

Patriotic Perspectives: Wick Phillips Attorney on Holiday Mission

BY SHERRY TALTON

It is not uncommon for attorneys to take some time off at the holidays. Many even travel to exotic locations to enjoy some much-needed holiday down-time. In December, **Jeffrey W. Hellberg, Jr.**, head of the Wick Phillips appellate group, grilled steaks for himself and about 5,000 friends at a picnic halfway around the world—on the deck of aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68).



Steak Team Mission member Jeffrey Hellberg, Jr. shows off his grilling skills.

Mr. Hellberg is a member of Steak Team Mission, a non-profit that supports U.S. troops by bringing steak dinners to deployed military personnel during the holidays.

"Participating in Steak Team Mission is just my way of supporting our sailors and soldiers in the field and letting them know that people back home are thinking about them," said Mr. Hellberg.

Since 2002, Steak Team Mission has grilled steaks for soldiers in Uzbekistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait and Djibouti.

According to Lieutenant Commander Jason Salata, the USS Nimitz & Carrier Strike Group 11 Public Affairs Officer, the USS Nimitz is "in the North Arabian Sea conducting flight operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan.

Since entering the U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations September 18, Nimitz has flown more than 1,800 combat sorties, providing 30 percent of the close air support to the coalition forces in Afghanistan." [Ed. note: It's now more than 2,200 sorties.]

Just getting enough food to the troops on the Nimitz was a challenge. Local donors provided much of the over 2500 pounds of food, which American Airlines Cargo helped transport to the Nimitz.

Mr. Hellberg and his team cooked steaks for over five hours on nine grills on the flight deck as part of a "steel beach picnic." The picnic also included games like ping pong and basketball during the day and closed with a movie night in the ship's hangar bay.

Lieutenant Commander Salata expressed the troops' gratitude, "each of us was honored that the members of the Steak Team Mission came out to visit us and show their support for what we are doing ... that alone would have been enough. To add on 5,000 steaks and the fixings, that just made their visit all the more

memorable. We are truly lucky to live in a country where people are willing to do these very kind things."

The event was memorable for Mr. Hellberg, as well. "Being able to watch the sailors in action really helped me understand exactly what those men and women are dealing with out there," he said. "They are on the front lines providing key support for the troops on the ground. It was just an amazing experience." He got a tour of the aircraft carrier from the captain and observed both day and nighttime operations. "They fired the ship's 50-caliber machine guns for us and we stood right next to some F/A-18 Hornet fighter jets," Mr. Hellberg recalled with boyish excitement. "I couldn't have had any more fun."



Some of the more than 5,000 U.S. troops aboard the USS Nimitz enjoying a holiday steak feast.

As Mr. Hellberg explains, Steak Team Mission would not be possible without the local individuals and businesses who donated food and supplies and employers who let Steak Team Mission members take time off work. "I also can't thank Wick Phillips enough for supporting this endeavor," he said. "In addition to letting me take the time away from my practice, they donated special aprons for Steak Team Mission members to wear to the cookout and

helped us find other donors willing to contribute. The firm's support is just one more example of why it's such a great place."

From the firm's perspective, **Todd Phillips**, founding partner of Wick Phillips, LLP, says that he is "so proud of Hellberg's generosity." "He [Hellberg] gave up time with his 9-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son to give our troops a little piece of home for the holidays," said Mr. Phillips. "Everyone

here at Wick Phillips supports our troops 100 percent throughout the year, but we think it's especially important to remember the troops during the holiday season."

It will be interesting to see where the Steak Team Mission's next holiday will be. **HN**



As of September 19, the USS Nimitz has flown more than 2,200 combat sorties, providing 30 percent of the close air support to the coalition forces in Afghanistan.

Photos courtesy Steak Team Mission. Official Navy press release: tinyurl.com/yagse6r.

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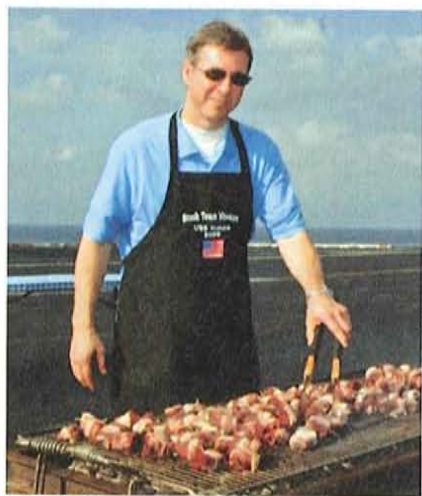
Mission Possible: Steak Team

As a child, Jeffrey W. Hellberg, Jr. was apprehensive of Harvey Gough. Gough, the former owner of Dallas' Goff's Hamburgers, was something akin to the Soup Nazi on *Seinfeld*. "He'd ask if you wanted silverware. If you said yes, he'd ask if you wanted it sanitized. If you said yes, he'd lick the silverware and hand them to you," laughs Hellberg, a partner in the Dallas office of Wick, Phillips, Gould & Martin, L.L.P.

It wasn't until 1997, when Gough recruited Hellberg to do some legal work, that Hellberg realized Gough was not the menace he made himself out to be. In fact, Gough had a soft spot for those in the military (he was a former military man himself). In the 1980s, Gough started serving hamburgers to the soldiers at Fort Hood in Killeen. In 2002, local businesses started donating money to Gough's efforts, and in 2004, Gough, Hellberg, and friend Tony Booth formally established Steak Team Mission. The nonprofit organization — funded solely through donations — supplies steak dinners to troops overseas, complete with appetizers, beans, coleslaw, cornbread, melons, and ice cream.

"This is just our way of giving back," Hellberg says. "This is a good way to let the troops know that people are thinking about them."

In December, Steak Team Mission flew 8,500 pounds of food to the Gulf of Oman to grill and serve more than 5,000 steaks to the sailors on the USS Nimitz. The team used nine grills for almost four and a half hours to prepare the food (the steaks were prepared to order). Being able to interact with the sailors was the best part of the mission, Hellberg says. But being able to fly onto the USS Nimitz and take a tour of the ship were interesting experiences too. "It was a little stressful because as you could hear the flight operations happening, you could also feel the heat, feel the constant rumble that went on around the ship," he says. "The U.S. Navy took really great care of us."



Jeffrey Hellberg, Jr. is a member of Steak Team Mission, which provides deployed troops with steak dinners. Here, he grills steaks for sailors while on a mission in the Gulf of Oman in December.

Earlier this year, Steak Team Mission served 10,000 steaks to troops at Fort Hood. The team has three upcoming missions: one for the Wounded Warriors program at Brooks Army Medical Center in San Antonio; one for sailors in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and one to Mosul and Baghdad, Iraq.

Jarrett R. Andrews' twin brother, Darryn, was killed in Afghanistan in September 2009. Andrews, senior counsel to Energy Future Holdings Corporation in Dallas, had been searching for a tangible way to cope with his grief when he read about Steak Team Mission in the Dallas Bar Association's newsletter. Participating with the organization seemed like one way to honor his brother. "It always meant a lot to him when people would show him some sort of gratitude," Andrews says.

He participated in his first mission with the team in Fort Hood. "When it was over, I had the best feeling in the world. These soldiers sacrifice so much, there is no way that we can ever come close to repaying them for the sacrifices they make," he says. "But just to be able to do something for them was extremely rewarding."

For more information, please visit www.steakteammission.org.

TEXAS PEOPLE

Bryan A. Garner, author of *Garner on Language and Writing*, published by the American Bar Association, was named a winner in the 2010 Benjamin Franklin Awards from the Independent Book Publishers Association in recognition of excellence in independent publishing. The book took top honor in the professional/technical books category. Garner is a versatile and prolific writer on legal-linguistic subjects.



Hugh Hackney, a shareholder in Greenberg Traurig, L.L.P. in Dallas, was appointed as a U.S. representative for the International Chamber of Commerce Commission on Arbitration. The primary objectives of the ICC Commission on Arbitration include studying the juridical aspects of arbitration and other modes of settlement of disputes of an international business nature and examining current developments, including new technologies such as electronic discovery.



St. Mary's University School of Law Associate Dean **Reynaldo Anaya Valenciano** was elected to a three-year term on the Harvard Alumni Association Board of Directors. Valenciano was appointed by President Clinton as one of 16 White House Fellows for 1999-2000. Valenciano also teaches in the Summers Skills Enhancement Program, which prepares students for success in their legal education.



Geoffrey D. Weisbart, a founding partner in Hance Scarborough, L.L.P. in Austin, was named a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, one of the legal profession's most prestigious honors. Weisbart has represented clients in Texas' capitol city and throughout the nation for nearly 25 years.

