

A newsletter exclusively for former USS YANCEY SAILORS

# YANCEY MEMORIES

Volume 7, Issue 2

April 2003

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS YANCEY AKA-93



### USS YANCEY 2003 REUNION

**OCTOBER 23-26**

**RADISSON  
BEACHFRONT  
HOTEL**

**CORPUS  
CHRISTI, TX**

Registration packets will be mailed out approximately 90 days prior to the reunion. Be sure to read it carefully to avoid paying for something you do not want. Keep your calendars clear for these dates!

### YANCEY HISTORY CONCLUDED

Meanwhile, a crisis was brewing in the Caribbean. American reconnaissance had disclosed the presence of Soviet offensive missiles on Cuban soil. Accordingly, on 23 October 1962, President Kennedy ordered a naval quarantine of Cuba to make sure that no more offensive weapons were taken to that island. Yancey supported the ensuing naval operations in waters near Cuba as the United States and the Soviet Union stood, in Secretary of State Dean Rusk's words, "eyeball to eyeball."

After the removal of the offensive missiles, tension relaxed, and

Yancey resumed her former routine of operations along the eastern seaboard and into the Caribbean. Over the next eight years, Yancey deployed regularly to the Mediterranean, where she joined in multilateral NATO exercises and supported the United States 6th Fleet's presence in that area of the world.

Once again, however, Yancey was called upon to perform her vital support duties during a time of crisis. In the early spring of 1965, she was on routine training mission when civil strife erupted into warfare in the turbulent Dominican Republic. Commander, Caribbean Sea Frontier, ordered the attack cargo

ship to proceed at once to the troubled area, just as she was preparing to enter San Juan harbor for liberty

On Friday, 30 April, the sixth day of the crisis, Yancey arrived off Santo Domingo, the strife-torn capital city. Incorporated into the Caribbean Force already on the scene, the attack cargo ship took on board 593 evacuees representing some 21 nations. Included in the group were the daughter of the United States ambassador, 16 nuns from the Dominican Order, and several seven- or eight person families. Among the 21 countries represented were Italy, France, Germany, Hun-

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gary, Colombia, Mexico, Chile, Switzerland, Canada, Lebanon, and the United States.

Upon their arrival on board the ship, the evacuees received information folders in Spanish and English, blankets, fresh fruit and milk, and various other items. In addition, nurseries, rest areas, information booths, infirmaries, and various other makeshift stations proliferated on board. Everything from baby bottles and diapers to canes and crutches were provided the people whose routine had been so unceremoniously uprooted by open warfare.

Women and children evacuees slept in the officers' and crews' quarters, respectively, while Yancey's men and the male evacuees slept "under the stars." Sacrifices made by the ship's company included missing a few meals to ensure that the embarked refugees had enough to eat and abstaining from showers in order to conserve water—despite the almost constant 100-degree temperatures during the day. Her crew worked nearly around the clock in order to care for the sick, injured, elderly, and the children. Highlighting the voyage back to San Juan, between 30 April and 1 May, was a birth—the ship's doctor, Lt. Ben Passmore, MC, delivered Stephen Yancey Paez, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Rodolfo Paez, at sea on 1 May. A ship-wide ceremony ensued, with a cake-cutting and the traditional passing out of cigars.

Representatives of the Red Cross; the Commander, Caribbean Sea Frontier; and several hundred relatives greeted Yancey's arrival at San Juan on 1 May, and the 594 evacuees (the new arrival included) disembarked swiftly. There was more work in store for the attack cargo ship; and, in response to urgent requests from the marines landed at Santo Domingo, the ship loaded hundreds of tons of gasoline, oil, and ammunition before she returned to the Dominican Republic.

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Soon after the ship's arrival back in Santo Domingo on 2 May, Yancey's sailors worked round-the-clock shifts getting the vitally needed material ashore to the marines. On the 3rd, the ship received 150 evacuees and, on the following day, an additional 300 more displaced persons came up the gangways. Again, the ship's crew responded, in her commander's words, "magnificently." Once again the ship inaugurated nurseries, infirmaries, "kiddie" watches, and other special arrangements to take care of her guests. Newspapers were printed in Spanish and English, and interpreters were constantly on duty and in demand. Although there were inconveniences to those civilians unaccustomed, as they were, to shipboard life, the evacuation itself was preferable to lying flat on the ground, listening to the whine of bullets overhead back in Santo Domingo.

Ultimately, Yancey disembarked the second contingent of refugees, having carried well over one-fourth of the total number of people evacuated from the Dominican Republic. She returned to Norfolk soon thereafter, soon to commence preparations for resumption of training and cruising off the eastern seaboard and into the Caribbean basin.

Toward the end of her career, Yancey made headlines. On 21 January 1970, Yancey, at anchor near one stretch of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel near Norfolk, dragged her anchors in a snowy gale and, driven by the winds that gusted up to 50 miles an hour, drifted inexorably toward the span. The collision between the attack cargo ship and the bridge put the later out of service "for at least three weeks." The Navy started up a free shuttle service for commuters that normally utilized the bridge-tunnel, using helicopters and LCUs. Fortunately, there were no vehicles on the bridge, and no one was injured.

Subsequently, Yancey deployed once more to the Mediterranean in the spring of 1970. She returned to

the United States that summer and entered inactive status at Norfolk on 1 October of that year. Placed out of commission, in reserve, there on 20 January 1971, Yancey was towed to the James River berthing area for the National Defense Reserve Fleet on 18 March 1971. She remained there until her name was struck from the Navy list sometime between 1 October and 31 December 1971. Presumably she was sold for scrap. (She was sold to the State of North Carolina and sunk as an artificial reef in 1990.)

Yancey earned two battle stars for her operations in World War II and three for her Korean service.

*Submitted by Goerge Rohrman*

**A NEWSLETTER EXCLUSIVELY FOR  
FORMER USS YANCEY SAILORS**

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*"Our Reunions Work So You don't Have To"*

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

Balance remaining after 01/03 issue  
**\$171.44+\$27.99 refund=\$199.43**

Funds received since 01/03 issue  
**\$399.00**

Funds available for 04/03 issue  
**\$598.43**

Funds expended for 04/03 issue  
**\$194.47**

Remaining balance **\$403.96**

**Thank you for the generous contributions since the last issue.**



## WELCOME MAT

The following shipmates have been located since the last newsletter. Welcome Aboard! We hope to see you at the next reunion. You are invited to become an active member of the association.

*Paul Smith, Jr. EM3 E Div  
9 Countryside Dr  
Essex Junction, VT 05452-4352  
802-879-0777  
phsmithjr@att.net*

*Michael Steinberg  
1144 Q St  
Newman, CA 95360  
209-862-4014  
mcsteiny@ixpres.com*



## TAPS

The Yancey Memories was notified of the following shipmate's death. Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family of the deceased. Anyone who knows of a deceased shipmate, or learns of one, please notify ML & RS, Inc so their names can be included in TAPS and be added to the Honor Roll.

*James Dale Foster  
(1944-45) BM2/c 3rd Div  
Date of death not known*



## MAIL CALL

From your coordinator:

After receiving the latest roster, I was happy to see some new and familiar names of shipmates that were aboard with me in the early 60s. Now that the dates are finalized I hope you all make an effort to attend this year's reunion in Corpus Christi. It would be great to see you all again after all these years and I guarantee we always have a good time.

George Clifton, QM2 12/63 to 6/67

## A VETERAN DIED TODAY

He was getting old and paunchy  
and his hair was falling out,  
and he sat around the Legion,  
telling stories of the past.  
Of a war that he had fought in  
and the deeds that he had done.  
In his exploits with his buddies:  
they were heroes, everyone.  
And 'tho sometimes, to his neighbors,  
his tales became a joke,  
all his buddies listened,  
they knew where of he spoke.  
But we'll hear his tales no longer,  
for ole' Bob has passed away,  
and the world's a little poorer,  
for a VETERAN died today.  
When politicians leave this earth,  
their bodies lie in state,  
while thousands note their passing  
and proclaim that they were great.  
Papers tell of their life stories,  
from the time that they were young,  
but the passing of a VETERAN  
goes unnoticed, and unsung.  
Is the greatest contribution,  
to the welfare of our land,  
some jerk who breaks his promise  
and cons his fellow man?  
Or the ordinary fellow,  
who in times of war and strife,  
goes off to serve his country

and offers up his life?  
The politician's stipend and  
the style in which he lives,  
are sometimes disproportionate,  
to the service he gives.  
While the ordinary VETERAN,  
who offered up his all,  
is paid off with a medal  
and perhaps a pension, small.  
It's so easy to forget them,  
for it is so long ago,  
that our Bobs & Jims & Johnnys,  
went to battle, but we know.  
It was not the politicians,  
with their compromise and ploys,  
who won for us the freedom  
that our country now enjoys.  
Should you find yourself in danger,  
with your enemies at hand,  
would you really want some cop-out,  
with his ever-waffling stand?  
Or would you want a VETERAN,  
who has sworn to defend,  
his home, his kin, and country,  
and would fight until the end?  
He was just a common VETERAN,  
and his ranks are growing thin,  
but his presence should remind us,  
we may need his likes again.  
For when countries are in conflict,  
then we find the military's part,  
is to clean up all the troubles  
that the politicians start.  
If we cannot do him honor,  
while he's here to hear the praise,  
then at least let's give him homage,  
at the ending of his days.  
Perhaps just a simple headline  
in the paper that might say:  
"OUR COUNTRY IS IN MOURNING,  
FOR A VETERAN DIED TODAY."

## YOUR STORIES NEEDED

We need some more of your great stories for the newsletter. Those of you who have never written in, please let us hear from you. We've had great stories in the past about your most memorable character, your first time on board a ship and many more. **Please tell us your story.** Everyone has one!

## FROM A MILITARY DOCTOR

I am a doctor specializing in Emergency Medicine in the Emergency Departments of the only two military Level-One-trauma centers. They are both in San Antonio, TX, and they care for civilian emergencies as well as military personnel.

San Antonio has the largest military retiree population in the world living here because of the location of these two large military medical centers.

As a military doctor, in training for my specialty, I work long hours and the pay is less than glamorous. One tends to become jaded by the long hours, lack of sleep, food, family contact and the endless parade of human suffering passing before you. The arrival of another ambulance does not mean more pay, only more work. Most often the victim is from a motor vehicle crash. Often it is a person of dubious character who has been shot or stabbed. With our large military retiree population, it is often a nursing home patient. Even with my enlisted service and minimal combat experience in Panama, prior to medical school, I have caught myself groaning when the ambulance brought in yet another sick, elderly person from one of the local retirement centers that cater to military retirees.

I had not stopped to think of what citizens of this age group represented. I saw "Saving Private Ryan." I was touched deeply. Not so much by the carnage in the first 30 minutes, but by the sacrifices of so many. I was touched most by the scene of the elderly survivor at the graveside, asking his wife if he'd been a good man. I realized that I had seen these same men and women coming through my Emergency Department and had not realized what magnificent sacrifices they had made. The things they did for me and everyone else that has lived on this planet since the end of that conflict are priceless.

Situation permitting, I now try to

ask my patients about their experiences. They would never bring up the subject without inquiry. I have been privileged to an amazing array of experiences, recounted in the brief minutes allowed in the Emergency Dept. encounter. These experiences have revealed the incredible individuals I have had the honor of serving in a medical capacity, many on their last admission to the hospital.

There was a frail, elderly woman who reassured my young enlisted medic, trying to start an IV line in her arm. She remained calm and poised, despite her illness and the multiple needle sticks into her fragile veins. She was what we call a "hard stick." As the medic made another attempt, I noticed a number tattooed across her forearm. I touched it with one finger and looked into her eyes. She simply said, "Auschwitz." Many of later generations would have loudly and openly berated the young medic in his many attempts. How different was the response from this person who'd seen unspeakable suffering.

Also, there was this long retired Colonel, who as a young officer had parachuted from his burning plane over a Pacific Island held by the Japanese. Now an octogenarian, his head cut in a fall at home where he lived alone. His CT scan and suturing had been delayed until after midnight by the usual parade of high priority ambulance patients. Still spry for his age, he asked to use the phone to call a taxi to take him home, then he realized his ambulance had brought him without his wallet. He asked if he could use the phone to make a long distance call to his daughter who lived 7 miles away. With great pride we told him that he could not, as he'd done enough for his country, and the least we could do was get him a taxi home, even if we had to pay for it ourselves. My only regret is that my shift wouldn't end for several hours, and I couldn't drive him myself.

I was there the night MSgt. Roy Benavidez came through the Emergency Dept. for the last time. He was very sick. I was not the doctor taking care of him, but I walked to his bedside and took his hand. I said nothing.

He was so sick, he didn't know I was there. I'd read his Congressional Medal of Honor citation and wanted to shake his hand. He died a few days later.

The gentleman who served with Merrill's Marauders, the survivor of the Bataan Death March, the survivor of Omaha Beach, the 101-year old World War I veteran, the former POW held in frozen North Korea, the former Special Forces medic—now with non-operable liver cancer, the former Viet Nam Corps Commander. I remember these citizens. I may still groan when yet another ambulance comes in, but now I am much more aware of what an honor it is to serve these particular men and women. I am angered at the cut backs, implemented and proposed, that will continue to decay their meager retirement benefits. I see the President and Congress who would turn their back on these individuals, who've sacrificed so much to protect our liberty. I see later generations that seem to be totally engrossed in abusing these same liberties, won with such sacrifice. It has become my personal endeavor to make the nurses and young enlisted medics aware of these amazing individuals when I encounter them in our Emergency Dept. Their response to these particular citizens has made me think that perhaps all is not lost in the next generation. My experiences have solidified my belief that we are losing an incredible generation, and this nation knows not what it is losing. Our uncaring government and ungrateful civilian populace should all take note. We should all remember that we must "Earn this."

Written by CPT. Stephen R. Ellison, MD

## USELESS TIDBIT

The glue on an Israeli postage stamp is certified kosher. In the U. S., the glue on each stamp had about one-tenth of one calorie.