

A newsletter exclusively for former USS YANCEY SAILORS

# YANCEY MEMORIES

Volume 11, Issue 1

April 2007

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS YANCEY AKA-93



### Special Points of Interest

- **Learn about the county in North Carolina for which the USS Yancey was named. See the cover story.**
- **George Rohrman sent in some comments taken from the Korean War Project on the internet. See what others have to say about the Yancey on page three.**
- **Read about the USS Yancey badge on page four.**
- **You'll get a laugh out of "Words of Wisdom" on page four.**
- **Ken Groom contributes two stories, one about the Albatross and the other about the road to Sasebo. See page five.**
- **Do you still have your Peacoat? See page 6.**

## USS YANCEY NAMED FOR YANCEY COUNTY, NC

Established in 1833, Yancey County was named for a distinguished statesman, Bartlett Yancey, who served in the U.S. Congress from 1813 to 1817. He became speaker of the North Carolina Senate in 1817 and held that position until 1827. During his tenure as a legislator, Yancey helped to create an educational fund that would support the state's public school system. Adding to his legacy, and giving him a place in this region's history, was his involvement in the process of establishing the county that now bears his name. This state leader died in 1828, but the rugged, picturesque county of Yancey continues to preserve his memory.

After Yancey's death, establishment of the

county was made possible through the efforts of Captain Otway Burns. Captain Burns was the commander of the merchant ship Snap Dragon during the War of 1812. He became one of the best-known privateers of that war, capturing several valuable British cargoes along the Atlantic coastline. After this naval hero became a state legislator, he continued the efforts begun by Yancey and cast the deciding vote that created the county. In 1834, the county seat of Burnsville was established, honoring the name of Captain Burns. In 1909, the captain's grandson, Walter Francis Burns, Sr., contributed a statue of the statesman with the inscription, "He Guarded Well Our Seas, Let Our Mountains Honor Him." The 6-foot copper statue has become

a treasured landmark on the Burnsville Town Square.

The McElroy House, which is now the Rush Wray Museum of Yancey County History, was built around 1840 and served as the headquarters for the Home Guard for much of western North Carolina during the Civil War. The Chamber of Commerce currently operates the Visitor's Center in a restored service station on West Main Street below the Museum. Joint efforts of the Yancey History Association and the Chamber of Commerce have preserved and restored these properties, and this valuable regional historic site now serves residents, visitors and businesses alike. Numerous buildings throughout the county have been listed on

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the National Register of Historic Places. Perhaps the oldest of these is Burnsville's first inn, a two-story log trading post and stagecoach stop in 1833. Once known as the Ray Hotel, the inn has changed ownership several times over the years. In 1918, the structure was bought and renovated by William B. and Julia Wray, creating what is now called the Nu-Wray Inn. Prominently located on the Town Square, the lodge still offers guests genuine hospitality and hearty meals. Nearby stands a two-story concrete structure which served as the county courthouse when it was built in 1908 and now serves as a renovated town hall and police department.

The town's library, formerly occupied by two banks, is also listed on the National Register. The Burnsville Woman's Club established the library in the late 1930s. The county's first church on record was the Cane River Baptist Church. The first bank in the county was called the Bank of Yancey and was established in 1905. The CC&O Railroad began serving the area in 1901.

The county's original newspaper was The Black Mountain Eagle, first printed in 1896. Today's newspaper, The Yancey Common Times Journal, was first published in 1993 and is the result of a merger between The Yancey Journal and The Common Times.

History plays a significant role in Yancey County, as the citizens of Yancey County continue to preserve not only the original architecture of the past, but the legacies of their founding fathers, too. Through storytelling, original crafts and cultural events, traditions and heritage never cease to be celebrated.

Submitted by George Rohrman



## TAPS

The Yancey Memories was notified of the following shipmates' deaths. Our deepest sympathy is extended to the families 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.

**Paul David Yancey, Sr**  
(1964-68) BM E3  
Died January 5, 2007

**L.W. Farley**  
(1944-47) GM2  
Died 2006

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Balance after 01/07	<b>\$624.92*</b>
Funds received since 01/07	<b>\$45.00</b>
Funds available for 04/07	<b>\$669.92</b>
Funds expended for 04/07	<b>\$88.59</b>
Balance for 07/07	<b>\$581.33</b>

**The newsletter is being mailed only to those who returned the coupon for USPS service. All others can access the newsletter on line at [www.mlrsinc.com/yancey](http://www.mlrsinc.com/yancey).**

**\*The Funds Expended for the 01/07 issue of the newsletter was mistakenly printed as \$22.37 in the last issue. It should have been \$57.17. The corrected figures are in this issue of the Financial Report above.**

## STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The YANCEY MEMORIES is the official publication of the USS YANCEY AKA-93 Association. From now on it will be published quarterly in January, April, July, and October, *subject to receiving sufficient funding*. The Newsletter is funded by voluntary contributions from the membership. All members are encouraged to support the voice of the YANCEY. A financial statement appears in each issue of the newsletter.

The newsletter is intended to be a vehicle for the members to express opinions, make suggestions and especially share experiences.

Unless otherwise stated, the views and opinions printed in the newsletter are those of the article's writer, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Association leadership or the Editor of the Newsletter.

All letters and stories submitted will be considered for publication, except unsigned letters will not be published. Letters requesting the writer's name be withheld will be honored, but published on a space available basis. Signed letters with no restrictions will be given priority.

Letters demeaning to another shipmate will not be printed; letters espousing a political position will not be printed.

ML&RS, Inc. is not responsible for the accuracy of article submitted for publication. It would be a monumental task to check each story. Therefore, we rely on the submitter to research each article.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space and grammar limitations.

You are encouraged to actively participate in the newsletter family, by submitting your stories and suggestions.

**Thank you to all who responded to the request for stories for this issue. We are always in need of material for the newsletter, so even if you didn't have a story this time, please consider submitting one for a future issue. This newsletter is dependent upon your input, and without it we have no newsletter.**



## MAIL CALL

Yancey Memories,

My father, Paul David Yancey, Sr., has just passed away on January 5, 2007. He served on the USS Yancey during 1964-1968. I just submitted profile information on your reunion website in hopes that you might remember him at your next reunion. I'm sorry that I don't have many details on his service record...rank/rate, etc. All I know is that he was a Boatswain's Mate and the years that he was on the ship. Please let me know if you have any questions. Also let me know if you can find and share any information about my father's time on the USS Yancey. I am working on a memory book about him and I would love to include this information. I don't know how interactive your website or processes can be, but feel free to share my e-mail address with anyone who might be able to share a memory of him with me.

I noted in the profile that I submitted on the reunion site that his obituary can be seen at this address in the Xenia Daily Gazette: <http://www.xeniagazette.com/main.asp?SectionID=4&SubSectionID=10&ArticleID=153632&TM=46267.39>.

Thank you,  
Jennifer Cessna  
510 Forecastle Ct  
Crosby, TX 77532  
[Jennifer.cessna@accenture.com](mailto:Jennifer.cessna@accenture.com)

Dear Veterans and Friends of Those Who Served on the US Navy Attack Cargo Ships:

I am the author of the recently released book *Combat Loaded: Across the Pacific on the USS Tate*. The *Tate* (AKA-70) was a World War II attack cargo ship that saw significant action in the final stages of the Pacific War during the Okinawa campaign. This book was written to be not just a ship's his-

tory, but a representative history of all the front-line amphibious transports in World War II. It is my hope that this book will have a broad appeal to all veterans of the amphibious fleet, their descendents and anyone else who can appreciate the unsung service of the US Navy's gator freighters. Attached are links for my personal web page as well as the publisher's web page.

<http://myweb.cableone.net/crewfamily/default.htm>

<http://www.tamu.edu/upress/BOOKS/2007/crew.htm>

Please take the time to view them and pass this information on to anyone else you might think would be interested. I would be honored to reply to any inquiries you might have on this subject.

Respectfully,  
Tom Crew  
Long Beach, Mississippi

## COMMENTS FROM THE KOREAN WAR PROJECT

[www.koreanwar.org/html/units/navy/uss\\_yancey.htm](http://www.koreanwar.org/html/units/navy/uss_yancey.htm)

Ernie Wilson wrote on 2002-03-03

"I was on the Yancey from March '52 to Sept '52. I worked with several Electricians on the ship and had many friends from Company 270 out of San Diego. I was the 6th Squad leader. Would love to hear from any one in my company or that served aboard the Yancey during that time. I know that some have died that lived around me in Cincinnati or near by. Thanks for the information. It was a good time serving with those guys. May God bless you and yours during these trying days.

Shipmates forever,  
Ernie Wilson"

George Rohrman wrote on 2006-01-01

"Looking back fondly—it was a great ship and had a fine crew. The Navy was a learning experience that has been helpful to me throughout my life. I was aboard the Yancey from 1951 until 1954 and made 12 trips across the Pacific from the ship's homeport of Oakland, CA to Japan, Korea, Philippines, Hawaii and other ports in California. I did welding and sheet metal work. If you broke it—we had to fix it."

Dawn LeFebvre wrote on 2005-05-05

"My dad, Dean LeFebvre, served in the early 50s on the USS Yancey. Does anyone remember him? He passed away 2 years ago, but was always so proud to serve on this ship."

Joe Pergola wrote on 2003-09-16

"Help! What were we carrying in a forward compartment near #2 hole? A marine platoon guarded the area in route to Sasebo, Japan in 1953."

Rick Chester wrote on 2000-05-22

"The Yancey (AKA-93) was involved in the Korean War. My father was on her during the second World War. We have been (my dad, and my wife and my mother) to reunions with the shipmates. If you have any photographs of Korea that I could show to the shipmates, I would be very happy to pay anything for them."

Mary Grey wrote on 2007-01-21

"I was just wondering if anyone remembers my dad, Commander George S. Grey. He served on the USS Yancey until it was decommissioned in San Diego in the late 50s, early 60s. Anyone who remembers him I would be happy to hear from you."

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Roycle Gardner wrote on 2002-05-03

“This is to inform those who served with him that Dempsey Lee Gardner died on August 23, 2001. He was 66 years old. He was 20 when he served aboard the USS Yancey (about 1955). He is missed very much and will always be remembered. I am his grandson.”

*If you would like to reply to any of these messages, go to the web-site listed in the title box at the beginning of this article.*

## USS YANCEY BADGE

The USS Yancey badge is something special. I started researching the origin of the badge years ago. I decided to draw a patch of the badge to give to everyone at the reunion. Chief Way gave me a plaque of the badge and I went on line looking for the original badge. What I found the first time around was what I thought was an alligator, an eagle, and some anchors. However, I was wrong. It looked like they were part of South America. NOW I know differently. I believe the badge is from Iwo Jima. It is not South America, but rather the island is Iwo Jima, (which I have now visited twice) and the eagle repre-

sents the might of America. The alligator represents the gator navy that served Red Beach One and Two during the invasion. The anchors represent “pure” navy. Chief Way has been so helpful with his information and trusting in me to do what is right in my recording history. I only hope I can do them the justice that they deserve. I plan to have new patches at the next reunion that are not only factual, but show my true love for the men that served on the Yancey.

Rick Chester

## THOUGHT OF THE DAY FROM TONY BLAIR

In case we find ourselves starting to believe all the anti-American sentiment and negativity, we should remember England’s Prime Minister Tony Blair’s words during a recent interview. When asked by one of his parliament members why he believes so much in America he said, “A simple way to take measure of a country is to look at how many want in and how many want out. Only two defining forces have ever offered to die for you:

1. Jesus Christ
2. The American G.I.

One died for your soul, the other for your freedom.”

## WORDS OF WISDOM SUBMITTED BY GEORGE ROHRMAN

I remember my days aboard the USS Yancey with great pleasure. There was the story about the “sticky buns” and the ship’s baker. It turns out that Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.

After all—Ambition is a poor excuse for not having enough sense to be lazy.

If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.

Hey—who is this General Failure and why is he reading my hard disk?

How can you tell when you run out of invisible ink?

I have finally become an Adult—a person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle.

I always eat food from the four major food groups—sugar, salt, grease and alcohol.

I practice safe eating—I always use condiments.

I eat a balanced diet—a cookie in each hand.

Southern hospitality is more about Bar B Qing pork than serving tea.

Politicians and baby diapers

have a lot in common.

I do not approve of political jokes—too many of them get elected.

My grandmother started walking five miles a day when she was 60 and now we do not know where the hell she is.

I do not exercise because it makes the ice jump out of my glass.

I joined a health club last year and spent 400 bucks but haven’t lost a pound—apparently you actually have to go there.

Experience is a wonderful thing—it enables you to recognize a mistake when you make it again.

A sure fire way to double your money is to fold it over and put it in your pocket—Will Rogers.

Money can not bring happiness, but it sure makes misery a lot easier to live with.

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day—teach him how to fish and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

Experience is something that you don’t get until just after you need it.

My mind is like a steel trap—rusty and illegal in 37 states.

**2007 USS YANCEY REUNION**

**OCT. 11-14**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

**COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT HOTEL**

## THE ALBATROSS STALKS THE YANCEY

Most sailors know that Albatross like to follow ships. They swoop in on the stern of the ship and follow it looking for what food might be thrown over the fantail. When it is not meal time, they are following the currents that come off of the bow and like to let the air currents carry them up.

I can remember two incidents on the Yancey that involved the Albatross. An Albatross was following the air currents when I was near #4 hatch. A shipfitter noticed the bird and began to throw welding rods at it. This was observed by a Chief Corpsman who proceeded to chew the shipfitter out. The Chief thought it was bad luck. He must have thought about the poem most of us read in high school—"The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner." It seems that Mariner was telling this story to some landlubbers. In the story, his ship was blown to the South Pole where things grew very cold, then an Albatross started to follow the ship and it was thought that it brought fair weather along with it. The Mariner killed the bird

and the rest of the crew tied the bird around his neck for bringing bad luck that followed. The bad luck was when the sea became still with no wind. If that wasn't enough, the ship drifted north to the equator.

"Water, water, everywhere  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink."

After that things got worse until the Mariner repented. I can't say what happened to the shipfitter, but maybe he got his dues.

The second incident happened when someone heard a noise in the Port LCVP (landing craft). Some flapping around noise. It seems that the bird swooped a bit too low and got caught under the wire rope that was used to secure the LCVP. I don't remember any bad luck after that, so we may assume that someone released the Albatross.

Submitted by Ken Groom  
Yancey Historian

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## MEMORIAL DAY

Congress and President Lyndon B. Johnson declared Waterloo, N.Y. the "birthplace" of Memorial Day. There, a ceremony on May 5, 1866, honored local veterans who had fought in the Civil War. Businesses closed and residents flew flags at half-staff.

By the end of the 19th century, Memorial Day ceremonies were being held on May 30 throughout the nation. State legislatures passed proclamations designating the day, and the Army and Navy adopted regulations for proper observance at their facilities.

It was not until after World War I, however, that the day was expanded to honor those who have died in all American wars. In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday by an act of Congress, though it is still often called Decoration Day. It was then also placed on the last Monday in May, as were some other federal holidays.

To ensure the sacrifices of America's fallen heroes are never forgotten, in December 2000, the U.S. Congress passed and the president signed into law "The National Moment of Remembrance Act," P.L. 106-579, creating the White House Commission on the National Moment of Remembrance. The commission's charter is to "encourage the people of the United States to give something back to their country, which provides them so much freedom and opportunity." The National Moment of Remembrance encourages all Americans to pause wherever they are at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day for a minute of silence to remember and honor those who have died in service to the nation. As Moment of Remembrance founder Carmella LaSpada states, "It's a way we can all help put the memorial back in Memorial Day."

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## THE ROAD TO SASEBO

From Item Basin, where Yancey docked, the road to Sasebo was about two miles. In good weather most sailors just walked. It was a tree lined and curved road that crossed a river when it began to rain. The rain was so heavy, at times, that my white hat was filled to the brim with water dripping down my nose.

In cold weather, the Japanese would sometimes have a group of three wheeled cycles (rickshaws) with covered top. These were austere vehicles to say the least. The wheels were bicycle wheels and only the passenger section was covered with a flexible top. Seating was for two passengers. The rick-

shaw man usually offered a price for the trip and also showed how strong his legs were so that we could be assured a fast trip. In front of our feet was a #10 can with the top removed. The can most likely came from some Navy dump. In this can was some smoldering charcoal. A canvas flap was thrown over the passengers and the "heater" so the ride was more comfortable.

Somewhere I have a photo of this road, but I can't find it right now.

Ken Groom  
Yancey Historian

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## PEACOATS

You remember them as those ton and a half monsters that took the annual production of thirty-five sheep to make. Those thick black rascals with black plastic buttons the size of poker chips. The issue coats that drove shore duty chief petty officers stark raving nuts if they caught you with the collar turned up or your gahdam hands in your pockets.

"Hey, you rubber sock, get those gahdam hands outta them damn pockets! Didn't they issue you leather gloves?"

So, you took your hands out of your pockets and risked digital frost-bite rather than face whatever the Navy had in store for violators of the "No Gahdam Hands In Peacoat Pockets" policy. There's probably a special barracks in Hell full of old E-3s caught hitchhiking in sub-zero weather with hands in peacoat pockets.

As for those leather gloves, one glove always went missing.

"Son, where in th' hell are the gloves we issued you?"

We??? I don't remember this nasty, ugly bastard at Great Lakes when the "jocks and socks" petty officers were throwing my initial issue seabag at me and yelling, "Move it!"

As for the gloves, once you inadvertently leave one glove on a whorehouse night table or on the seat of a Greyhound bus, the remaining glove is only useful if a tank rolls over the hand that fit the lost glove.

In the days long ago, a navy spec peacoat weighed about the same as a flatcar load of cinder blocks. When it rained, it absorbed water until your spine warped, your shins crackled and your ankles split. Five minutes standing in the rain waiting on a bus and you felt like you were piggybacking the Statue of Liberty.

When a peacoat got wet, it smelled a lot like sheep dip. It had that wet wool smell, times three. It weighed three and a half tons and smelled like "Mary had a little

lamb's" gym shorts.

You know how damn heavy a late '50's peacoat was? Well, they had little metal chains sewn in the back of the collar to hang them up by. Like diluted navy coffee, sexual sensitivity instruction, comfortable air-conditioned topside security bungalows, patent leather plastic-looking shoes and wearing raghats configured to look like bidet bowls, the peacoat spec has been watered down to the point you could hang them up with dental floss. In the old days, peacoat buttons and grocery cart wheels were interchangeable parts. The gear issued by the U.S. Navy was tough as hell, bluejacket-tested clothing with the durability of rhino hide and construction equipment tires.

Peacoats came with wide, heavy collars. In a cold, hard wind, you could turn that wide collar up to cover your neck and it was like poking your head in a tank turret.

The things were warm, but I never thought they were long enough. Standing out in the wind in those "big-legged britches" (bell bottoms), the wind whistled up your cuffs and took away body warmth like a thief. But, they were perfect to pull over you for a blanket when sleeping on a bus or a bus terminal bench.

Every sailor remembers stretching out on one of those oak bus station pews with his raghat over his face, his head up against his AWOL bag and covered with his peacoat. There was always some "SP" who had not fully evolved from apehood, who poked you with his Billy bat and said, "Hey YOU!! Get up! Wad-dya think yer doin? You wanna sleep, get a gahdam room!"

Peacoats were lined with quilted satin or rayon. I never realized it at the time, but sleeping on bus seats and station benches would be the closest I would ever come to sleeping on satin sheets.

Early in my naval career, a career-hardened (lifer) first class gunner's mate told me to put my ID and liberty card in the inside pocket of my peacoat.

"Put the sonuvabitches in that gahdam inside pocket and pin the damn thing closed with a diaper pin. Then, take your heavy folding money and put it in your sock. If you do that, learn to never take your socks off in a cathouse. Them damn dockside pickpockets pat 'cha down for a lumpy wallet and they can relieve you of said wallet so fast you'll never know you've been snookered.

"Only a dumb ass idiot will clam-fold his wallet and tuck it in his thirteen button bellbottoms. Every kid above the age of six in Italy knows how to lift a wallet an idiot pokes in his pants. Those little bastards learned to pick sailors' pockets in kindergarten.

"Rolling bluejackets is the national sport in Italy."

In Washington, DC, they have a wonderful marble and granite plaza honoring the United States Navy. Every man or woman who served this nation in a naval uniform, owes it to himself or herself to visit this memorial and take their families. It honors all naval service and any red-blooded American bluejacket or officer will feel the gentle warmth of pride his or her service is honored within this truly magical place. The focal point of this memorial is a bronze statue of a lone American sailor. No crow on his sleeve tells you that he is non-rated. And, there are further indications that suggest maybe, once upon a time, the sculptor himself may have once been an E-3 raghat. The lad has his collar turned up and his hands in his pockets. I'm sure the Goddess of the Main Induction nearly wets her panties laughing at the old, crusty chiefs standing there with veins popping out of their old, I wrinkled necks, muttering, "Look at that idiot sonuvabitch standing there with his collar up and his gahdam hands in his pockets. In my day, I would have ripped that jerk a new one!"

Ah, the satisfied glow of E-3 revenge.

Peacoats...One of God's better inventions.