

USS RANKIN NEWS

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AKA-103

1945-1947

1952-1968

LKA-103

1969-1971

GOLD E

1956-1960

GATOR BOATBUILDER

New Orleans industrialist Andrew Jackson Higgins designed and built many of the boats that made U.S. amphibious operations possible.

His most famous production was the Landing Craft, Vehicle Personnel, a.k.a. the LCVP, a watercraft known to Rankin sailors as the Peter Boat and later the Papa Boat (when a new military phonetic alphabet came into use in 1956). His company also designed the LCM.

The world at large knew these craft as Higgins Boats. General Dwight Eisenhower said, "Andrew Higgins is the man who won the war for us... If Higgins had not designed and built the LCVPs, we never could have landed over an open beach. The whole strategy of the war would have been different."

Even Adolf Hitler knew of Higgins, referring to him as the "new Noah."

The LCVP was actually a modification of Higgins Industries' *Eureka* boat, which the Navy called the LCPL.

During WWII, the Higgins factories built 20,094 boats, from LCVPs to PT Boats to 170-foot FS ships.

NEW ORLEANS!



The USS Rankin reunion this year is in New Orleans, one of the world's most exciting cities. A special evaluation team visited there in April, and they report that good times are rolling day and night! The French Quarter and almost all of the other neighborhoods are 100% recovered from Hurricane Katrina, so nothing stands in the way of having a wonderful time in the city.

Our Four-Diamond hotel, pictured on the left above, sits right on the edge of the French Quarter, fronting on a normal city street. Just out a side door is Bourbon Street, with its world-famous restaurants and entertainment. We can't imagine a better location for a fun-loving group of former Gator sailors.

Our schedule includes plenty of time for socializing in a fully-stocked open bar hospitality room, and lots of opportunity to explore the city on foot or via its terrific streetcar system.

Tours this year include an Early Bird river steamboat cruise, a bus tour of the city including the areas devastated by the hurricane, and a visit to the National World War II Museum. It is said that you can spend two days in that museum, and still not see everything you'd like to see. If war museums aren't on your list of favorite attractions, there's an alternate tour of the place where Mardi Gras floats are made.

In a departure from past practice, Friday's dinner will be in a nearby local restaurant, rather than at the hotel. The restaurant is a wonderful Cajun place, with plenty of opportunity to sample local foods including crawfish.

The traditional USS Rankin Saturday evening banquet will feature some specialty entertainment the likes of which most of us have never seen.

New Orleans was founded on May 7, 1718 by the French, and was named for the Duke of Orléans, who was Regent of France at the time. It came under Spanish control in 1763. During the American Revolution, New Orleans was an important port for smuggling aid to the colonists, and for transporting military equipment and supplies up the Mississippi River.

The city reverted to the French in 1801, and was sold to the U.S. as part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. It grew rapidly after that, with influxes of Americans, French, Haitians, Creoles, Irish, Germans, and Africans. Major crops of sugar and cotton were cultivated with slave labor on large plantations outside the city.

During the last campaign of the War of 1812, the British sent 11,000 soldiers in an attempt to capture the city. The young Andrew Jackson defeated them

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NEW ORLEANS

HISTORY, FROM PAGE 1

decisively in the last battle of the war, which actually took place two weeks after the war had formally ended.

From then until the Civil War, the city was a huge trading port. Its diverse population included a large community of well-educated, often French-speaking free persons of color. By 1840, New Orleans was the wealthiest and third most populous city in the nation.

In the 20th century, the emergence of large Northern industrial cities resulted in a decline of the city's importance. A large system of levees and pumps allowed the drainage of huge tracts of swamp and marshland, enabling the city to expand into previously uninhabitable areas.

The Mardi Gras festival and parade became the city's premiere event, drawing thousands to the French Quarter each year.

By the 1980s, it was widely recognized that the city was vulnerable to flooding and possible destruction. In August, 2005, hurricane Katrina caused the flood protection system to fail, resulting in the worst civil engineering disaster in American history. Over 80% of the city flooded, and tens of thousands of residents were evacuated. Over 1,500 people died as a result of the flooding.

Reconstruction began, and by 2007 the city had regained about two-thirds of its pre-Katrina population.

By 2011, the city was fully back in business, hosting major tourist events and internationally famous meetings such as the USS Rankin Reunion.

SHIPMATES ON PARADE



John Haddox, QM3, LT, Candidate

John Haddox, QM3, 1968-1969, is a candidate for County Commissioner in Martin County, Florida. Martin County is home to Stuart, Florida, off whose coast the mighty USS Rankin serves as a fishing and diving reef. John is currently the county's Director of Veterans Services, having served in that department since 1999.

Young Haddox, from Monaca, Pennsylvania, enlisted in the Navy in 1968. He went immediately to Quartermaster A School, then was assigned to the Rankin. He made QM2 after two years, and went on to become QMC. People saw leadership talent in John, and he soon became an officer, retiring as LT in 1988.

John was a Gator throughout his career, serving as Ship's Boatswain on USS Guam (LPH-9) and Deck Weapons Department Head on USS Shreveport (LPD-12). He held similar positions on USS Coronado (LPD/AGF-11).

His last assignment involved base security in Hawaii, and when he retired he worked as a civilian Director of Security in Florida. That led to his current position with the county, and the rest is history.

We had more or less lost track of John until we were planning our 2008 reunion in Stuart. Once he learned we were coming to town, he jumped in with both feet to make our reunion a success. He had a TV crew lined up to do live footage from the sunken Rankin as our tour boat hovered above her, but unfortunately his immense talents do not extend to turning the tides—the weather turned bad, and we had to call off the ocean portion of our trip.

John's primary election is in August, and if he wins, he's likely to win in the fall. His campaign web site is www.haddox12.com

If he wins in November, we will declare him Honorary Captain of the USS Rankin, with all the honor and glory appertaining thereto. If he loses, we'll probably make him a mess cook.



USS Rankin – Ninth Annual Reunion New Orleans, Louisiana

September 13-16, 2012

Welcome to New Orleans

The Mississippi first defined her, 17th Century explorers and early settlers laid her foundation, and the artists, musicians, chefs, and others who followed built her into the Queen of the Mississippi. Unlike any other American city, from its unique architecture to its famous celebrations, New Orleans inspires and intrigues residents and visitors alike. The USS Rankin Reunion tour program will give you the opportunity to experience some of the area's top attractions, including a city tour, sightseeing lunch cruise, and the opportunity to visit the National WWII Museum. New Orleans is one of the world's most exciting cities, and is the perfect location for the USS Rankin Reunion. It will provide many opportunities for adventure, as well as to relax and enjoy your family and friends in a wonderful luxury hotel.

Hotel Information

The reunion officially begins on Thursday, September 13 and ends on Sunday, September 16. You will be staying at the Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel, located at 739 Canal St., New Orleans, LA 70130. The hotel is located at the entrance to the French Quarter, close to many of the area's top attractions.

The room rate is \$119.00 plus tax per night, based on single or double occupancy. For those of you who choose to arrive early or stay late, the same room rate is available three days prior and three days after, based on availability. Please make your hotel reservations NOW by calling Astor Crowne Plaza reservations at 1-888-696-4806. Mention that you are with the USS Rankin Reunion to assure you are associated with your group. You may request specific room types when you call to make your reservations (handicap accessible room, etc.). The hotel check-in time is 4:00pm; please don't expect to get into your room before then. Make your reservations today; you can cancel up to 72 hours prior to arrival without penalty. They will ask you for a deposit or credit card number to guarantee your room reservation. The hotel is holding rooms until they sell out or August 10, 2012, whichever comes first. Don't delay.

Getting to New Orleans

You are encouraged to get to New Orleans by air or rail, and *not* by automobile. Parking and driving are unduly expensive and difficult there, while taxis and public transportation are efficient and inexpensive.

The closest airport is Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport (MSY), served by nine airlines including low-fare Southwest and JetBlue. It is a medium-sized, no-hassle airport. Rail service to New Orleans is excellent, and at least two shipmates are traveling by AMTRAK.

2012 REUNION EVENTS

EVENT A: EARLY BIRD LATE AFTERNOON LUNCH CRUISE

Thursday, September 13, 1:45pm-5:00pm

Board an authentic steamboat and take a step back in time, when cotton was king and life was as slow as the current on the Mississippi River. As you cruise on New Orleans' only authentic steamboat, you will be amazed by the sights of one of the world's most active ports and the beautiful view of New Orleans from the comfort of your steamboat. The narrated two-hour lunch cruise includes an all-you-can-eat buffet with three entrees, several side dishes, salads, and an extensive dessert display. After lunch, enjoy the view as you relax to the sounds of the "Dukes of Dixieland" jazz band. Don't miss this wonderful day out on the river, and the chance to spend time with your friends and family.



OLD FASHIONED "SOCIAL NETWORKING"

Thursday, 6:00pm at the Hotel

Muster in the Hospitality Room for some "old school" social networking, a.k.a. catching up with your friends and shipmates, face to face, with snacks to munch on, and beer, wine, and spirits to drink. We are working hard to make this year's Hospitality Room the best we've ever had, with copious quantities of carefully-chosen food, drink, and alcoholic beverages. Alcohol is cheap in New Orleans, and we plan to take advantage of the bargains.

Dinner and the evening are on your own. Gather with some of your friends and try one of the great restaurants in the French Quarter, and try one of New Orleans' famous cocktails at one of the clubs on Bourbon Street. Our Four-Diamond hotel has a professional concierge who can suggest a destination anywhere in the city. He's not on duty 24/7, so be sure to catch him while he's at his desk.

EVENT B: NEW ORLEANS CITY EXCURSION

Friday, September 14, 10:00am-3:00pm

Travel through three centuries of history as you see some of New Orleans' top attractions. Absorb the sights & sounds of the world famous French Quarter and historic Jackson Square, home of the Cabildo and Presbytere museums. Visit one of the historic cemeteries known as "Cities of the Dead," and learn about this unique above-ground burial system. Marvel at stories of voodoo and piracy on Bayou St. John, the waterway used by Jean Lafitte and his band of pirates, as you make your way to the shores of Lake Pontchartrain, where you will see the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, the world's longest bridge over water. Follow the path of the St. Charles Avenue streetcar, the oldest continuously operating passenger railway system in the world, past the homes of former Kings & Queens of Mardi Gras, past stately mansions and through the world-famous, exclusive Garden District. The tour includes a drive through the Lower 9th Ward and the Lakeview area, two of the areas most affected by Hurricane Katrina. There will be time for lunch on your own and various return shuttle times to the hotel.



BUSINESS MEETING #1

Friday, 4:00pm at the Hotel

Before dinner, gather in the Hospitality Room for a brief meeting. Among other things, we will discuss possible locations for our next two reunions. We hope to come up with a "short list" of locations today, then to select the destinations at another meeting tomorrow. If you have a favorite city in mind, let Skip Sander know what it is before the reunion. If you'd like, you can make a brief "pitch" for it at this meeting.

EVENT C: GROUP CAJUN DINNER

Friday, 6:00pm-8:00pm

What better way to dine in New Orleans Reunion than with an authentic Cajun dinner? Take the short ride to *Mulates* for a delicious Cajun feast. You will be seated in the main dining room/dance hall, where the sights and sounds of the Cajun culture come alive in this authentic atmosphere. Your dinner includes salad, a choice of entrees including catfish, shrimp or chicken, and dessert. After dinner, return to the hotel on the bus for socializing in the Hospitality Room.

NOTE: You can choose to attend Event D or E below, or neither, but not both...

EVENT D: NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

Saturday, September 15, 10:00am-3:00pm

Spend the day at the National WWII Museum. Dedicated in 2000 as The National D-Day Museum and now designated by Congress as the country's official World War II Museum. This remarkable attraction illuminates the American experience during the WWII era with moving personal stories, historic artifacts and powerful interactive displays. From the Normandy Invasion to the sands of Pacific Islands and the "home front," the museum brings to life the teamwork, optimism, courage and sacrifice of the men and women who won the war and changed the world. You will have the day to visit the museum at your own pace. Your tour includes the Tom Hanks film "Beyond All Boundaries," a unique and powerful film about the Greatest Generations journey. The Museum offers a café for lunch on your own. (Shuttles back to the hotel provided; return at your leisure.)



EVENT E: MARDI GRAS WORLD

Saturday, September 15, 10:00am-1:00pm

New Orleans is renowned for the Mardi Gras. Since 1699, Mardi Gras has been integrally linked to Louisiana's cultural heritage. Spend the morning at Blain Kern's Mardi Gras World, which is the place where Mardi Gras magic is made. Step inside the giant warehouse filled with the famous Mardi Gras floats and props. Walk among the towering figures of fantasy and watch the world-renowned masters of carnival sculpture and float building, at work in their shops. Mardi Gras World is a world of wonders and the most unique expression of the spirit and culture of this annual Carnival. Lunch is on your own when you return to the hotel.



BUSINESS MEETING #2

Saturday, 4:00pm at the Hotel

Before our banquet, we will meet again in the Hospitality Room, hopefully to finalize the locations for our next two reunions. Attendance is encouraged, and there is no need to pre-register for the meeting.

NINTH ANNUAL USS RANKIN BANQUET

Saturday, 7:00pm at the Hotel

Join your friends for our gala Banquet Dinner. Cocktails will be available from the cash bar at 6:00pm; dinner will be served at 7:00pm. Entrée choices are London Broil or Chicken Marsala. Subject to the availability of funds, we will have some special entertainment after the banquet. It will NOT be easy to forget.

FAREWELL BREAKFAST & MEMORIAL SERVICE

Sunday, September 16, 8:00am at the Hotel

Gather for a farewell breakfast buffet at the hotel followed by the Annual Memorial Service. Don't miss the last chance to say your good-byes until next time.

Farewell Breakfast & Memorial Service, Continued...

The Memorial Service is open to all, and we want everyone to attend. For those who want to socialize during breakfast, we will be serving an optional Continental breakfast in the same room. The cost of the breakfast is \$10 per person, payable with your Reunion Reservation.

Important Reunion Information

Hotel reservations, cancellations, etc. Please remember that, unlike previous reunions, YOU are responsible for all arrangements with the hotel—reservations, payments, cancellations, suggestions, complaints, etc.

Everything other than the hotel is being handled by Military Reunion Planners (MRP) of Grapevine, Texas. For information about the reunion, you can call MRP on weekdays at 817-251-3551 or email them at info@MilitaryReunionPlanners.com

MRP works differently from our previous management company; they give us better planning, better facilities and more flexibility, but they aren't the "turnkey operation" that we are accustomed to. Please be understanding in all your dealings and interactions with them.

Reunion reservations are due by August 10, 2012. This is for the reunion and its events, as separate from your hotel. Late reservations will be accepted on a space available basis with a non-refundable \$10 per person late fee. You can make your reservations online at www.militaryreunionplanners.com/rankin or by submitting the written form that accompanies this newsletter. If you use the form and need a written confirmation, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Refund requests must be made in writing and postmarked before August 10, 2012. No refunds will be made after this date, unless you have purchased Tour Cancellation Insurance. No refunds will be given for any reason after midnight the day before the reunion starts. There is a \$10 per person refund processing fee. Your cancelled check is your receipt and proof of purchase. There is a \$25 fee for all returned checks.

Tour Cancellation Insurance protects you from unforeseen expenses caused by sickness, injury or any other causes that impact your travel plans. This insurance enables a refund of Tour & Banquet expenses at any time before the first day of the reunion. It expires at 11:59 PM on September 12, 2012. No refunds can be given after that time. If you need to cancel, please contact Military Reunion Planners immediately at 817-251-3551 or email cancel@MilitaryReunionPlanners.com for confirmation of your cancellation.

Tour procedures. Be sure to bring photo identification (like a driver's license) to all events. Please consider your abilities before purchasing tours: a certain amount of walking is necessary from the bus to attractions and in some instances, also to see the attractions. All tour times are subject to change. A final itinerary will be available at registration. MRP reserves the right to cancel any tour and pay a full refund if a minimum of 30 people per bus is not met. They cannot be held liable for failure of vendors to provide contracted services or for any injuries/accidents that may occur during the reunion.

Useful Contact Information

Military Reunion Planners
PO Box 1588
Colleyville, TX 76034
817-251-3551
www.MilitaryReunionPlanners.com/rankin
info@MilitaryReunionPlanners.com

Astor Crowne Plaza Hotel
79 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
Reservations: 888-696-4806
Hotel Operator: 504-962-0500

SHIPMATES ON PARADE



Ed Slomkowski, FN, 1952-1954

Ed lives in Pawley's Island, SC, where he hosts his own Sunday polka show on Michigan-based radio WRHC 106.9 FM. His show, featuring Happy Music for Happy People, is also heard on the internet at www.radioharborcountry.org.

It all started many years ago in New Jersey where Ed grew up listening to Polka Music. In 1968 he was invited by a friend to attend The Monday Night Polka Party on radio station WSOU 89.5 FM at Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ. Ed made several visits to the station and became one of the co-hosts. In 1972 a new community radio station was born in Elizabeth, NJ. With a large population of Polish, Slovenian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian people, Ed was able to get a one hour Polka Show on Sunday mornings. Within two years it grew to a two-hour Polka Show. In 1975 The Polka Carousel was born and the show became a three hour polka show on Sunday mornings on station WJDM 1530 AM. Ed Slomkowski had the Polka Show for 27 years.

In 1998 he and his family moved to South Carolina. It didn't take long for Ed to seek out a local radio station to play polka music. It was WGTN 1400 AM in Georgetown, SC. He was able to acquire one hour of radio time on Saturdays to play Happy Music for Happy People. The show lasted for a year and a half when the format of the station was changed. Now, Ed is back on radio to play Polka Music for Happy People in Radio Harbor Country.

Ed is a regular participant in the USS Rankin Lottery Pool.

Marshall Carrick, QM3, 1952

Marshall, whose hometown was San Francisco, came to the Rankin from USS Leonard F. Mason (DD-852). He tells us that the Rankin may have saved his life, since he came to us after his ship had served two combat tours in Korea and was headed back for a third. The combat had been pretty serious, including the delivery of continuous shore bombardment at the Siege of Wonsan. While the Mason was anchored in Wonsan, the North Koreans tried to board her by climbing up her anchor chain. Luckily for all of us, they failed.

He left the dangers of Korea to help bring the Rankin out of mothballs.

"I was part of the recommissioning crew. On the day of recommissioning, I was Quartermaster of the Deck, in full dress uniform with a .45 caliber side-arm. There were lots of guests and extra bunting, of course. I manned the log book and a phone. I also welcomed my parents on board when they came over from San Francisco."

Marshall had an interesting birthday on board the Rankin. "We had just completed passage through the Panama Canal and were steaming out into the Caribbean. I was Quartermaster of the Deck on the mid-watch. When 0000 came, I turned 21. It was easy for me to go into the chart house and note our position. On the Rankin I also registered to vote for the first time. Exciting times!"

Ron Sirois, SM2, 1965-1966

Ron, who was from Eagle Lake, Maine, told us of his history aboard the Rankin:

"When I went aboard the Rankin in 1965, I was a Seaman Apprentice in the deck force. There I made Seaman and a few weeks later requested an opening on the signal bridge. I got the opening, and after three months of mess cooking went up on the bridge. (I think the Signalmen needed a mess cook.)"

"In 1965 I went up for Signalman Third Class and got it near the end of the year. In 1966, I was able to go up for 2nd Class after they cut the waiting time to six months. I made SM2 and was transferred to the USS Direct (MSO-430) out of Little Creek. I stayed there until July 1968 when my four year tour was up."

"I remember James McCourt and Paul Lint from my time on the Rankin."

LOTTERY POOL



A lot of people have gotten hope and amusement from the USS Rankin Lottery Pool. This pool is not an activity of The USS Rankin Association, but is operated by and for the shipmates and others who participate in it. A new pool is starting now, and we can use a few more players. If you think you might like to play, call Skip Sander at 412-367-1376, or email ussrankin@aol.com

Every dollar contributed is used to buy a lottery ticket, and every dollar won is either plowed back into the pool or distributed among the participants. A \$25 contribution to the pool gets each participant 52 chances at a portion of a Mega Millions or PowerBall jackpot, plus other smaller prizes.

Pools run for three months, with four separate drawings each week. We win something in every drawing, because we buy tickets with every possible PowerBall and Mega Ball number. Winnings of \$10,000 or more, if any, are divided equally among the participants in the current pool. Smaller winnings are used to buy extra tickets when the jackpot is very large, and to pay the expenses of running the pool. Our affairs are conducted openly and in accordance with a set of highly detailed Rules and Procedures published at www.ussrankin.org/lottery.htm

While we hope to win a fortune in the pool, the mathematical chance of doing so is very, very small, even if we buy hundreds of tickets. Nevertheless, *somebody* wins sooner or later, and during a typical pool, these two lotteries pay out over \$100 million in cash Jackpots.

ANNUAL FUND DRIVE

We're doing OK on this year's fund drive, but contributions have slowed down in recent months. So far, shipmates and friends have contributed just under \$9,000. We need a few thousand more to replenish our accounts after last year's less-than-normal fundraising.

A reply envelope is enclosed. You can use it for your contribution and/or lottery pool payment.

Fund drive contributions are *not* used to support our reunions—they go toward printing, postage, office, telephone and web site expenses, etc.

As always, we don't have any sort of annual dues, and we serve every shipmate on the same basis as every other. We don't want anyone's bond to the Rankin to be broken just because they can't or don't send us any money.

Also as always, most people who send money send \$25.00. Many send more, and recently quite a few have sent \$100. If you send an extra \$5.00, we'll send you a directory showing everyone who was on the ship during the years you were aboard, including contact information if we have it. \$100 contributors will get one of our new 2012 USS Rankin Challenge Coins, pictured below. Last year's coins were very nice, but this year's coins are phenomenal! They commemorate the ship as a whole, and they particularly honor her "Gold E" years from 1956-1960.



REUNION HISTORY

You can now see the entire history of our reunions on our web site at www.ussrankin.org

We spent the better part of a month this winter, uploading material from all the known USS Rankin reunions, from those held by Jim Landreth in the 1990s, through The USS Rankin Association series held from 2004-2011.

Included in the new material is every page from every one of the Memory Books created by Larry and Brenda Eckard of Military Locator and Reunion Service, plus lots of photos taken by various reunion attendees.

Everything is in living color, of course, and it's put together very nicely. Navigating this part of the site is particularly easy, even for folks who aren't very accustomed to using the internet. Go to the site right now and take a look.



USS RANKIN NEWS

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