

2025 VIRGINIA BEACH VA REUNION

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Greetings shipmates. As always, I hope this newsletter finds everyone well. Last year in Philadelphia, we had a few more people attend than the previous year, but still not enough to keep organized reunions going.

As we discussed last time, all future reunions will be shorter get togethers, with no hospitality room, organized events, or meetings. (Please refer to last years Presidents letter if you are not sure about our reasoning)

This year we will be getting together in Virginia Beach, at the beachfront hotel we stayed in for our 2017 reunion. It is a beautiful location, with a restaurant and bar on site. Across the street (boardwalk) is a great restaurant on the water.

This is our first informal reunion, and you are all invited to join us for a few days, to hang out and visit. The hotel is expecting us, and is offering a really great rate for an ocean side hotel. Some of us will arrive on Monday Sept 15, for three nights, and depart on Thursday the 18th. Others may arrive before, and stay longer_ Some may choose to stay only a night or two.

It is your choice, so make your reservations, and bring your own drinks/snacks/coolers. Send me a short email when you make your reservations, so we know who is coming.

This year will be our last scholarship award so get your grandkids to submit their applications for the \$1000. We will be closing the association treasury this year after paying all our bills, and donating the balance to a worthy military charity.

(Continued on Page 2)

SEPTEMBER 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

▶ ▶ ▶ THINGS TO DO ◀ ◀ ◀

- Make hotel reservations by August 1. (See Page 3)
- No signup sheets or raffle items this year.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

(Continued from Page 1)

Our official association will be dissolving, and this will also be our last newsletter. We all want to thank our secretary, Harold Welch for publishing this STRONG SALVOS newsletter for all these many years. He has done an incredible job. And a great big thanks to Jim Kelly, who has been our treasurer for as long as I can remember!

We will also be closing the USS Strong Association website before the next renewal charge of over \$400 is due. In the future, you will be able to keep up with any shipmate get togethers by visiting the two existing Facebook pages for the USS Strong on line. Bob Magoteaux has agreed to keep these pages posted for us.

It has been an honor to serve as your president for the last few years. We have all carried on the tradition started by Paul Pritchard, our association founder, and maintained by all our members and executive board people for over 30 years. I believe all of our former shipmates (467/758) would be pleased with the way we carried on what they created.

I hope to see some of you in our next few get togethers, but to all I wish you:

FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS.

Ron Impello

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President

Ron Impello
1161 Naples Drive
Pensacola, FL 32507
251-978-9617
rimpello@gmail.com

Treasurer

Jim Kelly
345 Kathmere Road
Havertown, PA 19083
610-789-2391
jimkelly@kellywelde.com

Acting Secretary

Harold Welch
1417 Belfaire Lake Trail
Dacula, GA 30019
770-995-4638
welchh@bellsouth.net

Vice President

Open

Sunshine Committee

Johnnie & Arnold Bailey
185 Lark Trail
Jasper, TN 37347
423-942-1512
abailey16@bellsouth.net

Appointed Officers

Master at Arms – Open
Historian – Open
Parliamentarian – Open
Chaplain – Open

HOTEL INFORMATION
BEST WESTERN SANDCASTLE RESORT
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

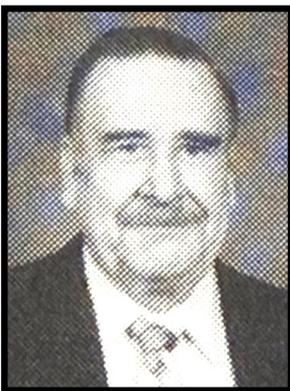
1307 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
Tel: (757) 428-2828

Make reservations by August 1, 2025.

Indicate that you are with the USS STRONG group.

Rates: \$99.00/night plus tax. (Continental breakfast included)
(Rate is available 3 days before and after reunion)

Check in Time: 4:00 PM, Check out Time: 11:00 AM



DON WILSON

USS-STRONG.COM WEBSITE

Don served onboard the USS Strong DD758 as a radioman from 1950 to 1952. After joining the USS Strong Association, he spent hours, and lots of effort above the call of duty to build and published the website in 1995. Through this website many old friendships have been renewed, and many new members have been found and joined the association. Don was the web master until 2000 when he passed away. The site was then managed by Cletus Fields and Bruce Mock until their passing. Harold Welch took over the site in 2012.

WELLINGS-NICHOLSON SCHOLARSHIP

The scholarship is named for DD467 Captain Joseph H. Wellings and DD758 Captain AT. Nicholson.

Including this year, over thirty-eight \$1000.00 scholarships have been awarded to descendants of association members.

The scholarships are funded by raffles at reunions and member donations. Since attendance at reunions has dwindled, we can no longer fund the scholarships and 2025 will be the last.

2024 SCHOLARSHIP

Last year the \$1000.00 scholarship was awarded to Mandy Beckman, granddaughter of Mike Macy.

Rebecca is attending the Berry College in Mount Berry GA, majoring in Animal Science in the Pre Vet program. She will next attend Veterinarian school.

2025 SCHOLARSHIP

This year, one \$1000.00 scholarship will be awarded.

Eligibility is limited to descendants of active association members or descendants of deceased shipmates who were members of the association or that died on active duty.

Previous year applicants and scholarship winners are eligible to apply.

Applications are available in PDF format on the web site reunion page. They are also available from the association secretary.

Applications must be received by July 1, 2025. The applicant must also ask their current school to forward copies of their scholastic and disciplinary records to the association.

SMALL STORES

Need a Hat- Jacket or a Sweatshirt?

Get in touch with Jim Kelly.

PHONE - 610-604-0909

E-Mail - jimkelly@erols.com

Hats	\$12.00
Sweat Shirts	\$22.00
Golf Shirts	\$20.00
New Tee Shirts	\$10.00
"Grandchild" Tee Shirts	\$8.00
Jackets	\$36.00–\$40.00



SUNSHINE COMMITTEE

Please remember to inform us as soon as possible of any illness or demise of a shipmate. You can call any association officer or get in touch with Johnnie & Arnold Bailey, Chairmen of the Sunshine Committee.

Phone - 423-942-1512

E-Mail - abailey16@bellsouth.net

The Sunshine Committee posts news about shipmate illness and demise on the website guest book. When the website ends, the posts will be made on Facebook.

PROJECT USS STRONG DD467

Most of you know that last July of 2024, I was finally able to find a home for the memorial plaque of strong DD-467 at the South Pacific WWII Museum on the island of Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu. I thought long and hard about where it needed to go and fortunately most of the family agreed with me.

The experience of being right where the naval supply depot was during the war was something very hard to put into words. The people I met there who helped bring it all together were exceptional, smart, wonderful and made the week I spent on the island an incredible and life changing experience.

The ceremony to install the plaque in the display they built for it was streamed live on Facebook and can be found by visiting the website of the South Pacific WWII Museum. I also wrote about my experience and posted photographs in my July 2024 blog for the Project Uss Strong DD467 website.

This amazing museum is yearning to grow into a world class facility to serve the many thousands of people who visit every year from every corner of the globe. They will one day meet their goal of getting enough funding to build what you can view on the website, but until then they also need any contributions they can get to help with programming and hosting visitors.

If you have a few bucks and can support the museum's efforts, and now the home of the permanent exhibit for our Strong families, there is a Paypal tab on the website that will help this effort. I will be dropping them a few bucks from time to time and hope to return for a visit in the next couple of years and take Greg back with me this time. It's a long way there, but so worth the experience!

Thank you again Jimmy Carter, Bill Widup, Marina Moli, Wendy and Stephen Turner, Rick Wood and Mayumi Green!

Its been over 26 years of working on this project to honor my uncle Billy Hedrick, his ship and the men he served with. If not for the help, love and support of the joint USS Strong DD467/758 Association, I would never have gotten this far. Meeting the members, the families from both ships has again been life changing for myself and Greg.

We hope to make it to Virginia Beach this year to say thank you in person and have a chance to tell you more about my trip overseas. Thank you all for everything!

Tambrie Johnson

WEB SITE TERMINATION

In August of 2025 the USS-Strong.com website will no longer be available. Association posts will be made on Facebook.

The Facebook pages for the Association are:

USS STRONG DD758

and

Uss strong dd758

These appear to be the same, but different upper and lower case letters make them separate Facebook pages.



**PAUL PRICHARD
FOUNDER**

USS STRONG ASSOCIATION FOUNDER

Paul served aboard the USS Strong DD758 from 1958 to 1960, where he was the leading petty officer in ships office, and the captain's writer. By phone calls, letters, and ads in the veteran's magazines, he put together the first reunion in Norfolk VA. in 1987. And with the aid of some of the other members at that time. He founded the USS Strong association. Paul passed away in Feb 2002 and was buried at the Quantico National Cemetery, where the association has erected a flagpole in his honor.

STRONG ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS



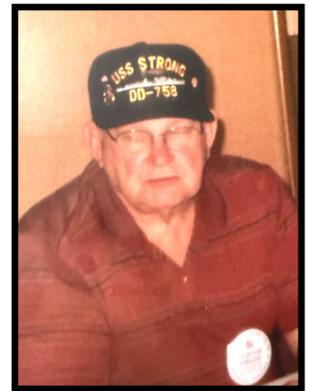
**JOE SOMMERS
1988**



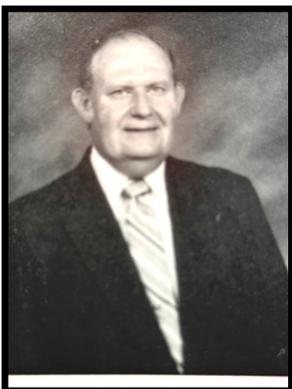
**BILL BAKER
1989**



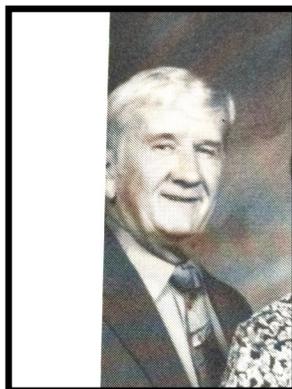
**E K SLEETH
1990-1992**



**CLETUS FIELDS
1993-1994**



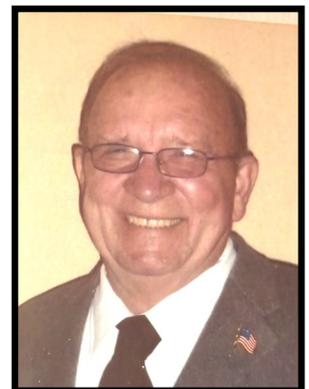
**MAYNARD MESSINGER
1995-1996**



**NORM KELLERMAN
1997-1998**



**BILL ROMAINE
1999-2000**

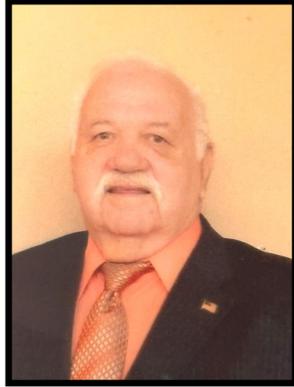


**BOB FRYER
2001-2002**

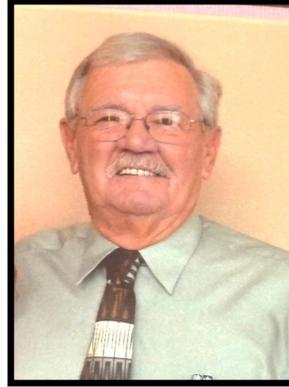
STRONG ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS



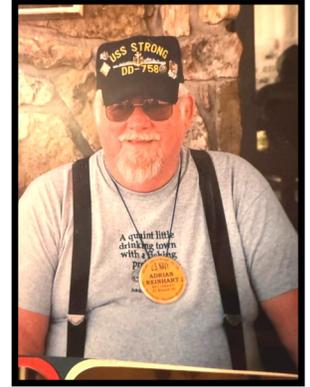
ED SEMONIET
2003-2004



PAUL DARLING
2005-2006



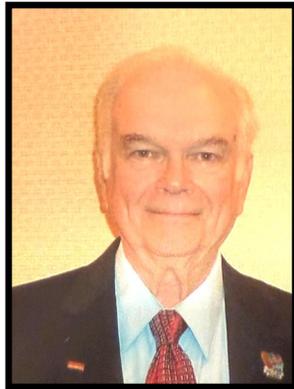
ARNOLD BAILY
2007-2008



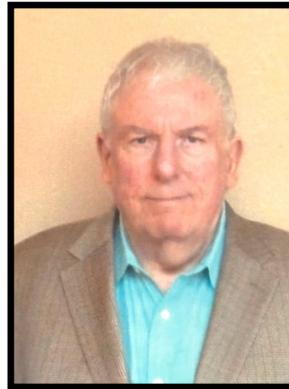
ADRIAN REINHART
2009-2010



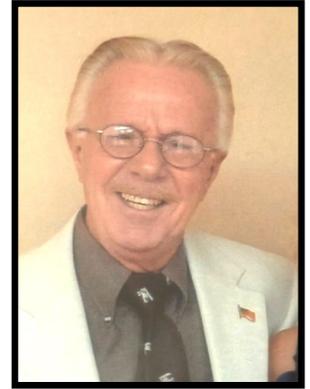
VINCE LAIETA
2010



BILL KAMINSKI
2011-2013



HAROLD WELCH
2014-2015



RON IMPELLO
2016-

USS STRONG ASSOCIATION TREASURER



JIM KELLY
TREASURER

Jim served aboard the USS Strong DD758 a Quarter-Master from 1956 to 1958. He joined the Strong Association in 1994 and soon became the treasurer.

Jim maintains the bank accounts and the reunion payments and expenses. He also handles the scholarship donations and sends out the awards. Jim also maintains the association memberships, the dues and the roster.

He runs the small stores, where you can buy Hats, shirts, jackets and other items.

Jim has lots of help from his daughter Donna.

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA LEDGER-STAR 1988 (Hard to read, but very interesting)

Still Strong

45 years after the fact, destroyer's ranks reunite

The men had not seen one another for 45 years — not since all hell broke loose aboard the destroyer Strong.

At 4:08 a.m. July 5, 1943, the Strong was struck on its port side aft by a Japanese torpedo that exploded with such force it broke the ship in two and sank it.

Signalman Albert Shultz of Independence, Ore.,



LARRY BONKO

was among the Strong crewmen who were saved by the destroyer Chevalier. It was a remarkable rescue.

The Chevalier snuggled up to the Strong's bow so that sailors aboard the stricken ship could scramble to safety in the darkness. In just seven minutes, 241

men escaped from the burning Strong.

Seaman Robert F. Gregory, of Moncks Corner, S.C., could not reach the nets and lines thrown to his shipmates by the Chevalier. He saved himself by leaping into the sea.

Gregory spent 2 1/4 days on a raft shaped like a doughnut before he washed ashore on the island of Kalumbajura in the Solomons, where the Strong had been on patrol duty off Guadalcanal. Shipmates Shultz and Gregory did not cross paths until recently, when the Strong's crewmen held a reunion.

Did they recognize each other at once?

They did not.

"It took time to bring him back into focus," Gregory said of Shultz.

A wonderful moment.

His shipmates in the Strong's deck division called Gregory "The Kid" because, well, he was a kid — just 17 when he enlisted. The Kid is a kid no more.

Time is a thief. It steals your life away. Nobody realizes that more than Paul Pritchard of Saddy-Daisy, Tenn., who decided last year that if ever the Strong sailors were to have a reunion, it better be soon.

Attending the reunion in Norfolk were former crewmen from two destroyers named Strong. (When the first Strong was sunk, the Navy gave its name to a destroyer nearing completion at a shipyard in San Francisco.) Both ships helped to conquer the Japanese four decades ago.

Shultz and Gregory represented the first Strong, DD-467. Both were aboard for its commissioning in 1942. Five plankowners — crewmembers when a ship is commissioned — of the second Strong also were honored.

Those who sailed for the Pacific in 1945 aboard DD-758 included Joseph P. Veltre of Washington, Pa., Stan Conley of Turnsville, N.J.; David G. Elg of Millford, Pa.; Joe Sommers of Topeka, Kan.; and Harry L. McCombs Sr. of Niles, Mich.

McCombs is an old salt if there ever was one. He was already a chief petty officer in 1940.

This man is all barnacles.

"The elite of the fleet," he said of the DD-758.

There are ships that have virtually no impact on the men who go to sea aboard them. They are forgotten the minute a sailor leaves the ship with his seabag on his shoulder. Other ships touch the sailors' soul, stay with him.

I have served aboard ships that I loathed. Others, I liked quite a lot, and would welcome a reunion with the men with whom I shared my youth.

Paul assured me that the second Strong was a special ship.

Shultz said the same of the Strong No. 1. He was the ship's first helmsman and its first mail clerk. In civilian life, Shultz was a letter carrier.

Hundreds of men shared duty aboard these destroyers. Virtually all lost touch with one another.

Paul and his wife, Mina, pulled together at least 70 of them for the Norfolk reunion. It was one hell of a good time.

USS STRONG ASSOCIATION REUNION LOCATIONS



**USS STRONG ASSOCIATION
1417 BELFAIRE LAKE TRAIL
DACULA GA 30019**

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED