



# Liberty News

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE USS LIBERTY

Volume 65 | August, 2018

## Board of Directors

**Ernie Gallo**

*President*  
[ernie7900@aol.com](mailto:ernie7900@aol.com)  
386-446-6855

**Larry Bowen**

*Vice President*  
[larryb1946@verizon.net](mailto:larryb1946@verizon.net)  
410-551-3647

**Ron Kukal**

*Secretary and Chaplin*  
[lvasec39@gmail.com](mailto:lvasec39@gmail.com)  
307-752-6693

**Bob Scarborough**

*Treasurer*  
[bobscarborough@gmail.com](mailto:bobscarborough@gmail.com)  
706-593-1898

**Gene Six**

*Member at Large*  
[sixegene@yahoo.com](mailto:sixegene@yahoo.com)  
951-313-9816



## Letter from the Editor

I have been relieved as editor of the LVA Newsletter so until further notice please send everything to Ernie for publication in the Newsletter. Even though William did all the work!

It was my privilege and honor to have served as editor of the Newsletter, just wish I could have done more. My goal all along was to make sure that all the members doing presentations and speeches, radio shows, and anything that promoted the memory and the truth of the attack would be recognized.

In passing I have just one observation and that is to see all of us work closer together, stop the name calling and mud slinging and continue to spend our time in promoting the truth about the attack on the Liberty.

Thanks to all for you dedication. You are all honorable.

—  
Wayne

### SUBMIT INFORMATION TO:

William Graves, Editor  
[editor@lvaneews.org](mailto:editor@lvaneews.org)

## Letter from the President

I cannot tell you enough how proud I am serving as your President. Our love and friendship for the crew and our supporters continues to grow as we passed 51 years while we have endured the ups and downs of the relationship. I wish I could share all the emails and letters of support I receive. Some are included in this newsletter.

I want to give a special "Thank You" to Wayne Kelley who was the editor of our newsletter for the past 7 years. As indicated in our plaque to you, we deeply appreciate your hard work. In addition, I want to thank Terry McFarland for hosting our June 8, 2018 memorial at the Washington Navy Memorial.

I want to mention that Joan Mellen's new book, "Blood in the Water" will be published in November. You can order a copy from amazon.com now. Her book will provide greater details of the collusion between LBJ and Israel to sink the Liberty. Please help her sell her book!!

The web site created by Doctor Tony Wells "[www.uslibertydocumentcenter.org](http://www.uslibertydocumentcenter.org)" is now a Library of Congress archive. Fantastic!!

Bryce Lockwood, Larry Bowen, and I will be attending the VFW convention, July 20 to 25 at Kansas City. As always, we will give 'em hell passing out our literature and hopefully reaching out to new friends. The American Legion is another story as they have banned us for life. They just don't like any negative Israel information.

I gave a presentation on July 10 in Deland, FL and one of the participants was a childhood friend of CTM-2 Richard (Dick) Keene who was killed when the torpedoes opened up our starboard side. He gave me this Poughkeepsie, NY, June 10, 1967 newspaper article. Dick had a work bench next to mine and I have lots of memories of playing cards and slot cars.

I received one email from a retired CIA friend, Dennis, who was a case officer overseeing Russia and other countries. He wrote an article for a newspaper and I wanted to share with you a portion of the text. I think you will find it interesting.

In 2002, the Russian newspaper Pravda published an online English language article entitled "USS Liberty - Hot summer of 1967: The Israeli attack on America and the 'Soviet destroyer.'" Following is an excerpt:

*"- Last year, a Russian translation of Joseph Daichman's "History of the Mossad" was published in Moscow. The author describes the tragedy in 1967 in detail. He admits that it was perfectly clear that the Liberty was an American ship and that the attack was committed to deprive the USA "of its eyes and ears," of the opportunity to control the situation. Daichman says the attackers had the right to act so. The Israelis feared that the Liberty would report information about the course of the war: they wanted to keep it a secret that troops had been shifted to Syria and the Egyptian border wasn't protected at all. The border was quite open for Egyptian soldiers to cross. Israel knew that American radio signals were intercepted by the Soviet Union, and the latter would certainly inform Egypt of the fact. That is why the Liberty was to be sunk to avoid leakage of important information. This is a very cynical version. I even couldn't have thought that I would ever read it."*

*It is not clear why Daichman would write about the attack on the USS Liberty in a "History of the Mossad," Israel's external intelligence service. His explanation for the attack sounds plausible, though, and his expressed belief that the "attackers" had the right to attack the USS Liberty sounds like something Netanyahu himself would say.*

## Statement of Purpose

**IN JUNE 1967** jet aircraft and motor torpedo boats of the Defense Forces of the State of Israel brutally assaulted the American naval intelligence-gathering ship, *USS Liberty*, while in international waters off the coast of the Sinai Peninsula in the Mediterranean Sea. The attack was preceded by more than six hours of intense low-level surveillance by Israeli photo reconnaissance aircraft, which buzzed the ship as low as 200 feet directly overhead. The carefully orchestrated assault that followed was initiated by high performance jet aircraft. This was followed by slower and more maneuverable jets carrying napalm, and was finally turned over to lethal torpedo boats, which blasted a forty-foot hole in the ship's side. The attack lasted more than two hours, deliberately killing 34 Americans and wounding at least 171 others. Over 821 rocket, cannon and machine gun holes were inflicted. When the *Liberty* stubbornly remained afloat despite her damage, Israeli forces machine-gunned her life rafts, firefighters, stretcher bearers, and sent helicopters carrying troops to finish the job, no survivors were to be taken.



At this point, with Sixth Fleet rescue aircraft supposedly en route, the government of Israel apologized and the identity of the assailants became known.

Details of the attack were hushed up in both countries. Israel claimed that her forces mistook the *Liberty* for an Egyptian ship, and our government quietly accepted that excuse despite evidence to the contrary. No ship in our history has ever received such damage and casualties by accident. Then our government downplayed the intensity of the surveillance and the severity of the attack, and imposed a news blackout on the crew to keep the story under control. The official version is that the *Liberty* was reconnoitered only three times and only from a great distance. The American people were told that the air attack lasted only five minutes and that it was followed by a single torpedo and an immediate apology and offer of assistance. Nothing could be further from the truth. In June 1982, fifteen years after the assault, crewmembers reunited for the first time in Washington, D.C. It was a tearful, joyful reunion in which the men not only released their pent up emotions and decided that the **USS Liberty Veterans Association** would be formed with the firm goals of finding all crew members, holding reunions, proper recognition of Captain and crew (in particular those who lost their lives), obtaining a Congressional investigation into the attack, and...

**TO BRING THE TRUE STORY OF THE ATTACK ON THE U.S.S. LIBERTY AND HER HEROIC CREW TO THE AWARENESS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.**

## Memorial Day Flag Event, Mooresville NC

Gentleman,

Thank you for your service and your sacrifice. As a fellow veteran I have been humbled by your sacrifice and outraged by what has been done, or not done, in regards to the cover up and lack of investigation of the attack you faced.

For the last 2 years I have attended a local Memorial Day event in my hometown that draws a good crowd, they call it a field of flags. Here is a link:

<https://www.mooresvilleknexchange.org/product-page/flag-in-memory-of-veteran>

This year I purchased a flag to commemorate the 34 men you lost in the attack. I wish I could have purchased one for every man, but with 2 young kids and a humble income it's all I could do. As people walk the field they can read each flag and see who it's in honor of, I hope it will raise awareness. There is also a ceremony held on Memorial Day where they read off the names of each flag and who it is dedicated to, the whole crowd there will hear about the 34 men lost when the state of Israel attacked an American ship.

I want you to know I will have your crew on my mind this Memorial Day.

Respectfully,

Mitch Bowers  
Cpl USMC



## Email from Wayne Weiss

Dear Mr. Gallo:

Some of the following is old information to you, but I include it to explain what I've learned and how I came to obtain this film.

On June 11, 1968, Captain William McGonagle was presented with the Medal of Honor, not in the White House as per usual custom, but at the Washington Navy Yard, by the Secretary of the Navy. President Johnson had been "advised" to break long held tradition due to the controversy surrounding the Israeli attack on the Liberty. I personally have come to the view this as an act of cowardice, but that's side the point. Three days later, on 14 June, another ceremony was held aboard the USS Liberty, then docked in Little Creek, VA to award decorations to some of the crew that were still attached to the ship or had not been transferred to other billets. It was officiated by RDAM B. W. Sarver, Commander, Service Forces, U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Captain McGonagle who wore his MOH.

Besides naval personnel taking still photos, there were at least three men in civilian clothes shooting motion picture film and recording sound. A short (17 minute) film was edited, but apparently never released. The film remained at the Naval Photographic Center until transferred to Norton Air Force Base, CA presumably circa 1969-71, when Defense Department (DoD) consolidated service film archives into the Motion Media Records Center (MMRC) at Norton. I was the DoD film producer from 1983 to 1995 and worked until it closed in 1994,

Millions of feet of 16mm and 35mm film not selected for retention by either the National Archives or an individual service, was marked for destruction. The criteria for retention or destruction was capricious and arbitrary (i.e., films were deemed either historical, obsolete, or excess. The selection process involved NARA personnel and Norton personnel consulting reams of computer printouts, but never physically reviewing a "motion media record". I became concerned at the pace of destruction and amount of films that were going down the memory hole. Also, the contractor was getting paid for every foot of film moving down the "disassembly" line. After consulting with Records Center personnel and the O-6 in command, and being told, "we know what we are doing". I resolved to take expedient measures. It was a personal, unofficial but conspicuous effort to save what I could. i.e., everyone knew how I felt and what I was doing.

As it turns out, among the many hundred of films saved, are the original film elements (cut picture & sound track) for "USS Liberty Meritorious Awards Presentation". What's even more curious is that, when the film elements arrived at Norton, they were not put in with the main collection, but consigned to an area called, "the X files". Yes, literally. These weren't classified films, but rather items that had originated outside official DoD channels, or had possible copyright restrictions – very strange for a film that carries Naval Photographic production number. Someone in the Navy had to have issued instructions to Norton to make the film inaccessible. To retroactively classify the film would have required written justification by an "Originating Agency", downgrading instructions, etc. Better to consign the film to the bowels of Bldg 248 and let time and bureaucracy take their toll.

About a minute of the footage was included at the end of the 2002 BBC documentary, Dead in the Water. The UK producer of that film obtained a copy from somewhere but not from me. Other than that, to my knowledge, its never been shown anywhere else, and certainly not the whole 17 minutes. There are no copies in the National Archives, the LBJ Library, or the Naval Historical Center.

Indeed, DoD throwing the movie into the San Bernardino landfill fits the long, sad arc of the USS Liberty narrative. There are no dramatic revelations contained here. But, on tomorrow's anniversary, it's worth 17 minutes for the public to remember what you and your crew mates endured. I had the film professionally scanned and reassembled. It will eventually go up on my own website of lost and forgotten (mostly) DoD films, hence it has my watermark.

Best Regards, Wayne Weiss, Altadena, CA

## Our U.S. Delegate on the 2018 Gaza Freedom Flotilla

Joe Meadors has been selected as the delegate from the United States on the final 1,000-mile voyage to Gaza with the 2018 Gaza Freedom Flotilla. He will be on the *Al Awda* or *Return*. There are four boats in the 2018 flotilla, which is on a 75-day voyage from Scandinavia.

<https://jfp.freedomflotilla.org/news/ports/upcoming-ports>.

Joe was a signalman on the bridge of the *USS Liberty* during the 1967 Israeli attack on the boat off the coast of Gaza. The Israelis killed 34 U.S. military and wounded 174. Joe and Francis Brown hauled up a second American flag after the steaming colors were shot down early in the air attack. That flag can be seen at [www.usliberty.org/g/battleflag.gif](http://www.usliberty.org/g/battleflag.gif). He was on the bridge throughout the Israeli attack and was one of several eyewitnesses to the Israeli machine-gunning of the ship's life rafts.



Mr. Meadors has been associated with the *USS Liberty* Veterans Association since it was first founded in 1982 and is a past president of the association.

Joe described the Israeli attack: "I watched some jets pass us, then turn left after they passed our ship, then they started strafing us. The attack lasted 90 minutes, during which we got a message off to the Sixth Fleet asking for assistance. We learned later that Joe Tully, commanding officer of the *USS Saratoga*, launched aircraft within minutes of the attack, but he told us later they were recalled before they reached the horizon. We found this out 20 years after the attack.

"The most frustrating thing has been a lack of reaction from the U.S. government. On June 8, 2005, we filed a war crimes report, and they are required to investigate these allegations. They've created reports about our mission, but they never did conduct an actual investigation of the attack itself.

"It was an illegal attack. We were on the high seas conducting legal activities. They admitted that they closed the area for military purposes but we tried to find out the boundaries of that area and they wouldn't tell us.

"The Israelis break international laws with impunity and the U.S. government is not going to hold them accountable, nobody is. There is no doubt that the Israelis were committing piracy on the high seas against the 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla and used deadly force against unarmed humanitarians."

In 2010, Joe was a passenger on the *Sfedoni*, in the 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla. He was in Greece for the 2011 and 2015 Freedom Flotillas. He is from Corpus Christi, Texas.

## A Letter from Leonard Schmidt

Leonard Robert Schmidt  
% 330 W. Nye Ln. #57  
Carson City, NV 89706

June 11, 2018

The American Legion  
700 N. Pennsylvania St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46206

Sirs;

I learned today of a decision prohibiting survivors of the June 8, 1967 Israeli attack upon the USS LIBERTY from again purchasing space at the upcoming national convention. That sorry decision is wholly and completely wrong.

I am a veteran of two U.S. wars, and I was on duty June 8, 1967 in the Radio Relay room of an U.S.A.F. communications squadron within N.A.T.O., when we almost went to war because of what the Israelis did that day. I **know** the attack was a premeditated, willful, perfidious attempt by the Israelis to sink the USS LIBERTY with all hands, blame Egypt for the sinking and thereby deceive Americans into war. Yes, we should have gone to war that day... but not against Egypt!

The terrible decision prohibiting space being made available to survivors of the attack upon the USS LIBERTY must be reversed immediately, allowing those men ample time to reorganize. Furthermore, with your letter of apology and reinstatement of attendance, the space requested should be offered free of charge as penitence for your error.

Paraphrasing wise words; "Choose you this day who you will serve, Israelis or Americans".

Sincerely,



Leonard Robert Schmidt

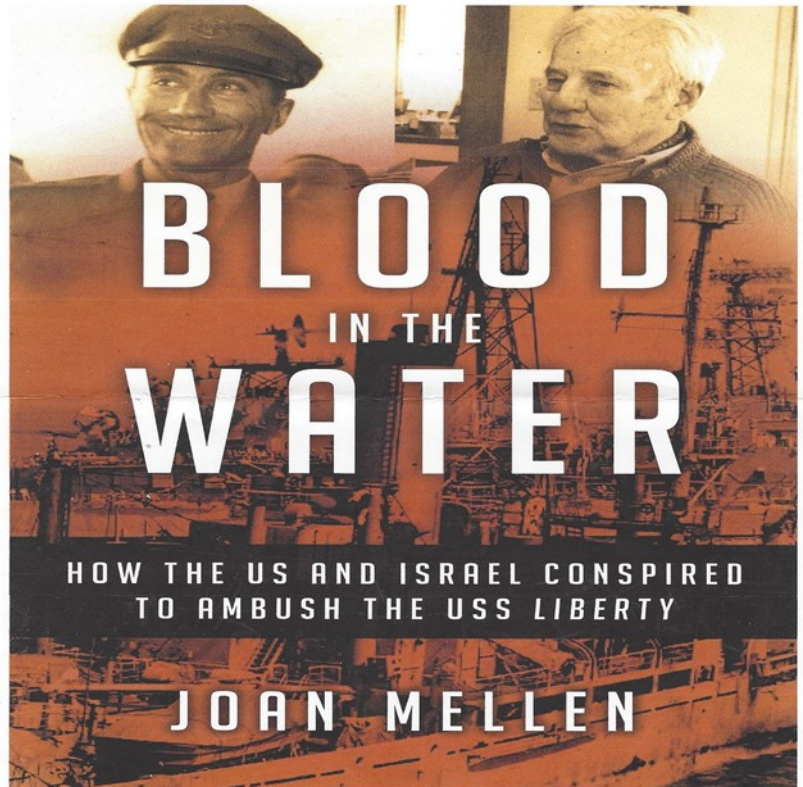
Cc: USS LIBERTY Veterans Association  
Veterans of Foreign Wars  
File

Sailor of the Year / A New Book



Congratulations to SO1 (now Chief) Shane Tourney as Seals Sailor of year, 2017

Joan Mellen's book will be published in November 2018





## Exerpt from an Article by Paul Craig Roberts

The bigger question is why the US government would participate so enthusiastically in the cover-up of a war crime against its own sailors. Well, the Pentagon has never been slow to hide its own incompetence. And there's plenty of that in the Liberty affair: bungled communications, refusal to provide an escort, situating the defenseless Liberty too close to a raging battle, the inability to intervene in the attack and the inexcusably long time it took to reach the battered ship and its wounded.

That's but par for the course. But something else was going on that would only come to light later. Through most of the 1960s, the US congress had imposed a ban on the sale of arms to both Israel and Jordan. But at the time of the Liberty attack, the Pentagon (and its allies in the White House and on the Hill) was seeking to have this proscription overturned. The top brass certainly knew that any evidence of a deliberate attack on a US Navy ship by the IDF would scuttle their plans. So they hushed it up.

In January 1968, the arms embargo on Israel was lifted and the sale of American weapons began to flow. By 1971, Israel was buying \$600 million of American-made weapons a year. Two years later the purchases topped \$3 billion. Almost overnight, Israel had become the largest buyer of US-made arms and aircraft.

Perversely, then, the IDF's strike on the Liberty served to weld the US and Israel together, in a kind of political and military embrace. Now, every time the IDF attacks defenseless vil-lages in Gaza and the West Bank with F-16s and Apache helicopters, the Palestinians quite rightly see the bloody assaults as a joint operation, with the Pentagon as a hidden partner.

Thus, does the legacy of Liberty live on, one raid after another.

## A Note from Jerry Hemby

The LIBERTY like other news about U.S. involvement in wars that mostly were started by the US and CIA. Especially our unwarranted war in VIETNAM was not covered so the american people could see the whole picture. They / we were fed only enough so as to not know the truth. I was on the AMERICA when the Liberty was attacked and even we didn't get the whole story. This was during the "6 day war" and we did have news reporters from all three networks on our ship. (there were only 3 networks then on TV). So if we didn't see the results of this Johnson atrocity, we would probably not know about it for months or years as many other Americans learned about it and many still don't know, Only through the efforts of the crew of the LIBERTY and other witness-es is this information still being spread for the world to see. Thanks guys for your contribution to the truth and best wishes for all of you and your families and those who were murdered on June 8th, 1967.

## President Trump, Let Me Tell You...

### USS Liberty Veterans Association Blog

And You Thought the US Government Cares About the US Military

## President Trump, Let Me Tell You About the Attack on the USS Liberty

[Joe Meadors](#) / September 3, 2017

### USS Liberty Survivor Bryce Lockwood Meets With President Donald Trump

Fresh off his trip to Reno, Nevada where he was instrumental in accomplishing the previously unheard of task of persuading The American Legion to pass [Resolution 40](#) calling on Congress to conduct an investigation of the attack on our ship, USS Liberty Survivor, [Bryce Lockwood](#) had a one-on-one meeting with President Donald Trump.

Not one to rest on his laurels and recognizing that while this opportunity has never presented itself before, Bryce quickly briefed the President about the attack and the fact that it has never been investigated by the US government after which he slipped a [USS Liberty Challenge Coin](#) into Mr. Trump's hand.

Bryce then spent time briefing the personnel accompanying Mr. Trump about the USS Liberty and of our effort to ensure the US government finally conducts an investigation of the attack. Everyone he spoke with was very interested in what Bryce had to say. Probably because many were either active duty military, veterans or – like USS Liberty Survivor Lloyd Painter – members or veterans of the Secret Service.

Arriving at the 50th anniversary of the attack coupled with the passage of Resolution 40 by The American Legion has wakened a sleeping giant. Americans are becoming aware of what happened to us during the attack and how we have been treated by Congress and by Americans who are more concerned about the well-being of the forces who attacked us than they are about their own countrymen.

We cannot rest on our laurels. Some members of The American Legion voted against [Resolution 40](#). They claim to be patriotic American citizens but clearly their patriotism is conditional.

Conditionally Patriotic Americans (CPA's).

Many of the CPA's are in positions of authority.

Authority they have not earned and certainly do not deserve.



## A Note from Mary Ann Hrankowski

The other day coming home from the grocery store, a car followed me all the way. It was a Vietnam vet who had heard Johnboy years ago at a VFW meeting, and the books had run out by the time he got to the head of line. Of course I gave him one, and he took the stickers... very surprised, he mustered out in 1970 and had the runaround from the VA for 20 yea. Then the local Vietnam Veterans here helped him. Funny, over 40 yrs ago John was part of the making it happen. We have great memorial here and again, the Liberty is in the time line on the stones outlining that atrocity.. thanks to John. Be well and be safe this holiday season.

Mary Ann

## Larry Bowen, Photos from the Front Line

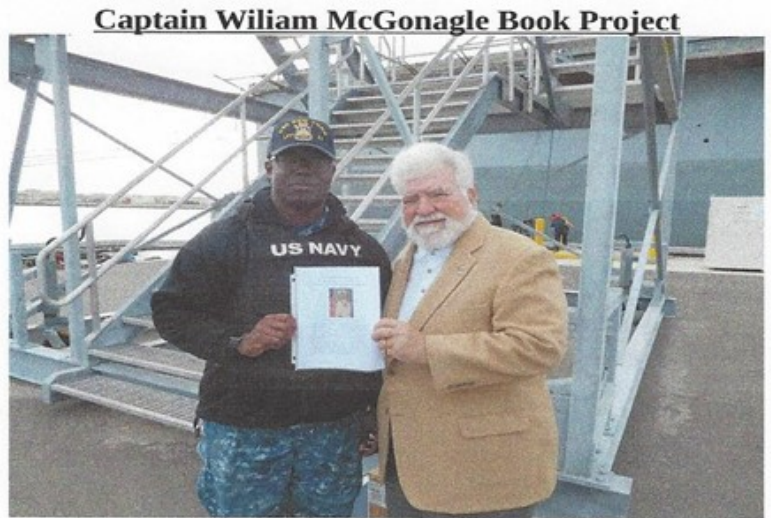
Larry Bowen, Vice President, USS Liberty Veterans Association, hard a work influencing congress. Here he is with Senator Nunes.



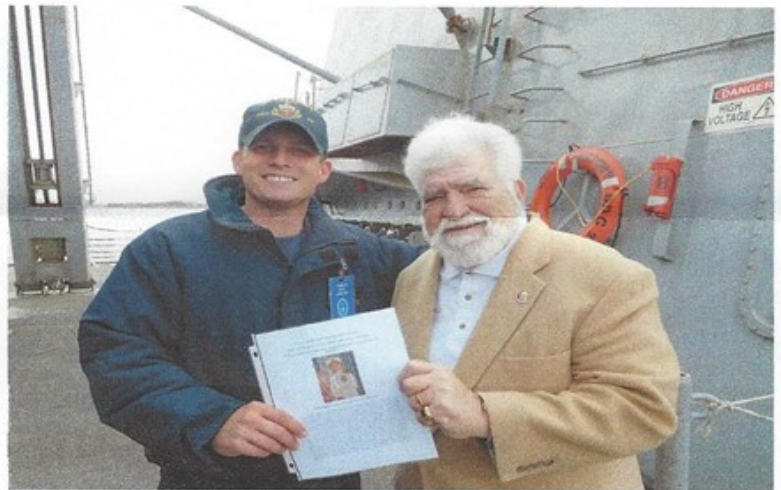
## The Captain William McGonagle Memorial Library Project

In 2005, Ernie Gallo created the above project. It is estimated that over 22,000 used and new books have been collected and given to the various commands and ships around Northern Florida and Georgia and also including the USS Constitution. When a box of books is presented, Capt. McGonagle's Medal of Honor citation with his picture is cited and explained to the command. Here is a sample of the presentations

USS New York



USS Farragot



USS Zephyr

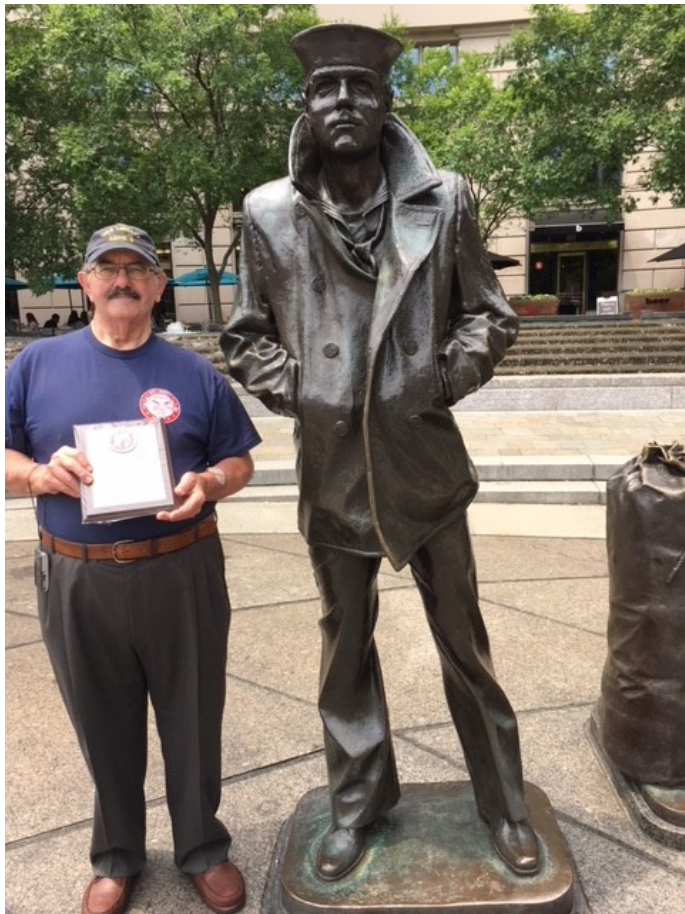


Navy Memorial Photos



Terry McFarlan and Frank O'Classen

Wayne Kelley



Jan Evan Houser  
Wife of Vice Admiral Houser



## Remembering Heroes

### Richard Reger (1946 - 2018)

Richard Reger (EM 2), passed away, May 28th, 2018 at a hospice in Boston, following a lengthy illness. He was 72.

Upon his Naval discharge, Dick was a building contractor, and built many beautiful, showcase homes in the Albany-Troy, N.Y. area. He and his family moved to Cape Cod in the late 90s where he continued home construction.

His wife, Dawn, predeceased him in May, 2017 almost one year to the day.

Rich is survived by a son, Jeremy, and a daughter, Rebecca. Funeral arrangements were private and at the convenience of the family in Cape Cod.

### Frederick W. Kerner

Frederick W. Kerner of Scranton died April 9 at home.

Born in Scranton, he was the son of the late Fred and Erma Wagner Kerner. He was a graduate of South Catholic High School. He played softball for many years and enjoyed watching sports. He served in the United States Navy and was a survivor from the attack on the USS Liberty in June 1967. He retired from Sandvik Steel.

Surviving are his sister, Erma Capozzi and husband, David, Lakehurst, N.J.; nieces, Donna Saafi and husband, Andrew; Patricia Frost and husband, David; and nephew, Christopher Capozzi; a great-niece; four great-nephews; and a great-great-nephew.

Private funeral services and interment in St. Mary's Cemetery will be private at the convenience of the family. Arrangements have been entrusted to the Miller Bean Funeral Home Inc., 436 Cedar Ave., Scranton.

## A Note from Bob Schnell's Wife

Hi This is Bobs Wife Sue, I just wanted you to know that our State of Oregon's largest paper *The Oregonian* ran a SHORT notice called "Today in History" in *The Oregonian*. It read In 1967 During the six-day Middle East war, 34 American servicemen were killed when Israel attacked the USS Liberty in the Mediterranean Sea. ( Israel later said the Liberty had been Mistaken for an Egyptian vessel.. Other than the 3 times Bob did an interview In the La Grande ( The Eastern part of Oregon , our small paper, with full page pictures of the vessel and the Jim E. book along with Bob Picture and description of events. Its the only small Blurb we have seen published in 51 years in Western side of the State of Oregon. For the 50th Anniversary. I submitted a letter of events, and Wanted the Editor to contact Bob. Never happened. I always refer to Bob as one the Good Guys that left to soon.

- Sue Schnell



**Liberty News** is the official journal of the **USS LIBERTY Veterans Association** - a California nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation representing the **USS LIBERTY** Survivors and former Crew Members, their families, and other patriotic Americans.

The yearly subscription rate is **\$20.00 for an associate member (former and non-crew member)**. Due to our small size, however, we cannot survive solely on subscriptions. We are grateful to, and rely heavily upon our many members who voluntarily donate more generously with each passing year.

**Make your tax-deductible check payable to:**  
LVA, C/O Moe Shafer, PO Box 680275, Marietta, GA 30068

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Ernie Gallo  
Run Kukal  
Larry Bowen  
Bob Scarborough  
Gene Six

**DIRECTORS**

Chaplin, Ron Kukal  
Historian, Jim Ennes  
Director of Finance, Moe Shafer  
Director of Operations, Joe Meadors

[www.USSLibertyVeterans.org](http://www.USSLibertyVeterans.org) | [www.USSLiberty.com](http://www.USSLiberty.com)

**LIBERTY NEWS**  
PO BOX 680275  
Marietta, GA 30068

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Moe Shafer**  
*Director of Finance*  
[moe.shafer@harbingernational.com](mailto:moe.shafer@harbingernational.com)

**Joe Meadors**  
*Director of Operations*  
[joe@ussliberty.com](mailto:joe@ussliberty.com)

**William Graves**  
*Editor*  
[William@lvanews.org](mailto:William@lvanews.org)

**Terry McFarland**  
*Member at Large*  
[t1mjumbo92@yahoo.com](mailto:t1mjumbo92@yahoo.com)

**Donna Shafer**  
*Ship's Store Manager*  
[donnashafer@bellsouth.net](mailto:donnashafer@bellsouth.net)