

# USS RANKIN NEWS

ISSUE #12 • THE NEWSLETTER OF THE USS RANKIN ASSOCIATION • DECEMBER 2008



A few scenes from our reunion in Stuart, Florida, October 30 to November 2, 2008...



All hands fall in to paint the anchor!



Frank's shoulder



Aboard the liberty boat



Halloween with the Rankin gators



Our leader



These guys were gators, too



Boarding the banquet limousine



Buddy's forearm



A distinguished mariner on liberty



## SHIPMATES ON PARADE

Denny Heenan started his Navy career via OCS after graduating from the University of Michigan. His first assignment was on the newly-recommissioned USS Rankin in 1952, where he served as boat officer and navigator.

Executive Board member Jill Breslau, then just a little kid, recalls him visiting her home with some of the other junior officers. She remembers her father, Max Breslau, then the Rankin's chief engineer, telling her about Denny's great talent for music.

One of his brother officers from those days remembers a 23-ship landing at Onslow Beach, NC. Denny was in charge of the Line Of Departure from H-Hour at 0600 until early afternoon, when he was relieved and returned to the ship. Things soon fell apart at the LOD, and the Admiral ordered Mr. Heenan back into the fray to get them straightened out.

Somebody must have seen some talent in the eager young officer, because his subsequent assignments included three ship commands and two Navy-sponsored scholarships, plus a tour at the Naval War College.

In the 1950s, Denny was Executive Officer of USS Courtney (DE-1021), then commanded by CAPT John Exum, who later commanded the Rankin and two other ships. John remembers him as the best exec he ever had.

Denny was C.O. of USS Joseph K. Taussig (DE-1030), USS Talbot (DEG-4), and USS Albany (CG-10). While on shore duty, he earned a M.S. in Management at the Navy Postgraduate School and a Ph.D. in Public Administration at American University. While at American, he had a fellowship at the Brookings Institution, where he was responsible for conducting seminars in federal government operations for senior business executives. He also led seminars on private enterprise for super-grade civil service personnel. Before retirement, he had numerous assignments in the Washington area.

After his discharge in 1977, Denny did consulting work in Navy planning for Vitro Laboratory and Matrix Corporation. Then he taught management subjects in the Graduate School at George Mason University. While on campus, he was appointed



**ENS Denny Heenan, USNR, 1952**



**CAPT R. Dennis Heenan, USN (Ret.), 2008**

Director of the Small Business Development Center for the State of Virginia.

He later moved to Florida and embarked on a new career as a musician. For many years he played keyboards at clubs and restaurants in Virginia and Florida.

In retirement, he lives in The Villages, Florida and Smith Mountain Lake, Virginia. His granddaughter is noted gymnast Katie Heenan (you can find her on the Internet).

## SHIPMATES HONORED AT THE 2008 MEMORIAL SERVICE

These Rankin men have died, or their death was learned of, since the 2007 reunion:

George F. Abell..... BK3 ..... 1956  
 William Joe Canupp ..... BM3 ..... 1963-1964  
 Frank Paul Chowanec..... ET1 ..... 1952-1953  
 Richard Cotter Dalton..... ENS ..... 1945-1946  
 Michael DeLeonardo..... S2/c..... 1946  
 Richard Clarence Dedrick..... S2/c..... 1945-1946  
 Howard Adrian Dove..... LTJG..... 1960-1961  
 Arthur Raymond Ellington .... BM2 ..... 1955-1961  
 Calvin Reuben Fairbourn ..... ENS ..... 1945  
 Dominic F. Fogarty ..... QM3 ..... 1945-1946  
 Louis E. Geers..... S1/c..... 1945-1946  
 Thomas P. Hartman ..... RD2 ..... 1945-1946  
 William R. Kugler..... S1/c..... 1945-1946

Arthur J. Lortie..... S1/c..... 1945-1946  
 Roger L. Lusk ..... SN..... 1960  
 August Louis Marakovits ..... S1/c..... 1945  
 James Paul Mendoza ..... PN1..... 1968-1970  
 Jeffrey M. Mutchler ..... EM3 ..... 1967  
 Richard L. Ori ..... QM3 ..... 1953  
 Teddy Wayne Otten ..... CS2..... 1953-1955  
 Morris W. Oviatt ..... BM3 ..... 1954-1955  
 Stanley Martin Stanzin..... LT ..... 1952-1953  
 William M. Thompson ..... LTJG..... 1967-1970  
 Gary Edward Williams ..... MM3 ..... 1965-1967  
 Carl Wolfgang Zapala ..... FN..... 1965-1968

# 2008 REUNION – STUART, FLORIDA

A hundred Gators come to town, and the Treasure Coast responds

The much-anticipated 2008 USS Rankin reunion is now a part of the ship's history. It will be remembered as one of the all-time best Navy reunions of any kind, anywhere. The Ramada Stuart in Florida was the host hotel for the event, held from October 30 - November 2. Well over a hundred people attended the four day, three night event (the official count was 61 former crewmembers, 40 of their spouses and guests, and eleven special guests at Saturday's banquet).



The reunion kicked off mid-morning on Thursday when the registration desk and hospitality room opened. As usual, Larry and Brenda Eckard were on hand to take care of registration. Some shipmates had arrived a day or two early to enjoy the delights of Florida, but Bob and Ann Devault were the first to register officially. Initially, shipmates gathered in the lobby to see who would next come through the door, and to read the front page of *The Stuart News*, which featured a long article on the Rankin and our reunion!

Eventually everyone found their way to the hospitality room, just a few steps away from the lobby. There they found a beautifully decorated table with an abundance of snacks, soft drinks and free beer. (Actually the beer was *not* free, but

by the time Skip Sander posted a price list, thirty-seven bottles had been drunk. Once the list was posted, everybody came back and paid for their beer. Whew!)

The table had been set by Stuart residents John Haddox (QM3, 1968-69) and his lady Chris Teegardin. Their behind-the-scenes work was responsible not only for the hospitality room, but for much of the success of the reunion.

At 5:00 PM the first official function of the reunion—the Welcome Reception—began. Ramada General Manager Audrey Ballantyne welcomed the group to Stuart and her hotel, introduced key members of her staff, and put out the word that we were all to have a good time. Then Skip Sander made some announcements and declared the reception open for all. It was a highly sociable event, with much more fun and conversation than people remembered from previous reunions. Many attributed this to the previously-consumed free beer. Others said it was the increasing cohesiveness of our ever-larger group of attendees. Whatever the reason, a beautiful room was full of beautiful people having lots of beautiful fun. The drinks were great, and the hors d'oeuvres were miniature ham and swiss sandwiches and spring rolls of the pork and vegetable varieties. Mmmmm!

After the reception, many had dinner in the Ramada, either at Jilly's Grille or the classy Tiki Bar. Some venturesome souls went out to one of the numerous local restaurants. After dinner, many enjoyed the entertainment at Jilly's, featuring the seven-piece oldies group Solid Gold.

Friday morning began with a continental breakfast buffet for 83 members and guests, served by the Ramada's unforgettable Diego of Nicaragua. It was a beautiful Florida autumn day, complete with the gentle breeze that one expects so near the ocean.

At 0830, all hands left in buses for an anchor painting detail under the Roosevelt Bridge. A good time was had by all. Even though the City of Stuart provided brushes and haze gray paint, it was hard to find



anyone doing any actual painting—everyone thinks he's a Boatswain's Mate now. Thanks to advance work by John Haddox, Skip Sander, and Traveling Secretary Joyce Marshall, television crews and news photographers were abundantly on hand to record the event for posterity. Most of the painters and onlookers also took their own shots of the activities.

When the anchor painting detail secured, buses took the group to the marina at the Marriott Hutchinson Island Florida Resort, where the 70-foot mahogany boat Lady Stuart II awaited, hopefully for a trip to 27.11.333N by 80.01.431W, the site of the sunken USS Rankin. As 92 passengers boarded his vessel, the captain explained that sea condi-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

tions might be too rough to go out to sea, but by approaching St. Lucie inlet he could see if it was safe enough to try. So we went there.

One look at the white water breaking on the seawall was all that the captain and the rest of us needed to know that the wind and seas were far too high for us to enter the ocean. This was a disappointment to everyone, especially the county diving crew that had hoped to take cameras down to the ship and feed live video up to us on the *Lady Stuart II*.

A contingency plan was quickly put into effect, and the classic wooden party boat commenced a leisurely cruise along the famous Intracoastal Waterway. Sailing was smooth, and many sea stories were exchanged. Men and women gathered topside and below decks to update one another on the important events in their lives, or to exchange the latest scuttlebutt. Sailors gathered on the fantail to talk, and it was rumored that some of them spliced the mainbrace with a tot of grog from a silver flask. Another rumor said that one of them had captured a sea bat back there. Tragically, Ralph Ayasse's USS Rankin hat was blown overboard when the boat changed course to blow tubes.

On the bridge, a number of sailors took their turn at the helm, while several would-be Officers of the Deck attempted to take the conn. Luckily for us all, the captain remained on the bridge to fend off collisions or grounding.

Meanwhile, the onboard reporters interviewed old salts and their ladies, amazed at their colorful stories. Topside passengers enjoyed the scenery along the Intracoastal, including wildlife, mangroves, and the beautiful homes of the wealthy. One group claimed they saw an

island full of monkeys; many believed them, but others thought of mail buoys, sea bats, and fresh-caught seamen sent to fetch left-handed monkey wrenches.

The cruise ended at 1400, with buses for the Ramada and a local restaurant. Once again the Tiki Bar hosted a happy group of aging Gators, and a good time was had by all. In the lobby, a few additional shipmates arrived, found the hospitality room and began to enjoy their reunion.



The social hour began at 1800, and social it was! During the next hour the cash bar served the guests a wide variety of beverages. The servers and guests showed up in a dazzling array of Halloween garb, ranging from casual clothing to elaborate depictions of pumpkins, clowns, devils, angels, and even a white-haired Superman. At 1900, a dinner buffet featured Halloween fare such as Ghoulish Green Potatoes, Tombstone Top Round Beef, and Fragments of Pumpkin Pie with Marshmallow Dirt Topping.

After dinner, Roger and Dolly Crane kicked off a tattoo party, with many sailors and their ladies indulging their passion for temporary body modification. Unknown to many, deep love for their ship had motivated Buddy Stringer and Frank Draper to get *real* tattoos of the Rankin. Unlike most Navy tattoos, alcohol had nothing to do

with it. Or at least we *think* so.

During the tattooing, duty choir director Dick Lacy led the group in practicing *The Last Carouse*, sung in honor of departed shipmates. Later in the evening, the group's Scotch drinkers enjoyed a wee dram of Oban 14-year-old single malt Scotch whisky, courtesy of the lovely and gracious Joyce Marshall.

Saturday dawned with Florida rain and overcast, accompanied by a gentle breeze. Diego again hosted breakfast, and the buses left at 0900 for Fort Pierce and the National Navy UDT Seal Museum. The talk on the buses was animated and LOUD, as friends talked to friends about the exciting events of the previous day. A few of the passengers just smiled and held hands, enjoying one another in the midst of their happy comrades.

The sun came out as the group arrived at the UDT SEAL Museum, allowing all hands to attend the solemn unveiling of a memorial brick sponsored by The USS Rankin Association. The museum's Chaplain gave a stirring address about the meaning and symbolism of memorials such as this. Skip Sander's response recalled a time when UDT members had guarded a fallen Rankin shipmate.



The museum staff led guided tours of the indoor and outdoor exhibits at the only museum in the world dedicated exclusively to the fighting men of Naval Special Warfare. As we saw, heard, and experienced the tour, many of us remembered the UDT guys of the 1950s



and 1960s, with red helmets and black boats at Little Creek, and riding aboard the Rankin, and diving from the signal bridge(!) into the beautiful waters off St. Thomas. We all learned that the original UDTs had trained during WWII on the north end of Hutchinson Island, on the exact site of the museum.

The buses then departed for the St. Lucie County Historical Museum, on the south end of Hutchinson Island, where countless WWII amphibious boat crews had learned to run Mike and Peter boats.



The museum has a special importance to the Rankin's WWII veterans who trained at the long-gone Ft. Pierce amphibious base. John Donlan, director of the museum, made sure we all enjoyed our tour. Not only does this delightful museum have a rebuilt LCVP and a roomful of items from the WWII training base, but its exhibits span 250 years from the 1715 Spanish shipwrecks, to the 1838 Seminole war, to the early industries of this interesting part of Florida—fishing, pineapple, cattle and citrus.

People were hungry after the museum tour, so the buses took us to the Golden Corral, where there was superabundant, superdelicious food, and a very low price for all you could eat. Except for having to pay, the meal was reminiscent of those on the Rankin at her best. (Well, she wasn't *always* at her best, but she DID serve some pretty good chow. Who remembers "take all you want, but eat all you take?")

When the group returned to the

Ramada, they saw another Rankin spread in the local newspaper. Headlined 'It was a good ship, good people'. It featured a massive color picture of BM2 Frank Shaw, leaning thoughtfully on a fluke of a Rankin anchor, plus a smaller photo of the ship just before she was sunk. The accompanying article featured quotes from the now-famous Shaw, and baker/plumber Melvin Munch, postal clerk Tom McDade, and Ensign/Admiral Vern Smith. What a wonderful thing for the local residents and for all who served on the Rankin!

The annual business meeting began at 1500. Skip Sander was the unwilling clearinghouse for all complaints, from "I don't have enough towels" to "my head doesn't flush right" to "I don't like green potatoes" and "my dessert was too small." He listened carefully, then swallowed hard and moved on to the *real* business of the day—the USS Rankin reunions. Everyone in the room agreed that so far, this had been one of the very best. Cheers went up when Norfolk was announced as the site of the 2009 reunion, and many applauded Branson, Missouri for 2010. There was a lot of sentiment for returning to Stuart in the not-too-distant future.

Special guest Sharon Evinrude, whose grandmother was heavily involved in bringing the Rankin to Stuart, told the group about the Maritime & Yachting Museum of Florida and showed us an original Deck Log from the ship. The group applauded her and her efforts.

At 1800, the limousines arrived to take us to Pipers Landing Yacht and Country Club, the Treasure Coast's finest and most exclusive private venue. Rankinites who remember walking out to liberty in San Juan and Naples were grateful for the buses and private cars. Oth-

ers, forgetting how it was in the "good old days," chafed a bit about waiting for their transportation.

On arrival at the club, revelers had their pictures taken for the 2008 Reunion Memory Book, then proceeded to the well-appointed bar for drinks. The late Steve Karper (ENS/LTJG, 1966-1967), through his wife Diane, bought the first round. Handsome men in uniform were prominent among the Beautiful People in attendance, as were very pretty ladies decked out in their finest dresses.



After cocktails, the group adjourned to the club's exclusive Main Dining Room, where the Memorial Table was displayed with all its meaningful symbolism. Formalities began with the playing of the National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance. Skip Sander reminded the group that every flaw in the reunion was his responsibility alone, and that everything good was the joint responsibility of Larry and Brenda Eckard of Military Locator & Reunion Service, of Audrey Ballantyne of the Ramada Stuart, and of the Association's dedicated and capable working staff.

Vernon Smith's memorable invocation preceded the serving of our meal. A fabulous dinner was served, consisting of a Piper's Landing Salad followed by a certified Angus beef tenderloin with sliced mushroom ragoût and asparagus. Those who prefer white meat enjoyed pan-seared free-range chicken Française with oven roasted toma-

toes and artichoke hearts. Both entrees were served with a delicious and highly memorable Pear Williams potato. Dessert was a Triple Chocolate Lava Cake with a light dusting of snowflake sugar. Though the Rankin was known as a “feeder,” such delights were *never* served aboard her, either on the mess decks, or in the wardroom, or in the captain’s cabin, at any time from 1945 through 1971. And the Piper’s Landing staff, known as the best in Florida, was *way* ahead of any Rankin mess cook.

When dinner was over, Skip introduced his special guests. These included Stuart resident Anita Petzold Cocoves, accompanied by her son Nicholas. Anita is the daughter of the late Charles Petzold, who as a young naval architect helped design the Rankin and followed its WWII career as a civilian in charge of monitoring ship performance in battle. After the war, he made the decision to keep the Rankin as part of the U.S. mothball fleet. Incredibly, Anita’s maternal grandfather also has a connection to the Rankin: he was William L. McDonald, the ship’s C.O. in 1945 and 1946!



**Anita and Nicholas Cocoves**

Other special guests were Gary and Misti Guertin, along with John Haddox and Chris Teegardin. Gary is Chairman of the Martin County Convention and Visitors Bureau, while John is a former Rankin quartermaster, retired Navy Lieutenant, and current Martin County Veter-

ans Affairs Officer. He’s also one of our youngest members, having come aboard the Rankin in 1968 as a lowly QMSA. Rounding out the list of local guests were Mark Perry, Executive Director of the Florida Oceanographic Society, and Kerry Dillon, the famous Florida diver. Mark was instrumental in bringing the Rankin to Stuart, while Kerry has made more dives to the Rankin (over 50!) than any person alive.

Notable guests from The USS Rankin Association included five Executive Board members: Jill Breslau, renewing her childhood ties to Dennis Heenan; John Mazzarini, with wife Virginia and son Tim; Jim McCourt with Mae; Jack Raso and Barbara; and, of course, Louis “Skip” Sander. Rankin men in attendance from the WWII era included LTJG Vince Christensen, WT3/c Herb Hallman, F1/c Tom Jones, RDM2/c Tom Lobello, S1/c Melvin Munch, RM2/c Harold Pontious, and S2/c Ed Walton, all accompanied by family members and/or friends. We thank them all for their service.

After the introductions, Mark Perry and Kerry Dillon gave a brilliant multimedia presentation about the Rankin’s arrival in Stuart in 1988, her sinking shortly thereafter, and her subsequent life as a valuable underwater reef. Their dramatic photos and videos gave everyone a wonderful insight into the post-commissioning life of their ship. Mark and Kerry brought some artifacts, too—the ship’s original steam-driven foghorn and a gyro repeater stand from her starboard bridge wing. Both had been brought in from the Stuart Sailfish Club.

When the talk was over, Skip presented original USS Rankin bronze plaques to Martin County and to the Florida Oceanographic Society, as a token of their work in



extending the life of our ship. To end the formalities, Dick Lacy once again led the group in singing *The Last Carouse*. It really *did* seem like the dead were there, and we think they really enjoyed themselves.

The remainder of the evening was passed in a relaxed atmosphere of intelligent conversation and comradeship. Everyone signed a get well card for ailing shipmate Fred Golin-gan (SD2, 1952-1957). After a last toast by the lovers of Oban Scotch, the throng returned to their homes.

Sunday morning arrived all too quickly (especially for those who forgot to set their alarm clocks for the end of Daylight Savings Time). Some left before dawn to catch early flights home. For those remaining, breakfast was a private buffet, followed by a moving memorial service from CAPT H. Edward Miller (ENS, 1962-1963) and HMCS Elmer Mayes (HMC, 1962-1965). Goodbyes said by one and all, the remaining hospitality room snacks were distributed to hungry travelers, and everyone departed in anticipation of next year’s reunion in Norfolk.



## SHIPMATES WHO ATTENDED THE 2008 REUNION

Ronald H. Altman ..... YN3 ..... 1953-1955  
 Ralph F. Ayasse ..... SMSN..... 1959-1962  
 David J. Bartholomew ..... LTJG..... 1960-1962  
 Brainard J. Belmore ..... CDR ..... 1956-1958  
 Jill S. Breslau ..... \*\* ..... 1952-1953  
 Lawrence L. Brumitt\* ..... BT2 ..... 1957-1961  
 Paul H. Buckner ..... EN3..... 1957-1958  
 Bobby W. Capley ..... SFP3 ..... 1961-1965  
 W. Vincent Christensen\* ... LTJG..... 1945  
 Roger H. Crane ..... MR3 ..... 1957-1959  
 Robert L. Devault ..... SM2..... 1959-1962  
 William P. Devroe ..... SK3..... 1963-1965  
 Hugh J. Doherty ..... SN..... 1959-1961  
 Frank B. Draper ..... SN..... 1961-1964  
 Raymond J. Falker ..... MMFN..... 1964-1967  
 Michael J. Fields\* ..... IC3 ..... 1959-1961  
 Hugh J. Forde\* ..... MMFN..... 1961-1962  
 Frank P. Gersbacher ..... LTJG..... 1959-1961  
 George E. Gilbert\* ..... EM2 ..... 1957-1960  
 Elton E. Gould ..... CSSN ..... 1956-1960  
 John L. Haddox ..... QM3 ..... 1968-1969  
 Herbert E. Hallman ..... WT3/c ..... 1945-1946  
 Jacob A. Haring ..... BMSN ..... 1953-1955  
 R. Dennis Heenan\* ..... LTJG..... 1952-1953  
 Richard B. Hughes ..... BT3 ..... 1959-1962  
 Thomas W. Jones ..... F1/c ..... 1945-1946  
 Homer Jordan\* ..... SN..... 1962  
 Thomas S. Kinsley ..... FT3 ..... 1956-1959  
 Dale F. Koepp\* ..... FN..... 1962-1964  
 Richard B. Lacy ..... ENS..... 1958-1959  
 Charles C. Liesegang\* ..... RM3 ..... 1964-1966  
 Donald E. Liff ..... SH3 ..... 1953-1955

Paul C. Lint ..... RD2..... 1964-1967  
 Thomas Lobello ..... RDM2/c..... 1945-1946  
 Elmer S. Mayes\* ..... HMC..... 1962-1965  
 John Mazzarini ..... RM2 ..... 1960-1962  
 James P. McCourt ..... RD3..... 1963-1966  
 Thomas C. McDade\* ..... SN ..... 1961-1963  
 H. Edward Miller ..... ENS..... 1962-1963  
 James D. Miller ..... RM2 ..... 1954-1958  
 Melvin M. Munch ..... S1/c ..... 1946  
 John S. Nelson ..... RM3 ..... 1961-1962  
 Allen G. Newell\* ..... RM3 ..... 1959-1960  
 Sherill B. Pittman ..... RM3 ..... 1955-1958  
 Edward J. Plumb ..... BT3 ..... 1966-1968  
 Harold E. Pontious\* ..... RM2/c..... 1945  
 Wayne P. Ranes ..... RM2 ..... 1960-1963  
 Jack L. Raso ..... LTJG..... 1963-1964  
 Louis "Skip" Sander ..... LTJG..... 1961-1963  
 Frank H. Shaw ..... BM2..... 1959-1961  
 Ercole C. Siciliano ..... CS3..... 1963-1964  
 Charles T. Smith ..... PN3..... 1964-1965  
 Vernon C. Smith ..... LTJG..... 1956-1958  
 S. Ray Spicer ..... BT3 ..... 1960-1963  
 Tex R. Spicer ..... BT3 ..... 1960-1962  
 John S. Stewart\* ..... RD3..... 1963-1966  
 Walter M. Stringer ..... MM3 ..... 1965-1969  
 Ernest J. Toupin\* ..... LTJG..... 1955-1957  
 Howard T. Urband ..... LTJG..... 1955-1956  
 Edward P. Walton ..... S2/c ..... 1946-1947  
 Harry J. Zimmer ..... LTJG..... 1958-1960

\* First-time reunion attendee

\*\* Jill is the daughter of Max Breslau, LT, 1952

## NORFOLK IN 2009!

It's been five long years since 300 of us gathered in the Rankin's long-time home port, and many of us are anxious to return. We're planning some great things to make it a memorable event. Some of them include:

- An extra day or two to enjoy the area & activities.
- A low-cost event, maybe a picnic or something similar, to accommodate shipmates who want to join us but don't want to spend much money.
- A two-tier lodging system, so those who like nice hotels can stay in one, but those who like to sleep cheap can do so and still take part in the reunion.
- With luck, special tours of active duty ships, hopefully including the crew's quarters, the wardroom, engine rooms, CIC, and other spaces not normally seen on tours. There have been LOTS of changes.

## FUTURE REUNIONS

We've been talking with shipmates and with other Navy groups about good locations for reunions. They not only suggested some very good ones, but they convinced us of the many benefits of selecting locations several years in advance.

The Executive Board has chosen these cities for our next five reunions. The list is subject to change as we move along and conditions evolve, so make your plans accordingly:

2009 - Norfolk, Virginia

2010 - Branson, Missouri

2011 - Charleston, South Carolina

2012 - Stuart, Florida

2013 - New Orleans, Louisiana



# HAPPY ★ NEW ★ YEAR

The poet who wrote this 50 years ago was the junior Ensign aboard the Rankin at the time. (That's probably why he caught the holiday midwatch!) He got his literary skills from his mother, a substitute English teacher at his five-room school in New Jersey. Unfortunately for us all, F. Donald Fleming's literary career seems to have ended with the New Year's midwatch.

## DECK LOG—ADDITIONAL REMARKS SHEET

USS Rankin (AKA-103)

0000-0400 watch, Thursday 1 January 1959

'Tis the first watch of the New Year, and all through the base,  
not a single ship stirs from her berthing space.

'Tween us and pier 12, another vessel doth lay,  
It's the U.S.S. OLMSTED, all shiny and grey.

Doubled up lines hold us snuggled up tight,  
By our portside, beside her, we rest in the night.

Berth one twenty-two is our home in this place,  
At Norfolk, Virginia, Naval Operating Base.

Condition of readiness five has been set,  
and with X-Ray below decks, we're safe, you can bet.

Both the boiler and generator that bear Number one,  
Have been chosen this night as the ones that would run,  
We're receiving our fresh water straight from the pier,  
And on this special evening I wish it were beer.

Dozens of ships lie about us in splendor,  
Destroyer, cruiser, auxiliary, and tender.

Of our Atlantic Fleet, these ships all are part,  
A force which stirs pride in each sailor's heart.

Merchant ships, too, can be seen on the pond.  
Ships from nations of which we are fond,

ComNavAirLant, our SOPA, is the biggest "wheel" on hand,  
and I'll wager, tonight no watch does he stand.

A breeze, light and steady, from the northeast blows,  
The weather is chilly and so are my toes.

The New Year hath come, the year Fifty-Nine,  
and because of it, I have written this rhyme.

There are thousands of things I would rather have done,  
And there are many places where I could've had more fun,

But though this watch didn't bring me great cheer,  
Let me wish to you all - A Happy New Year.

F. Donald Fleming  
ENS, USNR

Today, Don is alive and well and living in Laguna Woods, California. He's retired from a long career in the insurance industry, and has two sons and six grandchildren.

He vaguely remembers writing this log entry, but mostly he recalls the Navy's teaching him about responsibility and discipline. Very specifically, he remembers his first watch as OOD underway—the lives of 300 people depended on his doing his job correctly.

Another clear memory is the manly fun he had at GQ. His assignment was to strap on two .45's and stand outside the Crypto Room, making sure no bad guys gained entry. Wow!



## USS RANKIN NEWS

USS RANKIN NEWS is published by:

The USS Rankin Association  
153 Mayer Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15237  
888-252-0103 / 412-367-1376  
ussrankin@aol.com  
www.ussrankin.org

Back issues of USS Rankin News can be viewed online at [www.ussrankin.org/news.htm](http://www.ussrankin.org/news.htm)

The USS Rankin Association is a nonprofit 501(c)(19) veterans' organization incorporated in Pennsylvania. Donations to the Association qualify as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

Members of the Executive Board are:

Louis "Skip" Sander, Chairman  
George R. Berninger  
Jill S. Breslau  
John F. Feeley  
John Mazzarini, Vice Chairman  
James P. McCourt, Secretary  
Jack L. Raso  
Robert A. Reynolds  
Jan W. Smits

© 2008, The USS Rankin Association