

# USS RANKIN NEWS

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**AKA-103**  
1945-1947  
1952-1968

**LKA-103**  
1969-1971

**GOLDE**  
1960-1961

**2017 Reunion**  
Harrisburg, PA  
Sep 28 – Oct 1

Harrisburg offers loads of unique attractions, and is centrally located for quite a few of our shipmates. The best attraction is the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg, only a short bus ride away.

Other nearby attractions include the famous chocolate factory in Hershey, Amish country in Lancaster County, and the Harley-Davidson factory in York. Our tour schedule and hotel details are being worked out right now.

As in the past, shipmates from the USS Yancey (AKA-93) will be joining us at the reunion. Holding reunions at the same time in the same hotel will be reunion groups from USS Pickaway (APA-222) and USS Bexar (APA-237). With all those amphibians meeting in the same place, we can look forward to lots of Gator comradeship.

Details will follow soon. See you in Harrisburg!

## 2015 – 2017 REUNIONS



**Rankin shipmates at the 2016 reunion in Jacksonville.** *Standing:* Mark Thomas, Jim Grant, Bob DeVault, Dick Lacy, John Burke, Dave Beeler, Walter “Bud” Stringer, J. Harvey McCubbin, Ray Falker, Skip Sander, Willie Dunning, Ed Gaskell, Bill Devroe, Hugh Dougherty, Huey Hughes, Jim McCourt, Ray Spicer, Tex Spicer, Paul Allen, Dale Koepp. *Seated:* Hillyer “Billy” Head, Tom Lobello. *Not pictured:* Charles Liesegang, Larry Rogan, Ray Zellers, and 22 spouses and guests. Also in attendance were sixteen shipmates and guests from the USS Yancey (AKA-93). A great time was had by all – see [www.ussrankin.org](http://www.ussrankin.org)



**Rankin shipmates at the 2015 reunion in Nashville.** *Back row:* Frank Draper, Walter “Bud” Stringer, Willie Dunning, Kirg Rupert, John Davidson, Tex Spicer, Mike Fields, Jim McCourt, J. Harvey McCubbin, John Burke. *Center row:* Ralph Ayasse, Sherrill Pittman, Huey Hughes, Jim Grant, Harry Fuerstenberger, Harry Traum, Harry Zimmer, Dave Beeler, Skip Sander, Bill Devroe, Jan Smits, Dale Koepp, Pete Gersbacher, Dick Lacy, Mark Thomas, Paul Allen, Hillyer “Billy” Head, Stew Gully, Jim Lang, Ray Zellers. *Not pictured:* Paul Buckner, Elton Gould, Paul Lint, Allen Newell, Dewey Sloan, Ray Spicer, and 30 spouses and guests. Also attending this phenomenal reunion were 23 shipmates and guests from the USS Yancey (AKA-93). You can see an illustrated report on the reunion at [www.ussrankin.org](http://www.ussrankin.org)

## ABOUT THE AKA/LKAS

AKAs were U.S. Navy ships designed specifically to carry troops, equipment and supplies in support of amphibious assaults, and to provide naval gunfire support during those assaults. They were originally called Attack Cargo Ships and designated AKA. In 1969, all AKAs were renamed as Amphibious Cargo Ships and redesignated LKA.

As amphibious operations became more important in World War II, planners saw the need for a special kind of cargo ship, one that could carry both cargo and the LCM and LCVP boats with which to attack the beach, and that carried guns to assist in anti-air defense and shore bombardment. Specifications were drawn up, and construction of the AKAs began. A total of 108 were built between 1943 and 1945—an average of one new ship every eight days! Six more AKA/LKAs, featuring new and improved designs, were built in later years.

Compared to other cargo ship types, AKAs could carry landing craft, were faster, had more armament, and had larger hatches and booms. Their holds were optimized for combat loading, a method of cargo storage where the items first needed ashore were at the top of the hold, and those needed later were lowered down. Because these ships went into forward combat areas, they had Combat Information Centers and significant amounts of equipment for radio communication, neither of which were present in other cargo ships.

Attack cargo ships played a vital role in the Pacific War, where many were attacked by kamikazes and other aircraft, and several were torpedoed, but none were sunk or otherwise destroyed. Nine AKAs were present at the surrender ceremony in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945.

After the war, many AKAs were put into the National Defense Reserve Fleet. Others were converted for other uses, such as oceanographic surveying, under-sea cable laying, and repairing other ships. Some of the reserve ships were recommissioned for the Korean War, and some stayed in service during the Vietnam War.

In the 1960s, both the United States Navy and the British Royal Navy developed amphibious transport docks (LPDs), with well decks and flight decks, which gradually took on this unique amphibious role and today have assumed it completely. The last amphibious cargo ship in the American Navy, USS El Paso (LKA-117), was decommissioned in 1994.

You can see a complete illustrated history of AKAs on the USS Rankin website at:  
<http://www.ussrankin.org/51years01.htm>

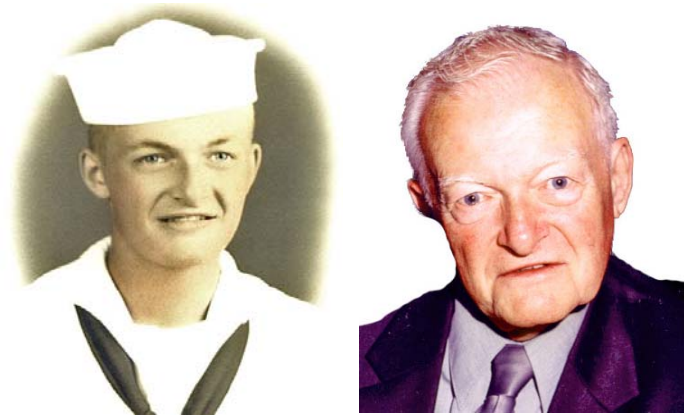
## OUR DEPARTED SHIPMATES

These are the shipmates who died or whose deaths were learned of between our 2014 and 2016 reunions. We honor their lives and memories here and by reading their names at our Memorial Services.

Harry Vernon Anderson.....	BTG2 ....	1945
Kenneth J. Biersteker .....	BT3 .....	1952-1953
James Nelson Clark .....	LTJG ....	1961-1962
August David Collier.....	ENFN ..	1953-1954
Ernest Calvin Couch.....	EMCM ..	1968-1970
George David Deweese.....	F1C .....	1945
Herbert W. Ezell.....	BM3 .....	1955-1956
George Robert Dixon.....	GM3 .....	1945-1946
Thomas A. Drayton.....	PN3.....	1961
Herbert W. Ezell.....	BM3 .....	1955-1956
Richard L. Flynn .....	ETR2.....	1962-1965
Joseph N. Freitas, Jr. ....	S1C.....	1945-1946
Joseph W. Gaskill .....	SN .....	1957-1958
Earl Robert Gimpel.....	CAPT, USMC.....	1952-1953
Carroll Albert Goldsborough .....	S1C.....	1946-1947
Kenneth E. Hablitzel .....	EN2 .....	1954
Robert Charles Hennekens .....	LTJG ....	1952-1953
Louis William Hennings, III .....	LTJG ....	1964-1966
Thomas Edwin Herring.....	SFC .....	1961-1962
Donald Lee Hibbs .....	HMC.....	1967-1970
Leroy Harry Keihn .....	BOSUN	1945-1946
James George King .....	SN .....	1968-1969
Eugene Charles Kocher.....	BMSN ..	1957
Roy Stygles Machia.....	S1C.....	1945-1946
David John Marker.....	LT .....	1952-1953
George Roy Mayo III.....	RD3 .....	1958-1960
Jacklon Gregory Mays.....	LTJG ....	1954-1955
Everett Lee McVicker.....	RM1 .....	1945-1947
Richard Arthur Metts Sr. ....	BMSN ..	1965-1966
Henry Marvin Mickey .....	EN2 .....	1964-1967
Edward Henry Muehleib .....	S1C.....	1945-1946
Hector A. Neveu.....	IC1 .....	1967-1968
Marvin Robert James Niehusen ...	FN.....	1967
Rodney L. Nolen.....	MMCS ..	1965-1967
Paul Bartholomew O'Neil .....	S1C.....	1945-1946
Francis Joseph O'Neill.....	RD2 .....	1959-1962
Franklin E. Plecker .....	SN .....	1966-1968
Andrew Thomas Pulley .....	CSC.....	1958-1961
Patrick Gerald Reding.....	RMSN ..	1952-1954
Donald Eugene Reinen.....	GMG2...	1966-1968
William Albert Ridder .....	GM1 .....	1945-1946
Quinton Harold Rotruck Jr.....	MR2.....	1968-1971
Lee Thomas Sanders Jr. ....	EM1 .....	1957-1958
Frank N. Sipes.....	TE2.....	1953-1954
Joseph Michael Soule .....	QM3 .....	1966-1969
Herbert Waddington.....	SN .....	1953-1954
Robert Howard West.....	LTJG ....	1964-1966
Edward White .....	PHM2...	1945-1946
Rodney Maurice Williamson .....	QMQ3...	1952-1954
Lawrence Eugene Willis.....	SN .....	1959-1961
James Gerald Wilson.....	LTJG ....	1953-1955
Henry Stewart Young.....	ENS .....	1952

# SHIPMATES ON PARADE

Over the years we've printed quite a few of these shipmate profiles, and people seem to have liked them. In this issue, we feature shipmates who were born in the 1920s. In future issues, we'll focus on men born in the 1930s and 1940s.



**Tom Jones – Born 1926**

S1C, 1945-1946

In May 1944, I graduated from high school in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh. I celebrated my 18th birthday in July and the next month I answered the “greetings” letter from Uncle Sam by going to U. S. Naval Training Station Sampson, New York for basic training, a.k.a. boot camp.

After boot camp, I was assigned to the Engineering Division at U. S. Naval Amphibious Training Base, Fort Pierce, Florida, learning about diesel engines for small boats. My Sampson group was being trained as a single complement of men for a ship to be named later.

This group was then sent to Newport, RI. (We spent Christmas in Florida and New Years in Rhode Island!) Along with other personnel from various training bases, we became the original crew of the USS Rankin. We completed sea training in the Atlantic before being shipped to Charleston, SC.

On February 25, 1945, the ship was put in commission and went on a shakedown cruise in Chesapeake Bay with the full crew. Then we went through the Panama Canal to San Francisco, where we were to load supplies for Pearl Harbor. It was here on April 12 that we learned of the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

During the time I was on the Rankin, I was in the Fireroom making sure the water level in the boilers was maintained. Once I experienced the inside of a boiler when it blew a superheater tube. It took three of us all night to repair it. Only one man at a time could enter, with a line secured around his waist and two men outside to pull him out over the baffle plates

in case he collapsed from the heat.

After Hawaii, we crossed the International Date Line to the Carolines, Okinawa, Saipan, Manila, Luzon, Wakayama Japan and Nagoya Japan.

During one of our cruises we experienced a typhoon, and what a ride it was! With both anchors down, screws turning over 18 knots, we were trying to stay in one place.

While we were unloading ammunition in Okinawa, the weather was so bad we were anchored there for 23 days. During this time we had to conceal the ship by laying smoke around it.

One of my most memorable experiences was that of a kamikaze coming straight at us. Lucky for us, but unlucky for the pilot, he flew over the fantail and landed in the water. He survived. We fished him out of the water; put him in the brig and kept a 24-hour guard on him (mostly to keep him safe from us sailors on board!) He was turned over to authorities in Manila.

If the atomic bomb had not been dropped, we were set to invade Japan in two weeks.

I was discharged in May, 1946. I had gone into the Navy as an innocent 18-year-old and came out a man.

In civilian life, I spent 32 years with Eastern Air Lines in Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and Miami, retiring in 1986.



**Paul Allen – Born 1926**

ENS (SC), 1946-1947

My brother and I grew up in Boston during the depression. Our father was an immigrant from England who joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 17 and served as a Yeoman first class from 1917-1923, mostly in the WWI North Sea Mine Force.

My Dad was a great patriot. He was a charter member of the American Legion and in the 1930s my brother and I were members of The Sons of the

American Legion, participating in various parades and ceremonies.

When Pearl Harbor was attacked on Dec 7 1941, I was a senior in an all boys' high school which had a cadet corps, as many did in those days. Because of the draft of all males 18 and older, the Boston high schools graduated all seniors in the class of 1942 on February 1, 1942 instead of in June. At the time, I was only 15 and not eligible for military service, so I went into the Boston Navy Yard as a shipfitter's helper at 58 cents an hour. After turning 16 six months later, I went into a private shipyard as a Navy certified welder, building LCIs and LSMs. I earned \$1.03 an hour, which was a lot of money in those days. A year later, in 1943, I turned 17 and joined the Navy as a Seaman 2/c. After taking a series of exams, I was selected for the V5A program to become a Navy or Marine Aviator after 8 months of further schooling. I was scheduled to go to preflight in 1944. The Navy had too many aviators then, so I was given the choice of going back to the fleet or continuing in the V12 program as a Line/Deck Officer I chose to go with V12.

After a series of convoluted events at the end of the war, at the age of 19 I was raised from S1/c at the Pacific Ship Repair Command to the rank of Ensign in the Supply Corps. In January 1946, after three months of business and finance training, I was ordered to the USS New Jersey (BB-62) as the Disbursing Officer. My first day there was spent counting the \$300,000 being transferred to me as I relieved the LTJG who was going home. That was a *lot* of money!

Service on a battleship was a very enlightening and disciplining experience for me. I was a 19 year old with a great deal of leadership and financial responsibility. The skipper, the exec and I talked a lot! We paid in cash, and the 2,500-man crew was very sensitive to prompt pay and the servicing of their allotments. The war had ended and people were coming and going by the hundreds every month.

After eight months aboard, the New Jersey was in Bremerton, Washington, moored alongside the Wisconsin, and I was chasing the Admiral's daughter. One day I got orders to report to the USS Rankin (AKA-103) as the Supply and Disbursing Officer. I had five days to get to the Rankin. When my relief arrived two days later, we transferred funds and I was off to join the Rankin, anchored in San Diego. It was a Wednesday in September, 1946.

On arriving in the afternoon I discovered several shocking situations: first, the officer I was to relieve was in the Mental Ward at Balboa Naval Hospital; second, we were getting underway in three days for China. (We were to pick up the remnants of the 7th Marine Division, who were caught in Peking between the communists and nationalists warring for control

of the country); third, we had no money on board, and were very short of provisions, clothing and small stores. All this was going on while we were preparing for a 6,000 mile voyage with a crew of 22 officers and 300 men.

On Thursday morning I met with and notified the Exec and the Captain of this dire situation. We all went into a crisis mode to solve our problems through the efforts of Commandant of the 9th Naval District.

Since I had no account with the area Federal Bank or local commercial banks, arrangements were made by message for all Navy ships in the harbor with excess cash to transfer funds to me in exchange for a check. In a couple of hours, moving from ship to ship in our gig, I collected about \$40,000, which was enough to get us to Japan, our first stop. On Friday we loaded provisions, small stores and various spare parts and equipment for our 22 LCVPs and LCMS. On Saturday morning at quarters, I was able to report to the Exec "Ready for Sea", which is the motto of the Supply Corps. Our Executive Officer was LCDR Robert Tepper, now deceased. Most of our Department Heads were mustang Lieutenants. (Over twenty years later, in 1967, I met with the Gunnery Officer, LT Jack Ahman, now deceased, when we were both Captains.)

We got underway on Saturday morning in company with three APAs: USS Bollinger (APA-234), USS Sevier (APA-233) and one other. Eighteen days later in Yokosuka, Japan, we realized that we should have loaded twice as many provisions. The shore-based supply department had none to replenish us for several weeks after our arrival. The four ships in our squadron were tied up in flooded drydocks and all lines and dockside maintenance was handled by Japanese laborers for which we had mutual animosity lingering from the recently ended island warfare, our total occupation of their bases, and General MacArthur's control over their government and economy.

When I returned four years later during the Korean War, MacArthur was still very much in charge, thank goodness!

Because of diplomatic confusion and hostilities in China and the South China Sea, our mission was put on hold and our four-ship rescue group remained tied up in Yokosuka for about eight weeks. However, we did participate in a drill for what would have been the invasion of Japan had we not dropped the Atomic Bombs. What a disaster! LSTs broached and "enemy forces" decimated us from the rugged heights.

In November 1946 we arrived in a very cold and snowy Tsingtao, China. This was a very dangerous and poverty-stricken city caught in a civil war. I remember seeing homeless families frozen to death in entryways of commercial establishments. One dark

snowy night my roommate and I were taking a rickshaw back to the Rankin when we were stopped by two armed commies camouflaged in white. Our driver/puller, who was spitting blood, somehow talked them out of robbing/killing us. We never went out at night after that, except as armed shore patrol.

After a few cold weeks we moved on to Ching Wang Tao a very, very cold port, having 4 to 6 inches of sea ice that we had to break through to anchor. From this port on a clear day you can see the terminus of the Great Wall of China. It also was at the end of a rail line from Peking, from which the Marines and their equipment could be loaded aboard for their homeward journey.

The Rankin's Captain was a real martinet! In retrospect, he reminded me of Captain Queeg of *The Caine Mutiny*, complete with flower pots outside his stateroom. He had four stripes and was only 36 years old. He acted as if he had a battleship. A year or so later his Naval Academy class reverted to Commander as the Navy restructured the seniority and ranking system. He gave me a bad time and I decided to leave the Navy when we arrived in the States in January of 1947. There are many humorous sea stories I could tell about this five month experience.

I found out later that the skipper did give me excellent fitness reports. He tried to get me to stay on, as did the Supply Corps detailers in Washington. After three weeks of terminal leave at home I changed my mind, contacted Supply Headquarters, and they offered me a regular Navy Commission with the promise of an advanced degree if my performance warranted. I accepted, and spent the next 26 years at various jobs at sea aboard USS Power (DD-839) and USS Essex (CVA-9), and on staffs in Southeast Asia, heavily involved in the Korean and Viet Nam conflicts.

Most of my career involved support of Navy and Marine aviation, and developing computer-based information systems for Navy business and research applications. On my tour as Director of Management Information Systems, I served alongside Captain W.T. "Barney" Rapp, a former CO of the Rankin who made Admiral while we were together. My three tours of duty in Washington included a two year stint at the Pentagon during which time I married a Navy nurse that I courted during the Korean War in Japan. We had four daughters, the oldest of whom retired as a Commander in 2013. She was a veteran of Yugoslavia and Desert Storm. My bride of 56 years, a decorated veteran of Korea, passed away suddenly in 2009.

Retiring from duty in Washington in 1971 as a Captain with almost 28 years of active duty, I joined the State of Michigan where I served as Chief Deputy for the State Department of Social Services and long-time Director of the State's Medicaid Program. Subse-

quent to that I had a brief position with Price Waterhouse as a Director in their health consultant group. I retired from my consulting positions at age 60.

At ninety years old, I am living on the Texas border with my new wife, playing golf and observing our efforts to protect the border. I think the Pentagon is upset with my longevity because it is eating up their pension funds! As I attend my ship's reunions there are no familiar faces that I served with, except CAPT Drew Miller MC USNR (Ret), who was The Medical Officer on the Rankin and a good friend. I kept his ten-gallon container of medicinal alcohol in my safe when not in use! He attended our last reunion at the age of 91 after we had a long conversation and several email exchanges. Enough said.

It was a great set of careers and I vividly remember my experience on the USS Rankin.



**Harry Berry – Born 1928**

EM3, 1946-1947

I come from a long line of sailors. My dad, Howard T. Berry Jr., served in the Navy during World War I, and my two older brothers, Bud and Bill, served in World War II. I myself officially joined the Navy in February of 1946. I had previously joined up, but did not take the oath until then.

Since I served during the time of national emergency following World War II, I hold a World War II discharge. I also hold a discharge from later years, when I was called back in 1950 during the Korean war.

I enlisted in Philadelphia, PA when I was 17 and a Senior in school for the Electrical trade. On the advice of my father, I stayed in school until I had enough credits to graduate.

After reading the *USS Rankin News* issue #23, I was inspired to relate some of my own experiences while on the Rankin. Rather than rewriting the history of our trip to Japan, I encourage you to read Billy Weckwerth's story in issue #23, page 2. I certainly can vouch for Billy's story, for I was there! You can find his story at [www.ussrankin.org](http://www.ussrankin.org) under "More Good Skinny...Newsletters".

I will pick up my story during the time of the typhoon. We had a brief power outage, and the Rankin was powered by DC current. The ventilating motors did not start automatically when power was restored, so they had to be restarted manually. I worked my way along the lifeline to the air shaft ladder, and had to go down the ladder with one hand on the top and one on the bottom, so I would not be thrown either up or down the ladder as the ship plunged into the high waves. After the typhoon, we experienced some unusually calm seas, with the beautiful sun out. It was truly a relief after experiencing the typhoon.

We headed back toward Japan, then tied up to the dock at Yokosuka. If you look at the 1946 video on the Rankin website, you can see that an officer recorded some of the damage that the ship incurred from the typhoon. You can also see that upon our arrival in Yokosuka, there was a car that was unloaded from the ship onto the docks. I was asked by one of the officers to drive his car off of the dock.

On October 26, 1946, we sailed to Tsingtao, China, where we anchored until December 10th, 1946. While we were on liberty there, my friend and shipmate Al Brewer and I (we worked in the battery locker together) went out to the colony. They had some disabled people, as well as a lot of children there. Al had a few chocolate bars that he tried to give out to the kids. Boy, did we get mobbed by the kids there! We almost got into trouble, because we were playing around under a picture of Chiang Kai-shek. A couple of people got upset about that, so we backed off.

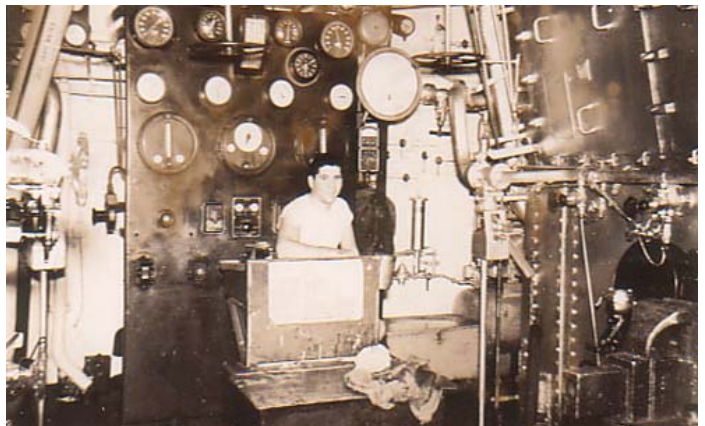
We then sailed to Northern Chinwangtao, China. While there, I got into another not-so-little episode. We were about to celebrate Christmas, and it was December 24th. We had gone out and picked up a small Christmas tree. I decided I wanted to put some lights on the tree, so I went up into the boatswain's locker where the light bulbs were stored. While up there looking around, an Ensign came in. We didn't acknowledge each other, and I don't know whether he saw me or not. Apparently he did not see me, because while I was still looking around for the light bulbs, he left the locker and locked the hatch behind him. There I was, on December 24th, locked in the boatswain's locker, and nobody knew I was there!

I tried several methods of trying to get someone's attention. I disconnected the submersible outlet and dropped a line down there and splashed it in the water. There were some Chinese people working on the ship and they were walking down the pier. While they made all kinds of Chinese sounds and hollering, laughing and kidding, it was to no avail. They did not notify the officer of the deck, so I abandoned that idea. I then took the fire extinguisher and shot that down the submersible pump outlet and foamed up a

little salt water. The Chinese workers did the same thing again, laughing and pointing, and that sort of thing, but sill nobody thought about telling the officer of the deck. So I abandoned that idea as well. I needed to do something here. Being an electrician, and having stood many hours on watch on the main board, I decided to take apart the light fixture and grounded it. I then tapped out SOS on the grounding system and figured that the guy on the main board would see it. I believe the guy on duty was named Ray Roberts. He saw something was happening, and at first he didn't know what it was. He called for the First Class and the Chief. They looked at the flashing lights and then decided to track down where it was coming from. They got out the prints to find out what distribution box it was coming from and what spaces it serviced. They finally did track it down to the boatswain's locker, then they came down and opened the hatch. I was rescued! That was a happy time for me—because of the holiday routine I could have been stuck in there all weekend. Since the next day was Christmas, I would have missed out on a lot of festivities, including the Christmas dinner and a movie night in the cargo hold. I was not only happy, but proud of myself for getting rescued that way.

After my discharge, I went to work at General Electric Co. I was later recalled back into the Navy in 1950, at the start of the Korean war. When I got out of the Navy the second time, I worked for the New Jersey Bell Telephone Company for the next 31 years. I started out "up the poles and down the holes". After a couple of years, I was transferred into the telephone exchange. I worked on maintaining the automatic dial equipment. Later on I was promoted into management and taught others.

As of September 2016, I was married for 63 years to my lovely wife Helen. We have three children, ten grandchildren and five great grandchildren (so far). The Lord has really blessed us! I still golf occasionally, and go bowling several times a week. I have much to be thankful for!



**Snipe Country, 1945-1947**



### **Bob Hilley – Born 1929**

ENS/LTJG, 1952-1953

I started my Navy career in September, 1946, with an NROTC scholarship to Georgia Tech, which was then called Georgia School of Technology. This came with a requirement to serve a four year tour after graduation. What I did not know was that I had to be 17 years old on September 1. I didn't turn 17 until September 3, so I lost the scholarship.

I did stay in the program, and received \$0.90/day for my last two years. The quarterly tuition at Tech at that time was \$57.50 for in-state students (today, it is \$3,050). I graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering, and started my business career with General Electric Co. on an engineering training program. I tested aircraft gas turbines in Cincinnati, Ohio until I received orders in June 1951 to report to San Diego as an newly minted Ensign for amphibious training.

At this point, I decided to marry my longtime girlfriend, Barbara Anne Barber. I think one of her reasons for marrying me was to ditch the name Barbara Barber, which got her a lot of double takes. It took us nine days in my 1939 Ford business coupe to get to California. On the first day of training I had to walk in the surf in my brand new expensive shoes. I had never in my entire life owned shoes that had cost as much.

After training, I reported to the USS Calvert (APA-32), which was then in Japan. Barbara went back to Georgia, and I sold my car to a friend who had also been in NROTC at Georgia Tech. I believe he had been assigned to USS Bayfield (APA 33). Several of us young Ensigns had been assigned to ships in Japan, and we all traveled to San Francisco to wait for our transportation, an escort carrier. We spent a hell of a week there, waiting for it to get out of the yard. It was a real rust bucket, but we had no duties, so it was a nice easy cruise to Japan.

Almost as soon as I reported to the Calvert, we set sail for the U.S. After several months, I was assigned to the Rankin as the Calvert went to Hawaii for repairs. I heard later that they stayed there six months and some family members accompanied them. Barba-

ra came back to San Diego, and we enjoyed some time there before the Rankin set sail for Norfolk. I had bought a 1949 dark blue Ford convertible with wide whitewalls, white top and red seats. After making the down payment, I borrowed money from shipmates until the next payday. The loan was for 24 months at \$78.60/month. I am good at remembering numbers.

My duties were in the engine room, and I was also a boat officer, and by now I was an LTJG. There was an incident in Goose Bay, Labrador that I will never forget. I was assigned to take the captain's gig to a carrier to get the mail. The weather turned really bad and spray was freezing on the bow. By the time we finally found the ship, the waves were so high that we were almost eye to eye with men on the weather deck, and then we would drop way down. One of the crew got up on the bow to hook the boom hook to the ring on the boat sling. He failed several times, so I told him to let me try. I got it the first time, but fell into the water between the boat and the ship. Somehow I was able to get back on that ice-covered bow before being crushed. The doctor gave me some grog after we got back aboard the ship.

The officers decided to go cod fishing in Labrador. We started using bait, but found that we could catch them without bait. We stacked them on the deck like cord wood. The bad part was that we ending up eating some cod that was not very well prepared.

When the ship was in Gibraltar, three of us bought pellet pistols; I still have mine today. When the ship was bridged with several other ships, we used them to shoot out light bulbs strung on the mast of the next ship. The OD on that ship really looked funny when the lights kept breaking.

After my two years in the Navy, I rejoined GE and worked in various jobs in several locations until 1964, when a friend and I started a manufacturer's representative business. This evolved into a small engineering firm, which has downsized to just myself and one of my sons. We sell air pollution equipment and fiberglass reinforced plastics products, such as tanks for corrosive service. One of our largest projects was supplying a fiberglass lighting arrester tower for a launch pad at Cape Canaveral. It is one of the large towers you see around the pad when you watch a launch.

I still do a little work for the company, but I try to play tennis every day with my octogenarian friends. My wife died 10 years ago, but I have a lady friend that lives two blocks away. I robbed the cradle, since she is only 72. We cruise a lot, but the food and accommodations are somewhat better than they were on the Rankin.. I was recently diagnosed with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. It hasn't progressed too far, and I'd love to hear from any former USS Rankin shipmates. My number in Birmingham, AL, is (205) 566-7373.

## ABOUT OUR SHIP



USS Rankin (AKA-103/LKA-103) was a Tolland-class attack cargo ship built during WWII by the North Carolina Shipbuilding Company of Wilmington, North Carolina. She was named after Rankin County, Mississippi.

Rankin's keel was laid on October 31, 1944. She was launched 52 days later and commissioned in Charleston, South Carolina on February 25, 1945. She joined the Pacific Fleet in April, participating for 17 days in the Battle of Okinawa. During her time there, she faced more than 100 kamikaze air raids. On June 28, she sailed for San Francisco. She was in Seattle when hostilities ended, and sailed for the Philippines.

Rankin took part in Operation Magic Carpet, repatriating U.S. soldiers who had been stationed in the Far East. She visited China and Japan during 1946 and early 1947. The ship was decommissioned in San Francisco in May 1947, and placed "in mothballs" at Suisun Bay, California.

Rankin was recommissioned in March, 1952 at the Todd Shipyard in Alameda, California. She transit-

ed the Panama Canal to join the Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet, and began a second career supporting amphibious training operations in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Caribbean.

In July 1958, she helped land 5,000 U.S. troops in Lebanon, helping to avoid a civil war. In November 1962, she was one of hundreds of ships responding to the Cuban Missile Crisis. In February 1963, she visited the Dominican Republic for the inauguration of President Juan Bosch, and in April, she patrolled for 31 days off the coast of Haiti until tensions eased in that country.

From 1956-1960, Rankin won an unprecedented five straight Battle Efficiency Awards, enabling her crew to wear a Gold E on their uniforms. In 1958, she simultaneously held every award available to an AKA.

USS Rankin was decommissioned in 1971, and in 1988 was sunk as a fishing and diving reef off the coast of Stuart, Florida. She rests on her starboard side at a depth of 130 feet.

## TO DO LIST

**1. Join us at this year's reunion in Harrisburg.** There are always lots of reasons not to go, but nobody who has ever gone to one has ever regretted it. There is comradeship, meeting shipmates and old and new friends, and seeing an interesting new city.

**2. If you like to play the lottery,** sign up for the USS Rankin Lottery Pool. \$25 gets you 52 chances at Powerball and Mega Millions jackpots that usually run into millions. You can see all the details at [ussrankin.org/lottery](http://ussrankin.org/lottery), or call Skip Sander at 412-367-1376.

**3. If you like cowboy and western music,** see [western100.com](http://western100.com), a really good site put together by our good friend Skip Skipson.



**Skip Sander**



**Skip Skipson**

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