



## NHL's L.A.Kings Treat Ronald Reagan Sailors Like Royalty

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By Lt. Ron Flanders, USS Ronald Reagan Public Affairs

LOS ANGELES (NNS) -- The NHL's Los Angeles Kings paid tribute to the crew of the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) with a "Ronald Reagan Night" at their Jan. 8 game against the Anaheim Ducks.

Nearly 100 Reagan Sailors sat near the ice to enjoy the heated cross-town rivalry game, which the Kings won, 4-3. The Reagan Honor Guard presented the colors, and Reagan crewmember AO3 Elise Clover brought 18,118 fans into frenzy with a rendition of the national anthem. During the second intermission, the Kings showed a Ronald Reagan tribute video; the crowd responded with a standing ovation for the crew.

"Tonight was a perfect night. Our Sailors had a great time," said Capt. Ken Norton, Ronald Reagan's commanding officer.

"We loved having the chance to do this," said former L.A. Kings defenseman Marty McSorley, who helped set up the event. "For those of us who've been a part of teams, sacrifice and selflessness were parts of what it took for us to get to this level. We know that is a big part of the U.S. Navy. So this event was just great."

For the ship's biggest hockey fans, the afternoon was one they would never forget. Prior to the Kings-Ducks battle, the Reagan hockey team played a matinee game on the Staples Center ice against a team of legends, the L.A. Kings alumni. The star-laden squad included the highest scoring left wing in NHL history, Luc Robitaille (668 career goals), NHL All-Star Randy "Stump" Burridge, and L.A. Kings assistant coach and 15-year NHL vet Mark Hardy.

The Reagan team lost the game, 13-11, but the opportunity to have their names announced and play in an NHL arena was a dream come true for the Sailors.

"Goosebumps," said Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Chase Christiaens, who scored two goals for the Reagan team. "It's something I always dreamed about as a kid, and something I never thought would happen. To be in the company of these men...they're idols. I still have goosebumps."

Smiles filled both teams' dressing rooms after the game.

"I became a U.S. citizen four years ago," said Robitaille. "Growing up as a French Canadian in Ottawa, I always admired the U.S. I love this country and appreciate what these Sailors do for us. To play with these guys and have fun, it was my way of saying thank you."


Ronald Reagan goaltender and Command Master Chief Mark Rudes offered some perspective as the team enjoyed a postgame dinner with the Kings alumni.

"It just goes to show how great the Navy is. Where else can you get invited to play on the Staples Center ice, against former L.A. Kings? It was fabulous. For those of us who got a chance to get out there, it was something we'll never forget."

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