

A newsletter exclusively for former USS YANCEY SAILORS

YANCEY MEMORIES

Volume 11, Issue 2

July 2007

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS YANCEY AKA-93



Special Points of Interest

- **Memories of the Korean War** written by George G. Dawson Wantagh are our cover story for this issue.
- Jay Lose shares a memory from his days on Yancey. See Mail Call on page three. Please follow his lead and send us your memories.
- George Rohrman has more words of wisdom on page three.
- George Clifton's Coordinator's Column has some information about the 2007 reunion. See page three.
- If you were part of Operation High Jump, we'd love to hear from you. Read the article on page four and let us know more about this subject.
- ML&RS, Inc wants your reunion memories. See why on page four.

KOREAN WAR VET REMEMBERS THE YANCEY

Taken from "Korean War Educator"

www.koreanwar-educator.org/memoirs/
*Edited to include stories pertaining to the Yancey and not personal notes of the author who is **George G. Dawson Wantagh**, New York- Korean War Veteran of the United States Navy*

As a radioman first class, I was assigned to the crew of an attack cargo vessel (the Yancey) which was designed to carry troops, vehicles, equipment, and supplies to the war zone. The ship carried several smaller landing boats that could carry men, equipment, or materials ashore to support an invasion or any other combat operation. See the cover of the August 2006 issue of Mili-

tary magazine. The ship depicted there is an AKA, and is exactly the same as the USS Yancey. We carried cargo of all kinds--from toilet paper to motor vehicles. The ports we visited in Japan were Sasebo and Yokosuka. Most often it was Sasebo. In Korea we visited Pusan and Inchon. We were allowed to go ashore in Pusan, but not in Inchon. There wasn't much of interest in Pusan. It seemed to be a rather poor and shabby city, much affected by the poverty that goes with war. We went back and forth between Oakland, California (our home port) and Japan or Korea. I think we made about five such trips during my year on the Yancey.

The most comical complaint that I ever heard about ship's food was on the USS Yancey. Some

joker got on the "bitch box" (loudspeaker) and yelled, "Now hear this. The chicken with today's duty get down to the galley and swim in the soup!"

A wide variety of things happened during my tour of duty on the USS Yancey. Once while I was taking a shower on the Yancey, the fire alarm sounded. Being in the nude and soaking wet, I couldn't get to my fire station (the emergency radio room) and was scolded for not being there. The fire was put out rather quickly. It seemed that someone left some oily rags in one of the empty holds and that spontaneous combustion ignited them. There were also some episodes in which some guys needed psychiatric care. The most unusual case was that of a

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Chief Pharmacist Mate. He was a grouchy man, and when sailors came to him with complaints, he had a tendency to think that they were mentally ill. He sent so many men to the psychiatrists in a base hospital that they began to think something might be wrong with him! Indeed, that turned out to be the case.

There were times when some guys did seem to "lose it." One guy who seemed to be in perfectly good health mentally and physically went wild one time. He put his head down and ran full speed into the metal bulkhead, doing some serious damage to his head.

As for my injuries, if they were minor I tended to them myself rather than go to the pharmacist mates. For example, once I cut my hand when my jack knife slipped. Another time while getting off of a landing craft and stepping ashore, something hit my right shin. It was very painful, but I tended to it myself as I realized it was only a flesh wound and that my shin bone was not broken. I was hospitalized four or five times for respiratory problems.

Rough seas didn't bother me very much. In my nearly nine years in the Navy, I had crossed both the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans many times in all kinds of weather. Furthermore, I had grown up on Shelter Island and had survived some severe storms, including the great hurricane of 1938. But one trip on the USS Yancey nearly did me in. On that trip, I experienced one of the most frightening events of my life. While operating in the areas around Japan and Korea during the Korean War, we encountered a typhoon. The weather was bad when we started and got worse day by day. The sea was very rough, and the ship rocked and rolled violently. At first we got a lot of laughs out of it as coffee cups and trays went sliding down the mess tables crashing on the deck, and as men went slipping and falling all over the place. Eventually,

however, the cooks decided that it was impossible to prepare hot meals safely, so they fed us sandwiches of cold cuts. Coffee was not served because the mugs slid off the table.

After repairs we went back to our usual routing of sailing from Oakland to Japan or Korea and back. A number of changes were made, but I can remember only those affecting me.

As everyone probably has heard, sailors are fighters. They will fight any enemy of the United States, first and foremost. But when there is no foreign foe to fight, they will often fight someone else. Civilians who insult or disparage the Navy are legitimate targets for bare knuckles. Members of other United States services who consider themselves superior to "swab jockeys" are bound to ignite the wrath of the men in Navy blue. Unfortunately, however, sailors too often fight one another. Such a fight was about to take place one day when the USS Yancey was in the Japanese port of Sasebo during the Korean War. There were many ships in the harbor. My friend and I were returning from liberty and were waiting for a boat from the Yancey to come. Dozens of sailors from other ships were also awaiting their boats. Many were drunk. Two other Yancey crew members approached us and said, "Aren't you guys from the Yancey?" When we replied that we were, they told us that they were being ridiculed by some sailors from another ship, that they were badly outnumbered, and asked if we were willing to help if the situation turned violent. We immediately agreed, even though we didn't know these men very well and didn't know what the argument was about. It is an unwritten law of Navy men that one stands by a shipmate, come hell or high water. We all approached the gang of hecklers, who were from a "ship of the line." They considered auxiliary vessels to be inferior. Obviously, they did not realize that the Yancey and many other auxiliaries had served nobly at Iwo Jima and

Okinawa. It seemed to me that a rational argument would have no effect on the attitudes of our adversaries. It would do no good to remind them that many auxiliaries had been torpedoed, bombed, and shelled, and that many sailors lost their lives while keeping the fleet supplied with food, fuel, ammunition, etc. Perhaps a bit of humor would defuse the situation. As our tormentors glared at us, I commented, "Look. The Yancey has arrived from the States carrying tons of toilet paper. If it wasn't for the Yancey, you guys wouldn't be able to wipe your asses." Everyone laughed, we shook hands all around, and returned to our ships with our noses intact and our knuckles un-bruised.

When in port I went to restaurants with other sailors, went to shows, concerts and museums, and did a bit of drinking once in a while. (I am not a great drinker, however.) While we were in our home port of Oakland, which was next door to San Francisco, there was plenty to do while on liberty. The San Francisco symphony, plays, and movies provided much pleasure. There was a small art gallery somewhere there that I always went to because they had a painting by Van Gogh that is rarely seen in any of the art books. It is a painting of a farmer kneeling in his garden while his wife is bringing their little girl out to him. He has his arms extended to catch her as she toddles toward him. It is a very touching painting--my favorite of all Van Gogh works.

I was relieved of my duty about one year after I had been recalled. I was not sad about leaving the Yancey because I was too elated at the prospect of being home with Shirley and getting back to my job as a radio operator at RCA Communications in New York City. I was in a Navy receiving station in or near San Francisco when I was about to be discharged. For the short time I was there, I read, played baseball with other sailors, went on liberty in San Francisco.



MAIL CALL

Yancey Memories,

I was onboard the Yancey from 1966 to 1970. I made HM1 while aboard her just before getting transferred.

I recall the time we were in Barcelona, Spain and I was assigned to Shore Patrol duty while there. I got really drunk the second or third night and was way late taking over the watch. Luckily the Chief I was to relieve was a nice guy and very understanding, or I could have ended up in the brig.

Jay Lose, HM1/Ret

MORE WORDS OF WISDOM FROM GEORGE ROHRMAN

- Beauty is in the eye of the beer holder.
- I used to have an open mind, but my brains kept falling out.
- Wear short sleeves—support your right to bare arms.
- Shin—a device for finding furniture in the dark.
- Tomorrow—one of the greatest labor saving devices of today.
- When I read about the evils of drinking, I gave up reading.
- My get up and go has got up and went.
- A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat.
- A hangover is the wrath of grapes.
- The only reason I would take up exercise is so that I could hear heavy breathing again.
- For every action there is an equal and opposite government program.
- By the time you make ends meet, they move the ends.

- If you must choose between two evils, pick the one that you have never tried before.
- My wild oats have turned into prunes and All Bran.
- It is harder to make a comeback when you have never been anywhere.
- There are two theories about arguing with women—neither of them work.
- Everyone seems normal till you get to know them.

Subject: The Power of Prayer

After starting a new diet, I altered my drive around town to avoid passing the Krispy Kreme Donut Shop. I accidentally drove by KK this morning and there in the window were a host of goodies. I felt this was no accident, so I prayed, "Lord, it's up to you. If you want me to have any of those delicious donuts, create a parking place for me directly in front of the bakery. And sure enough, He answered my prayer. On the eighth time around the parking lot, there it was!

Looking for a woman with a bass boat that can cook, clean house, do laundry, clean fish, cut bait, mow the lawn, do the shopping, wash the car and has a sense of humor. Please send a picture of the bass boat.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

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|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Balance after 04/07 | \$581.33 |
| Funds received since 04/07 | \$20.00 |
| Funds available for 07/07 | \$601.33 |
| Funds expended for 07/07 | \$119.04 |
| Balance for 10/07 | \$482.19 |

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.

COORDINATOR'S COLUMN

I hope everyone is enjoying the summer, but it's time to start thinking about the reunion in Washington, DC this October. It is important to note the date change from November to October. Many people requested this change for the various reasons stated in the January Newsletter. We had a large turnout and a great time at our 1999 reunion in Washington, DC and I look forward to the same or better this year.

By now everyone should have received their registration packet, however only 5 shipmates are registered to date. If you have not received it please contact ML&RS at 828-256-6008. I realize the reunion is 4 months off but I encourage you to register soon. ML&RS needs at least 15 responses before the reunion is official; which should not be a problem. However, once 15 registrations are received you will be able to view the attendees list on the web page. This is great information for those unsure of attending unless they know someone on the list. Or if the name of a shipmate is not on the list, give them a call.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and I look forward to seeing many of you in Washington.

George Clifton

A NEWSLETTER EXCLUSIVELY FOR FORMER USS YANCEY SAILORS

Military Locator & Reunion Service, Inc
PO Drawer 11399
Hickory, NC 28603

828-256-6008 (voice)
828-256-6559 (Fax)

Dinamlrs@charterinternet.com
Karenmlrs@charterinternet.com

www.mlrsinc.com

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

OPERATION HIGH JUMP

In 1947 a naval task force that included Admiral Nimitz, Admiral Krusen, and Admiral Byrd was sent to Antarctica. Some sources say it was a mission to find "coal deposits and other valuable resources", while others say it was training for possible war with the USSR in their sub-zero climate. The task force consisted of over 40 ships, including the USS Yancey as a supply ship. The expedition was filmed by the Navy and was made into a movie called *The Secret Land*.

Was Operation High Jump just a training mission or a pursuit for coal, or was there more to it than that? That question arose as I was researching Operation High Jump in order to get material for this issue of Yancey Memories. As I looked on the internet for information about the operation, I was fascinated by what I found! The more I read, the more engrossed I became by the story— underground Nazi (Aryan) bases, disappearing U-boats, 250,000 Germans unaccounted for after the war, "fallen angels", UFOs, Polar men, a region of Antarctica that is *not* frozen, the "suicide" of former Navy Secretary James Forrestal, the three missing hours of Admiral Byrd's plane flight! All these unbelievable things are mentioned in the story of Operation High Jump! Although too lengthy to print and probably mostly untrue, it is fascinating reading. I encourage you to go on the internet and look up "Operation High Jump" and read for yourself the stories there. Maybe someone can verify or deny some of the tales. I would love to hear more about this operation if any of you were involved. Contact me at karenmlrs@charterinternet.com or Karen Hoyle, PO Drawer 11399, Hickory, NC 28603.

Karen Hoyle
Editor, ML&RS, Inc

YOUR REUNION MEMORIES WANTED

Your annual reunions have been going on now for many years, and just like your shipboard days each reunion has created its own memories. Those memories need to be shared with everyone. Think back, what are some of your favorite reunion memories?

Before the 2008 reunion, we would like to publish a book of USS YANCEY reunion history and memories. We'll take care of the history part, but we need your help with the memories. Please take the time to think a little while and write down some of your favorite memories and send them to us. They don't have to be humorous, they can be nostalgic, sentimental, or whatever you remember best. If you can remember which reunion the memory occurred in, that would be great. To get you started, here are a couple memories (not necessarily from your ship) that we feel someone (if they are still living) will remember.

A Crewmember had borrowed \$20.00 from a shipmate, and one or the other left the ship before the money was repaid. When they saw each other at the reunion, the debt was paid (in public at the banquet no less).

Two former WW II POW's escaped from a POW Camp in Germany, became separated in the night and never knew what happened to the other – until the first reunion. Both survived and attended the first reunion – what a greeting when they first recognized each other.

A reservation got messed up and when a couple arrived at the reunion they had no room. The hotel was sold out so the hotel manager put up a bed in the "board room" to get them thru the night. (Hint, think Omaha)

A lady married to a shipmate discovered she and another shipmate had dated years ago. Then it gets complicated.

Two former Officers nearly got into a fight because they remembered the same incident so differently.

These kinds of memories are treasures – don't let them die. For this book we're not interested in what happened while you were in the military – just things you remember from the reunions. Each one of you that has ever attended a reunion has a memory. Please share it with us. Sending us the memory will also give your permission for us to use it in the book.

Again, please take a little time and think about the good times (or if you were unhappy about something) write them down and if you have e-mail send it to:

elainemlrs@charterinternet.com

If no e-mail you can either fax it to 828-256-6559 or mail it to:

ML & RS, Inc
ATTN: Elaine
PO Box 11399
Hickory, NC 28603

2007 USS YANCEY REUNION

OCT. 11-14

WASHINGTON, DC

COURTYARD BY MARRIOTT HOTEL