

National Capital Commandery

Battle of Midway Commemorative Dinner

On 3 June 2024 the annual Battle of Midway Commemorative Dinner took place at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Virginia with 150 people in attendance. This year, the Greater Washington Chapter of the Surface Navy Association transferred management of the event to a consortium of 13 maritime associations, organized by the National Capital Commandery.

The weather-perfect evening began with cocktails on the terrace overlooking Washington, DC in the distance. At 1900, in the ballroom, Master of Ceremonies, RADM Frank Thorp (Ret), Director of the Navy Memorial, welcomed those attending. The Navy/Marine Corps Color Guard presented the colors while MUI Michaela Swan, of the U.S. Navy Band, sang the National Anthem. Msgr Anthony Frontiero S.T.D., Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of the Military Services gave the invocation.

The audience watched a video in honor of the late YNC Bill Norberg, USN (1922 – 2023). At last year's dinner, Chief Norberg was the honored guest: A Battle of Midway veteran who served on the USS *Enterprise* throughout the war. He passed away two weeks after the 2023 Battle of Midway dinner, at the age of 100. His family members attended this year's dinner as guests and rose to receive recognition and applause in memory of Chief Norberg.

MCPON David Mattingly of the National Capital Commandery described the meaning of the empty chair at a small table with a rose: to help those in attendance remember POW/MIA service personnel, past and present.

During the meal, RADM Sam Cox, USN (Ret), Director of the Naval History and Heritage Command, described the Battle of Midway, lending drama and compassion to the story of the men, the ships, the planes, and the harrowing ordeal that led to victory over the Japanese navy and allowed the Allies to turn their attention to the war in Europe.

VADM John B. Munstin, Chief of Navy Reserve, gave the keynote speech: Witness to Midway. He echoed RADM Cox's sentiments on the valor of those who served. He noted the leadership of Admiral Nimitz and the role of the USS *Yorktown*. He discussed the battle from the perspective of his grandfather, then LDCR Lloyd M. Munstin, who served on the USS *Atlanta* and penned his thoughts about the unfolding battle in a diary. VADM Munstin read excerpts from the diary, which often expressed frustration that the battle was not fought more aggressively; "I wonder when we will get the nerve to really go after these bastards!" VADM Munstin segued to the current challenges that the US and allied naval powers face. He concluded by saying, "Today's sailors carry the torch inspired by the Greatest Generation."

Some years ago, the Munstin family had loaned the Lloyd Munstin diary to our companion, Dr. David Winkler who drew context from it for his recently published book, *Witness to Neptune's Inferno: The Pacific War Diary of Lieutenant Commander Lloyd M. Mustin, USS Atlanta (CL 51)*. After VADM Munstin's speech, Dr. Winkler presented him with a transcribed copy of his grandfather's diary. Toasts, the benediction, and farewells concluded the evening's activities.

The event was a success, thanks to the leadership of Mr. John Shanahan, Captain Bill Erickson USN (Ret), Captain Todd Creekman USN (Ret), Mr. Peter Pennington, Captain William Steagall USN (Ret), Captain John Rodgaard USN (Ret), Master Chief David Mattingly and other planning committee members.

Submitted by Judy Pearson, Ph.D.

Photos and Captions

1. RADM Frank Thorp, Director of the Navy Memorial was Emcee.
2. MCPON David Mattingly of the National Capital Commandery explains the POW/MIA Table.
3. The Norberg Family were honored guests.
4. RADM Sam Cox, Director of Naval History and Heritage Command
5. Mr. John Shanahan of the National Capital Commandery and VADM John Mustin
6. Left to Right, VADM John Munstin, RADM Frank Thorp, Mr. John Shanahan and Dr. David Winkler
7. Captains Todd Creekman and Bill Erickson of the National Capital Commandery