

# USS RANKIN NEWS

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## NEW ORLEANS REUNION RECAP

Our ninth annual reunion, like every one before it, was a great success, enjoyed by dozens of shipmates and their guests. The hospitality room opened early on Thursday, with an abundant array of beer, wine, soft drinks and hard liquor. Pretzels and mixed nuts were available for those who wanted to snack.

The bus left at 1:45 for a two-hour Mississippi River cruise. The sternwheeler *Natchez* was well-stocked with the food for which New Orleans is famous. A jazz quartet played for those who stayed below, while the weather cooperated beautifully for those who toured the weather decks. Custom photos were available for all who wanted them. Dinner was on our own, and most of the group enjoyed it on or near Bourbon Street, accessible directly from our hotel.

Friday brought a bus tour of the city, including a stop at one of New Orleans' famous above-the-ground

cemeteries. Evening brought dinner at the world-famous Deanie's French Quarter restaurant.

On Saturday, the group toured either Mardi Gras World, where all the floats are made and stored, or the National WWII Museum, the most breathtaking war museum anywhere. Frequent shuttles brought us back to the hotel, or dropped us off at a point not far from Saint Louis Cathedral, the Mississippi waterfront, Café du Monde (with its famous and delicious beignets), and the other cultural attractions of the *Vieux Carré*.

The evening featured our annual banquet, complete with a strolling photographer, a U.S. Coast Guard color guard, and entertainment by world yo-yo champion BMC Jim Johnson of the USS Winston (AKA/LKA-94).

Sunday was marked by a notably skimpy breakfast and a notably touching memorial service for our departed shipmates. Then we all went home.

## 2013 REUNION PLANS

Our 2013 reunion will be our tenth, and we want to make it a memorable one. In fact, we want to make it so appealing that attendance will be comparable to that at our first reunion in Norfolk, in September of 2003. We had hundreds of shipmates attending, with 300 people at the banquet.

Our subsequent reunions have been well-attended and very successful, but we've never had more than 100 guests or so at the banquet.

We have a core group of about 80 people who go to all or most of the reunions, plus another 40 or so who have gone to a few of them here and there. This gives about 120 who have actively participated in our reunion activities.

There are 1,164 living shipmates in our database, so about 10% of all known shipmates have connected through the reunions. According to what we know about reunion groups, this is a typical participation level.

Our challenge for 2013 is to attract as many people as we can to our Tenth Annual Reunion. That means attracting as many of our 120 "regulars" as we can, plus a goodly number of those who haven't yet been to a reunion.

We can do that by meeting at a good time in a good place, and by promoting attendance as strongly as we can. We badly want to find a way for those on a limited budget to attend the reunion. Some reunion groups have "scholarships" to defray reunion costs for some individuals, and we are looking into how they do it. Others offer things like free or low-cost picnics to attract local residents who might not otherwise attend.

### The Reunion Will Be in October

Many people need to know our reunion dates in advance, and many have told us that anything before mid-September is hard for them to make. At this point we can't be sure of dates for 2013, but we're pretty committed to having them somewhere in the timeframe of October 10 to November 3, assuming our normal Thursday through Sunday pattern.

### We Are Working Hard to Find the Perfect Location

There are so many attractive reunion cities that we could have a reunion every weekend and never run out of great places to go. In the past, we've chosen our cities by the seat of our pants, or by holding our finger up into the wind. This time we're approaching things methodically.

Hoping to find good locations for 2013, 2014, and 2015, Skip Sander has sent inquiries to 188 cities that are known to host military reunions. He's had a hundred responses so far, from Washington state to Florida, and from towns as small as Mooresville, NC to ones as large as Chicago.

After the first of the year, he and the Board will narrow the list down to 5-10 likely candidates, and will quickly choose one for 2013. Your input on the decision is valued and wanted, so we'll be sending out some surveys. Watch for emails coming from [ussrankin@aol.com](mailto:ussrankin@aol.com). (If you don't have email, but still want to register your opinion, call Skip and he'll find a way to accommodate you. He's at (412) 367-1376, in Pittsburgh.)

We've already heard from people about where they'd like to go in 2013. In no particular order, the list includes New England, Virginia Beach, the Washington, DC area, Long Beach California, Valley Forge/Gettysburg, Nashville, St. Louis, and the Chicago/Great Lakes area. Let us know your preference, and we're sure to find someplace great.

## FAMILY TIES

Every year, we see more shipmates bringing their extended families to the reunion. WWII veteran Hillyer "Billy" head brought four generations to New Orleans!

The photo below shows Billy, his granddaughter's husband, his granddaughter and his daughter in the back row, with his two great-granddaughters standing in front.



Jim and Mae McCourt were seen on Canal Street with a pair of attractive daughters, CDR Ed Gaskell brought his tennis-pro son, and a couple of others brought daughters and granddaughters. Very nice!

### USS RANKIN NEWS

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## REUNION ATTENDEES — NEW ORLEANS, 2012

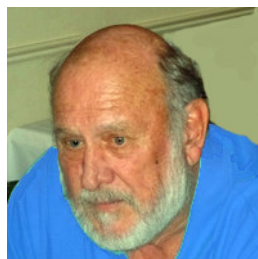
Thirty-six shipmates and at least 32 guests attended our Ninth Annual Reunion at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel in New Orleans, from September 13-16, 2012. Four of the shipmates were newcomers, never having attended one of our previous reunions. Some brought family members who enjoyed New Orleans but didn't attend our events.

Shipmate and Rank or Rate *	Years Aboard	Guest	Current Residence
Paul Allen, ENS (SC)	1946-1947	Faye Allen	Mission, Texas
Ron Altman, YN3	1954-1955		Batavia, Illinois
Dave Beeler, ETN3	1963-1966	Andrea Beeler	Fort Walton Beach, Florida
George Berninger, LTJG (SC)	1962-1964	Rita Berninger	Camarillo, California
* Lee Bledsoe, MM1	1963-1968	Leslie Mink	Zion, Illinois
Paul Buckner, EN2	1957-1958	Sylvia Tomlinson	Peachtree City, Georgia
John Burke, EN2	1966-1970	Lorraine Burke	Pompton Plains, New Jersey
Roger Crane, MR3	1957-1959	Dolly Crane	Bluffton, South Carolina
Bill Devroe, SK3	1963-1965	Bette Devroe	Wayne, New Jersey
Willie Dunning, PFC	1962		Mobile, Alabama
Ray Falker, MM3	1964-1967	Jackie Falker	Ellicott City, Maryland
John Feeley, LTJG	1961-1963	Meg Feeley	Crystal Lake, Illinois
Mike Fields, IC3	1957-1961	Susan Fields	Richmond, Michigan
Ed Gaskell, LTJG,	1954-1956	Ed Gaskell, III	McLean, Virginia
Frank "Pete" Gersbacher, LTJG	1959-1960	Lola Gersbacher	Anaheim, California
Elton Gould, CSSN,	1956-1960	Margaret Gould	Fall River, Massachusetts
Stew Gully, LTJG,	1958-1959	Ellie Gully	Raleigh, North Carolina
Hillyer "Billy" Head, S1/c	1945-1946	Randall Gilreath	Oxford, Georgia
Matthew "Jack" Hitchcock, LTJG	1962	Gail Zeanah	Eclectic, Alabama
* Randall Jameson, CS3	1966-1968		Stephenville, Texas
Dale Koepp, EN3	1962-1964		Amherst, Ohio
Dick Lacy, ENS	1958-1959	Martha Lacy	Jamesville, New York
Jim McCourt, RD3	1963-1966	Mae McCourt	Tierra Verde, Florida
* John Messick, RD2	1967-1968	Shirley Messick	Fanning Springs, Florida
* Ron Miller, BMG3	1952-1955	Sara Chauvot	Berne, New York
Melvin Munch, S/1c	1946	Melva "Mickie" Munch	Metairie, Louisiana
Allen Newell, RM3	1959-1960	Donna Newell	Cumberland, Wisconsin
Jack Raso, LTJG	1963-1964	Barbara Raso	Ellicott City, Maryland
Louis "Skip" Sander, LTJG	1961-1963		Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Frank Shaw, BM2	1956-1959	Alberta Shaw	Sauquoit, New York
Carl Siciliano, CS3	1963-1964	Florence Siciliano	Lindenhurst, New York
Charles Smith, PN3	1964-1965	Mary Smith	Fort Wayne, Indiana
Jan Smits, EN2	1957-1959	Carol Fuos	Grand Prairie, Texas
Walter "Buddy" Stringer, MM3	1965-1969	Arleen Stringer	Islip Terrace, New York
Mark Thomas, IC3	1967-1970	Linda Thomas	Stillwater, Oklahoma
Harry Zimmer, LTJG	1958-1960	Norma Zimmer	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

\* First-time attendee



Jack Hitchcock



Randall Jameson



Charles Smith



Mark Thomas



Ron Miller

Once again we recall the tradition of writing the New Year's log entry in verse. Rankin OOD's were pretty good at it, and some of them even won prizes. Here are New Year's logs, from sixty and fifty years ago, respectively:

### DECK LOG—REMARKS SHEET

USS Rankin (AKA-103)

Thursday 1 January, 1953 - 0000-0400

We assumed the watch at 2350,  
 Welcomed the New Year in a way quite nifty,  
 We sounded the siren, whistle and bell,  
 Our sentries reported, all seems to be well,  
 In Berth Baker-2, Hampton Roads, Virginia, this night,  
 We are anchored quite securely with the following in sight,  
 Clock Tower a true bearing of 130°.5,  
 Hardly a man is now alive,  
 Who remembers Fort Wool and the fight that was there,  
 It now bears 063°(t) when sighted with care,  
 To complete our fix on the chart room table,  
 At 082°(t) we spot Buoy 1-Able,  
 Old Point Comfort is last but far from the least,  
 It's at 042°(t) which is almost northeast,  
 Our starboard anchor is on a bottom of mud,  
 60 fathoms of chain let it down with a thud,  
 The water tonight is quite rough indeed,  
 Measures 10 fathoms deep, which is more than we need,  
 We have F. G. FAHRION as the SOPA,  
 He's a VADM in the Navy, and that isn't hay,  
 He keeps his staff on the USS POCONO,  
 That's the AGC-16, as we all know,  
 The ships all around us appear quite neat,  
 They should, for they're units of the U. S. Atlantic Fleet,  
 Well that about does it, not much else to report,  
 So with one last thought I'll cut this entry short,  
 Our ship is the best, ditto the officers and crew,  
 We've made an excellent record for a vessel so new,  
 In the coming twelve months we shall all do our best,  
 To operate our ship a bit better than all of the rest,  
 So from us who are standing this watch for four hours,  
 From Giles, Smith and Allen, Ricks, Bolen and Powers,  
 We want to wish you from all of us here,  
 A prosperous '53, and a "HAPPY NEW YEAR."



W. H. McDaniel  
 LTJG, USNR

### DECK LOG—REMARKS SHEET

USS Rankin (AKA-103)

Tuesday 1 January, 1963 - 0000-0400

Waiting, awaiting, aboard her tonight  
 Moored pier twelve, at Norfolk, U.S. Naval Station  
 With mooring lines standard, and wires fore and aft  
 Waiting for warmth  
 The ALGOL to port, the MOUNTRAIL to the right  
 We're outboard the ALGOL at  
 Berth number two  
 Awaiting the quilt  
 XRAY is set, on main deck and above  
 In Condition Six Ready with  
 YOKE down below  
 Waiting for dreams  
 Two and three generators, are now on the line  
 Number one boiler supplies  
 All our needs  
 Waiting for secrets  
 Ships of friendly nations, are present with us  
 Vessels of the District and  
 Even small craft  
 Awaiting the climax  
 In charge of all vessels, of this area  
 Is SOPA now present COM-  
 ASWFORLANT  
 Waiting for life  
 It matters little, here or elsewhere  
 The anxiety's the same and  
 Seeming for ever  
 Awaiting the end



R. A. Slater  
 ENS, USNR

