's bow. She broke the champagne bottle on the second try, paused, looked skyward, and said "Happy Birthday, baby". The band played, confetti streamed down.

At last, on 6 October 2012, Reveille! 0430 AM. Jenny drove me to New York City. Parking and coffee at Starbucks, then, a cab to Pier 88. There, a head to toe search by security before we joined the rest in our front-row seats dockside for the commissioning, 40 feet aft of amidships. The fast-paced program began at 10 AM. CDR Corey J. Turner, the MURPHY XO, introduced the honored guests. Two navy jets roared overhead after which three SEALs, one streaming an American flag, parachuted from a helicopter and landed on the roof of the pier. CDR Shultz escorted Senator Schumer aboard. Honors were rendered. The youngest of the ship's company, Seaman Recruit Stephen Martinez, sang the National Anthem.

CDR Turner directed our attention to the large tattered American flag fastened to the pier wall behind us. It was the largest to survive 9/11. Members of FDNY had lovingly restored the flag which will have a permanent home at the 9/11 Museum. The guests, led by Michael's brother, John, and their father, Dan, were announced and seated. The



Four USS ABBOT (DD-629) shipmates, (from left) Ted Karras, Rich Baran, Gene Gallagher, and George Rider pose at the commissioning of the USS MICHAEL MURPHY (DDG-112) at New York City's Pier 88 on 6 October 2012. Karras, Baran, and Rider served together in the mid 1950s and Gallagher followed by a few years. He served in the ship during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The USS ABBOT Association has actively supported the christening and commissioning of DDG-112 and attending the commissioning was the culmination of their efforts. Photo courtesy of George Rider.

colors were retired.

Retired LCDR Robert Coyle USN, now Monsignor Robert Coyle, was both the navy's casualty officer the night of 28 June 2005, when Michael went missing, and the celebrant of Michael's Mass at Our Lady of Carmel RC Church in Patchogue, New York, on 13 July 2005. In summing up Michael's deeds, he said, "In the name of the Lord, no greater love

hath any man than to lay down his life for his friends."

The USS MURPHY is 510 feet long, 59 feet wide, draws 31 feet, and weighs 9200 tons. She cost \$1.1 billion. She was decked out in signal flags and red, white, and blue bunting aboard and on the gangways fore and aft along with a handsome picture of Michael, the ship's coat of arms, and the ship's motto, "Lead

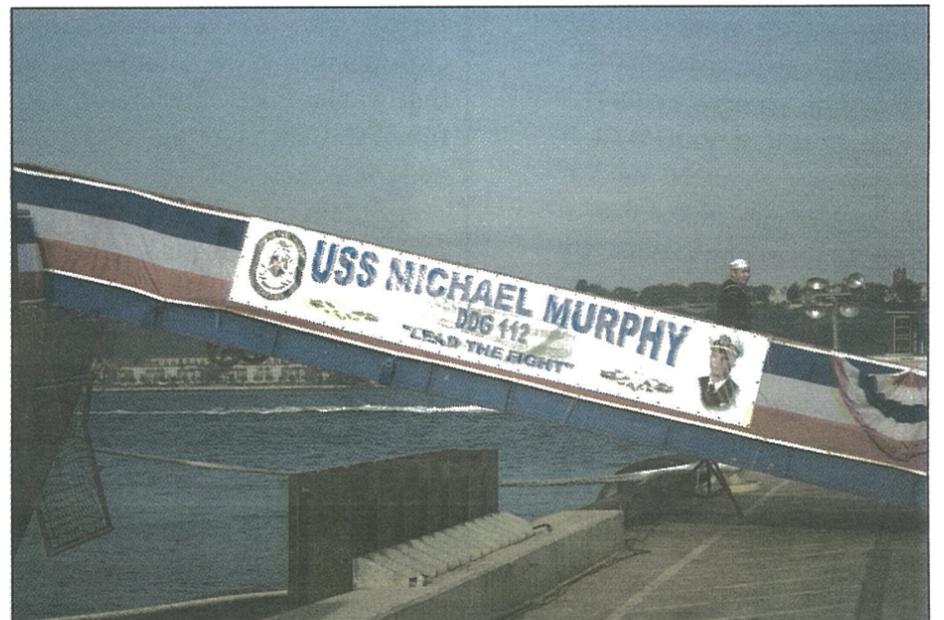
the Fight."

Mayor Michael Bloomberg recalled Michael's bond with the FDNY. It began with his childhood friend and fellow lifeguard, whose uncle, a fireman, perished on 9/11. Their bond grew closer. Before deploying to Afghanistan, Michael asked for 25 patches to be distributed

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Dan Murphy, father of LT Michael Murphy, stands near the stern of the ARLEIGH BURKE-class destroyer named for his son at Newport, Rhode Island. Dan Murphy managed to get the tickets to the commissioning for the four USS ABBOT shipmates. Photo courtesy of George Rider.



Shown here is the USS MICHAEL MURPHY's aft gangway and the Hudson River beyond at the ship's New York City commissioning. Commissioning ceremonies are always inspiring but none more so than this one. The brow is longer and steeper than those used by the FLETCHER, ALLEN M. SUMNER, and GEARING classes, but DDG-112 is more than four times heavier than any of those ships. Photo courtesy of George Rider.

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to his team from the New York Fire Fighters and Engine Company 53/ Ladder Company 43 headquartered in Spanish Harlem, "El Barrio's Bravest". Michael wore his patch on every mission, including the one in which he fell. The patch was cut from his uniform and returned to the fire house.

Jeffrey S. Geiger, President of General Dynamics, Bath Iron Works, spoke of the company's 5,200 dedicated workers who built the MURPHY. Their cry, he said, as they labored to complete her for his May 7th birthday was, "Do it for Murph!" Mr. Geiger spoke of Michael's, "spirit and strength that runs deep into the plates." The MURPHY was the 34th ship delivered by the company, and its best and most capable. The workers who built the

ship were guided by the standard that all their ships should be constructed as if their own kids would be aboard. The present ship's company includes Ensign Abby Harris, a native of Bath whose population is less than 8,000.

During the ceremony, Admiral Bill McCraven, Commander of the Joint Special Operations Command, recognized Maureen and Dan Murphy and called for applause for all other Gold Star Moms and Dads. He also stressed the meaning of "team" and how it applied in his command. Teammates "live together, fight together, and sometimes die together," he told the assembled guests. He spoke of Michael Murphy's raw courage in the face of death adding how proud he was to see a Murphy ride into battle again.

Congressman Peter King spoke of Michael's class and dignity, observing that one look at Maureen and Dan and you knew why Michael did what he did. He extolled Michael's unbridled courage. Senator Charles

Schumer stressed that Michael represented the best of America and Long Island. As an 8th grader, Michael was remembered as a boy who came to the aid of a special needs student by dispersing a group of harassing teenagers. He chased another group tormenting a homeless man and helped to pick up the empty cans that kids had heartlessly snatched from him. Senator Schumer stressed Michael's strength, courage, and humility.

Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations, called New York a navy town commenting on the hospitality displayed yearly to the navy during Fleet Week. He called the MICHAEL MURPHY the center of our fleet, repeating her motto "Lead the Fight." He introduced the 75th Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus who quoted Ecclesiastes, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven."

"Michael's time was far too short," he said. "But this is about how well he used the time given him." He noted that Michael's nickname growing up was the "protector." That was also true of his service with his SEAL team. He retold the story of how Michael exposed himself to enemy fire in order to get a better signal while radioing for help. Then, though mortally wounded, he found time to say "thank you," in his final transmission.

Secretary Mabus noted that "Michael's favorite book, Gates of Fire, by Steven Pressfield, told of the Battle of Thermopolis during which the heroic Spartans were greatly outnumbered. In relation to that battle he observed that Maureen and Dan had raised such a man, one "whose action truly transcends itself and touches the sublime."

The Secretary commented on the navy's current state, noting that the 592 ships in commission in 1989 had sunk to 283. In 2008, three ships were built. Today, he said, "we have 285 afloat, down from the 315 on 9/11. But we have turned the corner. Currently 42 ships are under contract." It has been suggested that when a total of 300 is reached, Congress should be urged to pass legislation that will not permit the total to fall below 300. He complimented BIW for completing those ships under budget and ahead of schedule. Today, he said, 25 ARLEIGH BURKE destroyers are now deployed around the world. The MURPHY is the last of that class.

As Secretary Mabus put it, "We saved the best for last." He recalled that three years ago, the newest USS NEW YORK (LSD-21), an amphibious ship, made with steel from the World Trade Center, was commissioned on the same pier.

Ray Mabus also referred to the SEAL's mantra, "The only easy day was yesterday." Finally, he quoted Maureen Murphy. "I am sure that Michael is looking down from heaven on the ship and its crew and will always be its protector," she had said.

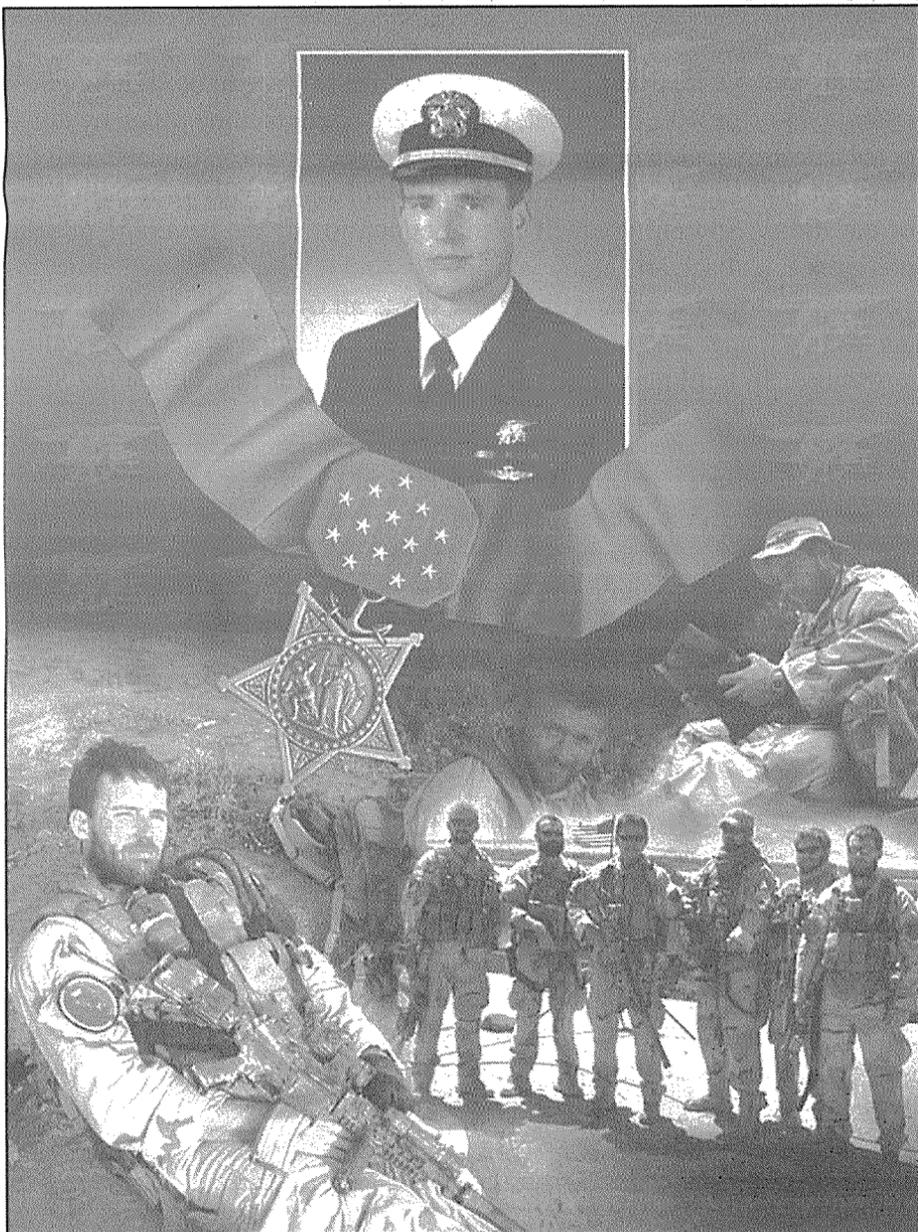
At the end of his remarks, Secretary Mabus joined CDR Shultz at the podium for the formalities that placed the MICHAEL MURPHY in commission. CDR Shultz, captain of the MURPHY, ordered the colors and commission pennant hoisted, then ordered the Exec to set the watch. As the boatswain piped, the OOD received a long glass from John and Dan Murphy in accordance with navy tradition.

Command Master Chief Matthew Danforth escorted Maureen Murphy to the podium where CAPT Shultz handed her the mike. In a strong voice, she ordered, "Officers and crew of the USS MICHAEL MURPHY, man our ship and bring her to life!"

The band played "Anchors Aweigh" as the crew, standing behind the seated guests, broke in the middle and double timed to the gangways fore and aft. Upon boarding, they fanned out to man the rails and open spaces from the main deck to the bridge. The ship's horn sounded one long blast. Captain Shultz ordered the Secretary of the Navy's flag to be hoisted and reported for duty to the Squadron Commander. He then stepped forward to speak.

He began by stressing unity aboard, "All together all in one!" he said and proceeded to describe the ways that the MURPHY was different. He started with the names of all 19 SEALs and Night Stalkers who perished in Operation Red Wings. During the MURPHY's keel authentication ceremony on 18 June 2010, their names were arc-welded to a steel plate that became part of the ship. He added that the crew proudly carried on the legacy of LT Murphy and his teammates and that he would be proud to take the MICHAEL MURPHY into battle against anyone.

Captain Shultz next asked Maureen Murphy to help him do something

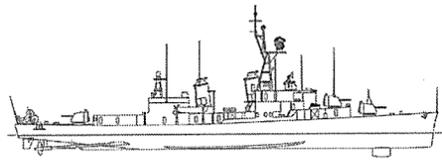


This collage poster was made to honor LT Michael Murphy. LT Murphy was a U.S. Navy SEAL killed in combat on 28 June 2005 in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush region while leading his men on a search for a notorious terrorist. In that action, LT Murphy exposed himself to hostile fire as he attempted to contact rescue support and was fatally wounded. For his heroism, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Image courtesy of George Rider.

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Mail Call!

Dear Editor:

that no other ship does. As they stood together, he pointed skyward and shouted "HOOYAH Michael Murphy!" The crew and the thousands in the audience answered in unison, "HOOYAH Michael Murphy!" The Battle Cry of the Navy SEALs.

At one point in the ceremony, a cannon fired a multiple-gun salute at intervals and later in the program charges were fired from three torpedo tubes. As an unforgettable reminder of the solemnity of the occasion, the 6-foot, 5-inch Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell stood on the pier surrounded by the honor guard as the band played the Navy Hymn. Luttrell is the lone survivor of Operation Red Wings and author of a book by the same name. Finally Monsignor Coyle blessed the crew of the MICHAEL MURPHY and Michael's family. "Lord bless this mighty ship and guard her going forth," he said. Over the IMC the assemblage heard, "MICHAEL MURPHY, arriving!"

Conceived, born, and christened in Bath, the MICHAEL MURPHY came of age at Pier 88 in New York.

"All ahead flank! Make turns for 31 knots!"

My final thought that day was "God Bless her, as she takes her place in the Pacific Fleet. Smooth sailing and calm seas MICHAEL MURPHY!"

In the last issue of the paper I was surprised to see CAPT Forter with Bob Spall as shipmates on the HARWOOD. I also served from 1953 to 1955 as a 2nd Class commissary man. As Bob said, I never really talked to the captain, but I know he was well liked by the crew. I think anyone who served under him will recall that there was no one who could bring a ship into dock any faster and be heading down the gangway before the screws stopped turning. On one occasion, I recall standing amidships one day when a personnel man took a message from CAPT Forter and was to give the response as soon as it came back. He asked the captain where he would be when he got the message and the captain said "There's only 300 feet on this GD ship. Find me." It brought a smile to those of us who were standing nearby. He seemed like a nice man, and I would have liked to have talked to him, but cooks were not high priority on any ship except when it was time to eat.

Sincerely,
Anthony Walker
USS HARWOOD (DDE-861)

Looking for a Lost Shipmate?

The Shipmate Locator service is an exclusive service provided to all Tin Can Sailors whereby anyone can search for a former shipmate for just a \$10 donation.

Simply call Tin Can Sailors Headquarters at (800) 223-5535 and provide the full name (middle names or initials are very helpful) actual or estimated age, Navy rank/rating, years aboard which ship, home town plus any other information you have to help make a successful search. Payment can be made either by check or credit card and is due only upon notification of success even if the person is found to be deceased.

We attempt to provide maximum information for all successful searches. Our success rate is over 70%. You have nothing to lose, so call today and let Tin Can Sailors reunite you with your long time shipmate or bring closure with the knowledge of his passing.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Mark Your Calendars!

May 11, 2013
Midwest Bull Session
Ramada Topeka West
Topeka, Kansas
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May 16-19, 2013
USS JOSEPH P. KENNEDY, JR.
(DD-850) Field Day
Fall River, Massachusetts
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June 1, 2013
Upper Midwest Bull Session
Robbins Restaurant
Oshkosh, Wisconsin
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July 20, 2013
Pennsylvania-Delaware
Bull Session
Hilton Garden Inn Valley Forge/
Oaks
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania
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August 11-15, 2013
Tin Can Sailors National Reunion
Hyatt Regency
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
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August 22-25, 2013
USS THE SULLIVANS (DD-537)
Field Day
Buffalo, New York
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September 27-29, 2013
USS KIDD (DD-661) Field Day
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
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October 5, 2013
New England Bull Session
Millican - Mackenzie American
Legion Post 273
Burlington, Massachusetts
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October 5, 2013
Western States Bull Session
Courtyard by Marriott
San Diego, California
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October 19, 2013
New York Bull Session
Hilton Garden Inn Melville
Plainview, New York
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October 24-27, 2013
USS KIDD (DD-661) Field Day
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Information on Page 37

October 26, 2013
Texas Bull Session
Sunday House Inn & Suites
Fredericksburg, Texas
Information on Page 42

October 26, 2013
Chicago Area Bull Session
Marriott Deerfield Suites
Deerfield, Illinois
Information on Page 40

Event information is also on our web site at
www.destroyers.org

WHAT'S A BULL SESSION?
A Bull Session is a one-day event at which all destroyer sailors are welcome regardless of which ship they served on or when.

It is a social event at which memories are shared, old friendships renewed, and new friends made. We try to keep the costs low so no one is excluded because he cannot afford to attend.

WHAT'S A FIELD DAY?
A Field Day is a working weekend aboard a destroyer that is now a museum/memorial. For many, it is like a chance to go back in time.

All types of volunteer labor are welcome but electricians, welders, plumbers, carpenters, etc., are especially needed. Others can clean or paint or do any of the other tasks that always need to be done.