

# A Fitting End, New Beginning to a

Click to view the USS Michael  
Murphy Commissioning ceremony  
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The events of Operation Red Wings are well-known throughout the special operations community. The bravery and heroics displayed in Afghanistan on June 28, 2005 will be remembered for generations to come. Lt. (SEAL) Michael Murphy, Gunner's Mate 2nd Class (SEAL) Danny Dietz, Sonar Technician 2nd Class (SEAL) Matthew Axelson, eight additional SEALs and eight Army Night Stalkers gave their lives that day. They have been honored in many ways in the seven years since they laid down their lives. Memorials have been built in their honor, communities and states have recognized their sacrifice with ceremonies, memorials, street dedications and days of remembrance. Their names have not only been etched in stone, but inscribed in special operations history. The men of "Red Wings" will not be forgotten. They have most recently been memorialized throughout the passageways of the Navy's newest ship, USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112).

"Michael Murphy's name, which will be forever synonymous with astonishing courage under fire, will now be associated with one of the U.S. Navy's most technologically advanced, most powerful, and most capable warships," said former Secretary of the Navy, Donald C. Winter.

May 7, 2011, on what would have been Lt. Murphy's 35th birthday, the ship bearing his name was christened in Bath, Maine. Just 18 months later, on Oct. 6, 2012, the guided-missile destroyer was commissioned in Manhattan, N.Y., near his hometown of Long Island.

USS Michael Murphy is the 62nd ship in the Arleigh Burke class of Navy destroyers and the last of its class. It is 509 feet in length, has a waterline beam of 59 feet and has a navigational draft of 31 feet. The 9,200-ton Michael Murphy was built by General Dynamics Bath Iron Works and is manned by a crew of 279 officers and enlisted personnel.

"This is a real tribute to our son and he would be really proud to see this beautiful ship that bears his name, as well as the Sailors who man her," said Dan Murphy, Michael's father. "It's important to our family that this ship not only embodies Michael's name, but the spirit of 19 very special operators; men who were heroes in their own right. For as much as Michael fought and died for his men, his men fought and died for him. So we are pleased that within this grand ship, there are displays of the heroism of those 18 other special operators who lost their lives."

"Our Heritage Hallway and the Wall of Heroes in the galley are there to honor Lt. Murphy and all of his teammates," said Cmdr. Thomas Shultz, the first commanding officer of USS Michael Murphy. "The story is much more than Lt. Murphy. There were 18 other teammates that sacrificed their lives that day and one thing that we have really come to understand and be blessed with, is to meet their families, their friends, and understand who those people were. It just makes us stronger; having the strength of all those people that we have now come to know."

Resting on the longest bulkhead of the ship's mess deck, is the Wall of Heroes, which is made up

## Historical Journey

of individual plaques inscribed with each operators' biography and photo, honoring their sacrifice and instilling in the crew the history of the ship's namesake.

The Murphy family has always been humbled by the sacrifice of the men who came to aid the four-man SEAL team.

"When Michael made the radio call, they answered that call. They didn't wait," said Dan. "They knew Michael and his team needed their assistance and they were prepared to do what they needed to do and as a result, sacrificed their lives."

In addition to the memorabilia throughout the ship, the crew reserved a special honor for Murphy's fallen teammates. The ship's two rigid-hull inflatable boats, used for rescue and reconnaissance, were named Axelson and Dietz, respectively.

"I love the idea that they have named the two rescue boats after Danny and Matt," said Maureen Murphy, Michael's mother and ship sponsor. "I think that's wonderful, because Mike was a team player and he would have wanted to include them."

As the ship's sponsor, Maureen has taken much of her personal time to spend with the crew. While living in New York, she was separated from the ship by hundreds of miles while it was being built in Maine, but she has made the most of her visits and has grown to love the crew and her responsibilities.

"I'm very proud and honored to be the sponsor of the ship," said Maureen. "The ship sponsor's duty is to get the personality and the spirit of the namesake within the ship and I think that has worked out well, because collectively, the crew has taken on so many of Mike's characteristics. They work hard, they are smart and they are all about teamwork."

"This is a special crew," said Shultz. Every single Sailor has looked at Michael Murphy's story and understands it. It's a true honor for all of us to be a part of this. And now, it's time for us to do our part in upholding Lt. Murphy's legacy, carrying on his story and his sacrifice for another generation. It's truly inspiring and an honor for us."

## Honoring the Namesake

Upon the ship's arrival in N.Y., a week-long celebration of events began. The first of those events was a visit to the New York City Fire Department Engine 53/Ladder 43 firehouse in Spanish Harlem.

The ship and firehouse are connected through a friendship that dates back to the early 2000s.

Lt. Murphy began wearing the firehouse's patch on his arm during deployments in honor of one of his good friends, Owen O'Callaghan, who was assigned to the firehouse. O'Callaghan reciprocated by wearing

Murphy's SEAL Team patch and would meet up with him when he visited his family in N.Y. Murphy was wearing the patch the day he died in Afghanistan, and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SEAL) Marcus Luttrell, the lone survivor of the battle, used it to identify Murphy as he slid down a mountain during the gunfight that claimed his life.

The firehouse now has USS Michael Murphy logos on its fire trucks and a wall within the firehouse dedicated to his memory. The wall displays several photos of Murphy, his team, his citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor, patches from his SEAL team and photos of the ship bearing his name. The firehouse has extended their welcome to any and all Navy SEALs and encourages them to visit the firehouse when they are in town.

The next morning, Maureen, Shultz and 30 members of the crew were greeted with a standing ovation as they entered the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE). Maureen and Shultz rang the opening bell to begin the day's trade. The experience was a day many of the crew will remember for years to come.

"The most amazing thing about our trip to the NYSE was seeing and feeling the overwhelming appreciation for our service that the folks at the NYSE had for us," said Command Master Chief Matthew Danforth. "As soon as we walked on to the floor, the applause and handshakes nearly choked me up."

"The applause died down, Danforth belted a solid "Hooyah Michael Murphy!" Like something scripted in a movie, everyone bellowed back "Hooyah Michael Murphy in response. "That shook me to the core with pride," Danforth said.

On the morning of Oct. 2, rain poured down as Maureen, Dan, Michael's brother John and more than 90 crew members entered a charter bus to visit sites in Murphy's hometown of Long Island, N.Y.

"Today is somewhat similar to the day Maureen broke the champagne bottle on the bow of the ship to christen it," said Shultz. "Just like we started the ship, we are all now starting down a new path and it's important to know where the path began – and it all started with Michael."

The first stop of the day was to Northport Veterans Affairs Medical Center

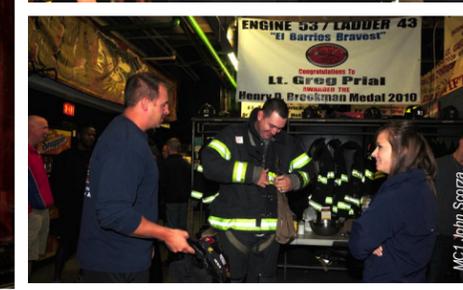
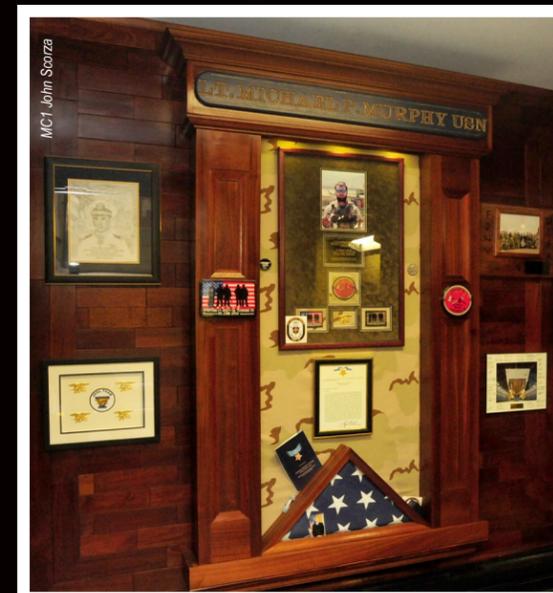


(Above) Sailors assigned to the guided-missile destroyer USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) salute as the ship passes the 9/11 Memorial and makes its way through New York Harbor.



# "El Barrios Bravest"

Engine 53/Ladder 43 Firehouse



"When a brother gets stuck you gotta go get 'em"

in Stony Brook, N.Y., where Michael's mother works. The Sailors played games with veterans and bonded over shared military experiences.

"The best part of the day for me was meeting and talking to the veterans," said Culinary Specialist Seaman Apprentice Lee Broyles. "Hearing all their stories and getting to see Maureen interact with the veterans was a unique experience. I really appreciate all of our veterans."

After the hospital visit, the crew traveled to Murphy's gravesite at Calverton National Cemetery to pay their respects. Of the 230,000 men and women buried in the cemetery, Murphy is the only Medal of Honor recipient.

As everyone exited the buses, the relentless weather continued. Within seconds of being in the elements, everyone was soaked, but carried on as if it was a sunny spring day. Michael's father was the first to speak.

"I come here every other day," said Dan. "Michael was a teammate, and he rests with 11 other fallen heroes from Iraq and Afghanistan. As a family, Maureen and I are very happy that he rests with his teammates."

"Michael had a lot of great attributes," said Maureen. "He was smart, funny and had a knack for bringing people together. He still does to this day. He isn't here physically, but in my heart he still lives."

Shultz then addressed the crew.

"This is a significant time for us," said Shultz. "Michael made a tremendous sacrifice. He's someone who can make us a better person, and for us as a crew, a better shipmate. Leave from here understanding that Michael is still with us and inspiring us."

The visit concluded as one of the roads in the cemetery was dedicated to Murphy and named "Lt. Michael Murphy Way."

The back of Murphy's headstone is unlike any other in the cemetery, adorned with an intricate, golden SEAL trident, compliments of a headstone engraver from Calverton National Cemetery.

During an interview, Michael's father Dan said that of all of the medals, awards and accolades his son earned as a SEAL, it was the Trident on his chest that he was most proud of.

After hearing Dan's remark, a headstone engraver from Calverton National Cemetery went to Michael's grave and on his own time, using his own equipment and funded out of his own pocket– stenciled a gold SEAL



(Above) Maureen Murphy, ship sponsor of the guided-missile destroyer USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112), rings the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange with the ship's commanding officer, Cmdr. Thomas Shultz and members of the crew. (Below) A Sailor assigned to USS Michael Murphy places a wreath at Lt. (SEAL) Michael Murphy's grave site at Calverton National Cemetery.





(Above) Sailors assigned to the guided-missile destroyer USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) run aboard to man the rails and bring the ship to life during its commissioning ceremony at Manhattan's pier 88. (Top Right) The crew of USS Michael Murphy man the rails during the ship's commissioning ceremony. (Bottom Right) USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112) conducts a pass-in-review by the USS Arizona Memorial during the 71st Anniversary Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration ceremony at the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center.

trident on the back of Murphy's headstone.

"When I go out to visit my son and I see the trident, Michael's connection to the community really hits me more than anything else," Dan said.

After paying their respects, the crew headed to Lake Ronkonkoma, where Murphy served as a lifeguard before joining the Navy. The park near the lake is now named "Navy SEAL Lt. Michael P. Murphy Memorial Park." In 2008, at the same park, then-Secretary of the Navy, Donald C. Winter announced that the Navy's newest guided-missile destroyer would bear Murphy's name and his mother would be its sponsor.

To conclude the day, crew members visited Murphy's Purple Heart monument and Serenity Plaza, ate dinner and watched a fireworks display over the lake. The crew members sang "Anchors Aweigh" as the fireworks lit up the sky.

In the final days leading up to the commissioning, the Michael Murphy crew attended the "Late Show," the "Daily Show," New York Jets and Giants football games, participated in the annual "Tunnel to Towers" run and enjoyed other sites in the New York area.

## The Commissioning

On the morning of Oct. 6, thousands of spectators, veterans and invited guests gathered in front of the ship to witness the ceremony, which included distinguished guests such as the Honorable Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York, Adm. Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and Adm. William McRaven, commander, U.S. Special Operations Command.

The Honorable Ray Mabus, Secretary of the Navy, delivered the principal address and spoke of the ship, her crew, and her namesake's heroic actions. "This ship honors the courage, service and sacrifice of Lt. Michael Murphy, his Red Wings brothers, fellow SEALs, special operators and

service members around the world who answer the call of duty every day," said Mabus. "It is absolutely fitting that the USS Michael Murphy bears a SEAL trident on her crest because, much like Michael and every Navy SEAL who has earned the honor of wearing the trident, this ship is designed to counter threats from above and below the surface of the oceans, in the air and on land."

Greenert reflected on the ship's massive power and ability to protect our nation's freedom.

"USS Michael Murphy, the most flexible, lethal and multi-mission capable ship of its kind, represents the backbone of our surface combatant fleet," Greenert said. "It is one of the best destroyers in the world. This ship will operate forward around the globe, assuring allies, projecting power and defending our nation and like its namesake, Lt. Michael Murphy, this ship will serve to protect, influence and win in an era of uncertainty."

At the conclusion of the remarks, acting as the ship's sponsor, Michael's mother fittingly gave the order "man our ship and bring her to life!"

The crew responded by saying, "Aye, Aye Ma'am" and began to double time up the brows and manned the ship as the Navy band played "Anchors Aweigh." Crew members stood shoulder-to-shoulder, manning the rails as the ship's systems came online. Radars, weapons systems and other parts of the ship began moving to symbolize her "coming to life."

## Bringing Murphy Home

Following the commissioning ceremony, the ship was scheduled to visit several ports before transiting to its homeport of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. In many ways, the family, friends and crew of Michael Murphy feel that the new homeport of Hawaii is a fitting one, considering the four-man SEAL team, for which Murphy and his men were assigned, was based in Hawaii.



Before completing the final leg of their Hawaiian voyage, the crew steamed toward the city where Murphy's career as a SEAL began - San Diego, Calif., home of the Naval Special Warfare Center (NSWCEN) and Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training.

More than 40 members of the crew toured NSWCEN. The crew, including Shultz and Danforth, watched the command video, observed BUD/S training, toured the facilities and obstacle course. Two visiting Sailors completed the obstacle course from start to finish, noting that it would most likely be their first and only opportunity.

"Visiting today was really great," said Engineman 3rd Class Derek Potter. "After running the course, I can see how people could have a hard time getting through SEAL training. This visit has put a lot of things in perspective. It's one thing to read about SEALs and watch videos, but seeing everything in person has been eye-opening."

For Danforth, the visit to the center was more than a tour of the facilities. He realized that although the mission of a U.S. Navy destroyer is quite different from SEAL operations, many of the traits emphasized to SEALs are attributes needed by all Sailors.

"I think everything we've done so far is not just connecting with our namesake, but understanding the aspect of teammates, camaraderie, and most importantly, what I'm taking away from this visit - resiliency. Every person in the Navy has to have it whether they are a Navy SEAL or an engineman stationed on a U.S. Navy ship."

Murphy's parents have always been appreciative of the support they have received from the NSW community. To them, the NSW community has been unwavering since they lost their son.

"The SEAL community has attended or been a part of every event or ceremony [leading up to the commissioning] along the way," said Maureen. "Through the seven years since Michael passed, they have never forgotten him, ever, and that has brought me comfort."

"I think the Sailors that man this ship are under a lot of pressure," said Dan. "The ship is known throughout the special operations community. They will be keeping their eye on it, as to what it does and when it's in port and I'm quite sure they will visit."

And as Dan predicted, SEALs did visit the ship - and didn't wait long. As the ship pulled into Hawaii, more than 30 personnel assigned to Murphy's former SEAL Team stood at the pier in their service dress whites waiting to welcome USS Michael Murphy home.

"For us, the journey continues," said Danforth. "We are now the legacy of not only Lt. Murphy, but the 18 others that lost their lives; we're going to carry that forward. We have a special bond with [the SEAL community] and we want that to continue to grow." 

MC1 John Scorza



## Lt. (SEAL) Michael Murphy's Medal of Honor Citation



FOR SERVICE AS SET FORTH IN THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

FOR CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY AND INTREPIDITY AT THE RISK OF HIS LIFE ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY AS THE LEADER OF A SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE ELEMENT WITH NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE TASK UNIT AFGHANISTAN ON 27 AND 28 JUNE 2005. WHILE LEADING A MISSION TO LOCATE A HIGH-LEVEL ANTI-COALITION MILITIA LEADER, LIEUTENANT MURPHY DEMONSTRATED EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM IN THE FACE OF GRAVE DANGER IN THE VICINITY OF ASADABAD, KONAR PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN. ON 28 JUNE 2005, OPERATING IN AN EXTREMELY RUGGED ENEMY-CONTROLLED AREA, LIEUTENANT MURPHY'S TEAM WAS DISCOVERED BY ANTI-COALITION MILITIA SYMPATHIZERS, WHO REVEALED THEIR POSITION TO TALIBAN FIGHTERS. AS A RESULT, BETWEEN 30 AND 40 ENEMY FIGHTERS BESIEGED HIS FOUR-MEMBER TEAM. DEMONSTRATING EXCEPTIONAL RESOLVE, LIEUTENANT MURPHY VALIANTLY LED HIS MEN IN ENGAGING THE LARGE ENEMY FORCE. THE ENSUING FIERCE FIREFIGHT RESULTED IN NUMEROUS ENEMY CASUALTIES, AS WELL AS THE WOUNDING OF ALL FOUR MEMBERS OF THE TEAM. IGNORING HIS OWN WOUNDS AND DEMONSTRATING EXCEPTIONAL COMPOSURE, LIEUTENANT MURPHY CONTINUED TO LEAD AND ENCOURAGE HIS MEN. WHEN THE PRIMARY COMMUNICATOR FELL MORTALLY WOUNDED, LIEUTENANT MURPHY REPEATEDLY ATTEMPTED TO CALL FOR ASSISTANCE FOR HIS BELEAGUERED TEAMMATES. REALIZING THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF COMMUNICATING IN THE EXTREME TERRAIN, AND IN THE FACE OF ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH, HE FOUGHT HIS WAY INTO OPEN TERRAIN TO GAIN A BETTER POSITION TO TRANSMIT A CALL. THIS DELIBERATE, HEROIC ACT DEPRIVED HIM OF COVER, EXPOSING HIM TO DIRECT ENEMY FIRE. FINALLY ACHIEVING CONTACT WITH HIS HEADQUARTERS, LIEUTENANT MURPHY MAINTAINED HIS EXPOSED POSITION WHILE HE PROVIDED HIS LOCATION AND REQUESTED IMMEDIATE SUPPORT FOR HIS TEAM. IN HIS FINAL ACT OF BRAVERY, HE CONTINUED TO ENGAGE THE ENEMY UNTIL HE WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED, GALLANTLY GIVING HIS LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY AND FOR THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM. BY HIS SELFLESS LEADERSHIP, COURAGEOUS ACTIONS, AND EXTRAORDINARY DEVOTION TO DUTY, LIEUTENANT MURPHY REFLECTED GREAT CREDIT UPON HIMSELF AND UPHELD THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL SERVICE.

SIGNED GEORGE W. BUSH