

USS RANKIN NEWS

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DALLAS REUNION – 2018



USS Rankin Reunion Attendees *Left to Right*: John Beck LT 1963-64, Willie Dunning PFC USMC 1962, Stew Gully LTJG 1957-58, Harry Fuerstenberger ICFN 1965, Tex Spicer BT3 1960-62, Sherrill Pittman RM3 1955-58, Paul Allen ENS(SC) 1946-47, Joe Paulsen SM3 1968-71, Ray Spicer BT3 1960-63, Ridgely Conant HM2 1969, Ed Gaskell LT 1954-56, Jan Smits EN2 1956-59, Allen Newell RM3 1959-60, John Burke EN2 1966-70, Mark Thomas IC3 1967-70, Skip Sander LTJG 1961-63

During a time when reunion groups from our era are shrinking and discontinuing reunions, the USS Rankin Association is finding new ways to grow. Our reunions are getting bigger and better every year, and 2018 was no exception. When we joined with people from nine other gator ships to have one of our best reunions ever.

The reunion began with a Thursday buffet dinner in the hotel's atrium lobby, and continued with fellowship in our two hospitality rooms. Friday morning we began three days of sightseeing in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. We saw the former Hotel Texas where JFK stayed the night before he was shot, and we saw Dealy Plaza with its famous Grassy Knoll. Later on, we visited the Sixth Floor Museum in the former Texas Schoolbook Depository, where Lee Harvey Oswald sat as he fired his fatal bullets.

Probably our best tour was of the Fort Worth Stockyards, where a herd of Texas longhorn cattle parades through the street twice every day. These are some BIG cows!

While we were in the Stockyards, we got to see

much of the annual Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering, which brings 20,000 fully outfitted cowboys to town, where they camp, rope, and parade. What a sight!

Then we saw the government printing plant where over half the country's currency is made, and the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, featuring artifacts from W's time, including a perfect replica of the Oval Office. Those who wanted to could sit at W's desk and play like they were big shots.

Sunday's farewell banquet, attended by 120 people, featured group and individual photographs, a touching Memorial Service, a first-class meal, and entertainment by a championship barbershop quartet.

See it all at www.ussrankin.org/reunion2018.htm

16th Annual Reunion Buffalo, NY – September 5-9, 2019

See page 8. If we know your email address, you'll get details and a registration package by email. If we don't know it and you've attended a recent reunion, or if you call Skip Sander at 412-367-1376, you'll get them by postal mail. They are also on our website at www.ussrankin.org

Shipmates on Parade



Lyle White, Born 1947. ENS/LTJG, 1969-1971.

In central Nebraska, not far from Kearney, there once existed the “1733 Ranch” so named because of its supposed location 1733 miles from either coast. Having lived my first 22 years not far from that landmark, it may come as no great surprise that I never laid eyes on let alone put a toe in the ocean prior to my arrival at Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI in the summer of 1969. My journey to this new life began with the top down on my red 1962 MGB roadster, a vehicle not known for reliability or comfort for anyone over 5' 10" tall. But the car was fun to drive. When I pulled into Newport I was glad to park it. First gear was gone and the clutch was slipping badly, and I am sure there must have been oil leaking from something. I recall being met at OCS by some eager to be taken seriously officer candidate who immediately informed me (like while the car door was half open and I was unfolding my frame in effort to present myself) of the Navy way. Who buttons every button anyway? Officer candidates do.

In November I graduated as Ensign White physically fit and mentally polished—okay so there were a few extra weekend hours marching in circles to atone for some failed inspection or another. The Rankin had not yet returned from its Mediterranean deployment so I took orders to report to Norfolk and attend navigator school. I met the ship when it pulled into Little Creek sometime around Christmas as I recall. I also recall there was a lot more traffic leaving the ship than arriving. When I did make it aboard, the ship was nearly deserted. It was a lonely Christmas.

I learned later that week that Foster Howell Corwith, III had realized on the return voyage that he had been getting way too much sleep in X Division, and jumped at the opportunity to become the Rankin's new Navigator. Thank you Foster! Consequently, I was assigned second division—a position I held

through a winter/spring Caribbean cruise and part way through the subsequent Med cruise that began in July 1970 and finished in December. Sometime during that cruise, I replaced Steve Mamikonian as Gunnery Officer.

Thinking back on the ONE-ALFAS and other deck evolutions, I'm still amazed at the skill and care the Boatswains Mates showed as hatch captains, coxswains, and during sea and anchor detail. When I joined the gunnery division, I developed a similar respect for the sailors who managed to keep that ancient arsenal functioning—mostly.

I'm looking at the Med 2-70 cruise book (using reading glasses, thank you), smelling its musty odor and searching for clues into that past. They are definitely there. There is the landing party. Bondi, Earnest Prichard (who looked a bit like Steve McQueen then), Burkholder, Weinstein, and others whose faces I recognize, but the book does not name. What a crew! In Little Creek we trained with the Marines and watched the SEALs train on the beach at night. I'll never forget the SEAL team dropping the inflatable raft they were carrying overhead. The DI ordered them to pick it up, and when they didn't, he started to fill it with sand. Soon it was overhead again and the team and DI faded over the horizon. Later on, we did a night exercise in Crete where, unknown to me, the locals supplied some of the outfit with fine Cretan wine. Some of the lads became unfit for serious action, and fortunately none was required. I do have a vivid recollection of SN Powell elevating one of his colleagues (his identity is safe with me) by the heels in the belief that vertical inversion would lead to instant sobriety. Then there was liberty. I'll leave those tales untold except to say, LT Corwith never failed to entertain.

After helping prepare the Rankin for decommissioning, I spent another tour on USS John King, (DDG-3) as the First Lieutenant. As the King had just come out of the shipyard, we had some fun at GTMO and then were off to the Med. I left active duty on September 11, 1972. That was it for me and the ocean.

Since then I have done a number of things, acquiring a number of graduate degrees in search of a path with heart. My first post-Navy job was as a psychiatry aide in a Nebraska mental health hospital, locked wards and all. A bit of a change for sure, from having someone make my bed to making the beds of others, not to mention emptying bedpans, giving showers, and chasing the residents who refused to take their meds. It was pretty close to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. After a year and a half of that, I got degrees and graduate training in elementary teaching (third grade for two years—now that is a tough job!), school coun-

selling, school psychology, and family therapy. Ultimately, I finished a Ph.D. at the University of Iowa in 1988 and became a faculty member at Southern Illinois University Carbondale where I worked for 27 years.

For a while I taught psychology courses on military bases for the university's distance education program. During one of those weekend sessions, I absent-mindedly lined up empty tables while talking. One of the students called out "Dr. White was you ever in the military?" I still check my gig line every morning, too. I guess the Navy did make a lasting impression. I ended up as the interim dean of the College of Education and Human Services, retiring in June, 2016.

PHIBRON 10



"Five Ships, homebased at Norfolk, Virginia, comprise one of the Navy's newest and most versatile combat assault units—Amphibious Squadron 10.

"The squadron, only one of its kind in the world, is a heavily armed, highly mobile, self-contained fighting force. It is composed of the assault carrier USS Boxer, three dock landing ships, an attack transport, and a total of about 4,000 men.

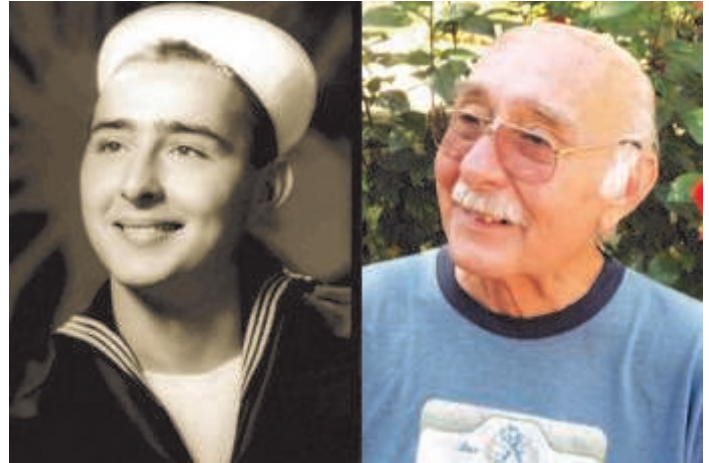
"The Boxer, a World War II-built carrier, has been converted into an amphibious assault ship carrying 24 huge transport helicopters and 1,000 fully equipped Marines in addition to a crew of 1,100. She also serves as the flagship for CAPT H. J. Kossler, USN, Commodore of Amphibious Squadron 10.

"The dock landing ships are about 600 feet long and are loaded with landing craft which in turn carry armored vehicles and other combat equipment. By ballasting so that their well decks are submerged, the LSD can disgorge the smaller craft which push up on the beach to unload the mobile equipment and troops.

"The attack transport provides logistical support."

The undated material above is in our archives along with an official Navy photo of PHIBRON 10. The Rankin was part of PHIBRON 10 during the early 1960s. At that time there were the Boxer, only one LSD, an AKA, an LST or two, and sometimes an LPD. The squadron was developing tactics for vertical envelopment, the helicopter delivery of forces on enemy shores. This concept had been used sporadically since the 1950s, and by the time of Vietnam had become a standard method of amphibious assault.

Shipmates on Parade



Greg Kristof, Born 1946, EMFN, 1965

I arrived aboard the Rankin on March 8, 1965, fresh out of Electrician's Mate "A" school. I was headed to Nuclear Power Basic School, but the timing was bad and I had to delay for six months, spending that time on the USS Rankin. Three others were in the same situation, and we joined the Rankin together.

After a couple of days of moving mattresses around for a deployment to Puerto Rico, I went into E-Division. Nelson Hadley EM2 took me under his wing, and we became good friends. We still have contact today. He was my mentor at the time, and showed me how to make do with what we had, even if the right parts weren't available. I've carried that experience with me throughout my whole life.

We loaded up the Marines and their equipment, then hauled them all off to some war games. We dropped them off at Vieques and went to a few liberty ports: St. Croix, St. Thomas, and San Juan.

Civil war broke out in the Dominican Republic in August 1965 while we were down there. We had to go back and pick up the Marines and take them to the real war. We sat offshore until the war was over, then picked up the men and equipment and returned to Norfolk.

The next month I got orders to Nuclear Power training in Bainbridge, Maryland. I finished the nuke schools and submarine school, and was transferred to the USS Daniel Webster (SSBN-626) in January 1967. I made four patrols, plus a 14 month overhaul in Newport News, and was honorably discharged in June of 1970.

When I got out I headed West and went to college on the GI Bill in Idaho. I graduated and went to work for a major construction company. Over the next 30 years I traveled all over our country and many others. In 1980, I even went back to the Dominican Republic.

I'm now retired and sitting on a trout stream in Idaho. Life is good!



FAMILIAR sight in NY harbor was beginning of one-port, world-wide tour.



OLD-WORLD-STYLE market added to men's interest while shopping in NYC.

AROUND

SILKS, SPICES, CAMEL SADDLES and tastes they missed overseas were the tour targets for a group of Navy-men from USS *Rankin* (AKA-103) who went ashore to discover New York City. Here, gifts they had bypassed in foreign markets were found to be in just as colorful a setting as in the old world.



RANKIN sailors visit shop in Syrian-Lebanese community while in Brooklyn.

KOHL ISHKOR, Arabic pastry, is enjoyed by men who had missed this



CHARTING 'WORLD CRUISE'—Liberty party from USS *Rankin* (AKA 103) stops in front of Woolworth building to get their bearings while sightseeing in NYC.

THE WORLD IN ONE PORT

NYC is like most big American cities that have large concentrations of nationality groups, except that New York has more. Men of *Rankin* as shown in the photographs on these two pages, found their way through Chinatown (Pell Street), had lunch and shopped in a bit of Naples only one street away (Mott Street),

crossed the Brooklyn Bridge and visited an Arabic Section (Atlantic Street) then traveled through the Greek, Ukrainian, Polish and German sections.

Back on their ship after cruising around the world in New York it was hard to realize that they had just left the Hudson River behind.



DOWN BEAT—Navyman gets word on how to beat and snap desert drum.



BRIGHT spot of the tour was Times Sq. It was like other cities, only more of it.



FLIPPER—Rankin men watch techniques in pizza pie-making during stop to eat.

treat abroad. Translation of the pastry's name is 'eat and thanks.'



SOUVENIRS APLENTY—Hong Kong gifts that were passed up while visiting the Far East because of time or shipping problems could be purchased at leisure.

Application for a Date with a Sailor

APPLICATION FOR A DATE WITH A SAILOR

NAME_____ AGE_____

ADDRESS_____

HEIGHT _____ WEIGHT_____ COMPLEXION_____ BUST_____ HIPS_____

WAIST_____ IS FIGURE GOOD_____ WHY?_____

DO YOU NECK?_____ DO YOU BELIEVE IN LOVE_____ FAVORITE INTERTAIN-

MENT_____ DO YOU SMOKE_____ BRAND_____ DO YOU LIKE

TO RAISE HELL_____ WHY_____ ARE YOU MARRIED_____

IF SO, WHAT NIGHTS IS YOUR HUSBAND NOT AT HOME_____

TYPE OF RESIDENCE_____ CAN YOU COOK_____ WHAT_____

WILL YOU TRY ANYTHING_____ IF SO WHAT_____ ONCE, OR

MORE THAN ONCE_____ PRESENT INCOME_____

WHAT DO YOU ESTIMATE YOUR CAPACITY OF THE FOLLOWING TO BE-----

WINE _____ BURBON_____ GIN_____ SCOTCH_____ BEER_____ MILK _____

WHAT IS THE EXACT CARFARE TO THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS---

PARK_____ DEPOT_____ MOVIES _____ BEACH_____ CAFE _____

DANCE_____

IS PICTURE INCLOSED_____ IS IT YOUR BEST_____ IS IT YOUR BEST POSE_____

HAVE YOU A SISTER_____ HOW OLD _____ HAVE YOU A BROTHER _____ AGE_____

QUANTITY_____ LBS._____ HEIGHT_____ IS HE A BOXER_____ WRESTLER_____

INVALID_____ OR JUST PLAIN PEST_____

INDICATE ON OTHER SIDE OF PAPER THE EXACT LOCATION OF FOLLOWING---

A--PARRENTS BEDROOM B--LIGHT SWITCH C--BACK DOOR D--SOFA E--NEAREST
OPEN WINDOW TO SOFA F--QUICKEST WAY OUT G--ANY HIDING PLACES-CLOSETS,
ETC--H--ICEBOX I--DOG HOUSE (DOES DOG BITE)

SIGNATURE

Variations of this item appear several places in our archives. It's hard to know if they are real or just a joke. After all, most sailors are interested in women, and most sailors have minds that work in the orderly way shown in the Application. Former sailors are invited to ask these classic questions of their wives and significant others. But they are advised to be VERY careful about it!

Vieques and Culebra – From Targets to Tourism

If you sailed the Caribbean on the USS Rankin, you got to some really nice liberty ports—San Juan, St. Thomas, St. Croix, Aruba and Kingston, to name a few. These were, and still are, sunswept jewels, with miles of sandy beaches, lots of shops featuring fine china, perfumes, and bottles of exotic beverages, not to mention a number of interesting casinos, golf courses, island bars and gin mills.

On the other hand, you got to practice landings on Vieques and Culebra, two godforsaken islands a few miles off the eastern coast of Puerto Rico.

Since World War II, Vieques and Culebra had been the two components of the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range Inner Range. They were used as landing and naval gunfire support training areas for the war in the Pacific, as well as laboratories for developing new tactics. Their use continued long after the war was over.

In 1999, a series of highly publicized protests

against the Navy's presence began. In 2004, there was a massive occupation of the Vieques practice range. Shortly thereafter, the Navy ended its presence on Vieques.

Tourism quickly sprung up in Vieques. Culebra became a weekend vacation destination with one of the world's best beaches. The illustrations on this page are from 2004.

Hurricane Maria devastated Vieques on September 19, 2017. The island's booming tourist economy experienced a near-total shutdown. As of early 2019, the largest hotel, the successor to the 2004 version on this page, is still closed, but smaller operations are starting to come back.

Welcome To **VIEQUES**

or "Isla Nina", Puerto Rico's little sister island, located 7 miles off the east coast of PR. Christopher Columbus sighted Vieques in 1493. Since then it has remained a jewel of the tropics, Nestled between the turquoise sea of the Caribbean and the azure waters of the Atlantic. Now thousands of visitors come every year to discover what the 9000+ inhabitants already know, Vieques' beauty is unsurpassed.

A must see on your stay is our bioluminescent bay. It is one of the best examples of this phenomenon in the world and will absolutely astound you. Next, you can rent a vehicle and go beach hopping. Chances are you will be one of only a handful of people on a half-mile stretch of glistening white sand.

To learn a little about Vieques' history and culture visit our museums: the Historical Trust located on the strip in Esperanza, Punta Mulas Lighthouse just past the ferry docks in Isabel II, and the Fort Code de Mirasol, the last military fort built by the Spaniards in the Western Hemisphere, perched on a hill just above the center of town.

You'll find the people of Vieques very friendly and helpful if you are in need of assistance, directions, or just a quick Spanish lesson. So kick back, order another pina colada and watch the sun go down.

Experience
the elegance and romance
of fine dining at
WYNDHAM
Martineau Bay
Vieques' only luxury resort



Paso Fino

The ocean is your backdrop while dining at Paso Fino, Martineau Bay's most elegant restaurant. Enjoy the fine cuisine and atmosphere while surrounded by the tranquility and harmony of this charming island.

Reservations requested.

Isla Nina

For a more casual atmosphere, dine poolside at Isla Nina and enjoy the cool Caribbean breeze.

Taino

The most beautiful bar on the island. Taino is the ultimate in comfort and style with an assortment of specialty cocktails and live music.



**WYNDHAM MARTINEAU BAY
RESORT & SPA**

VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

Route 200 KM 3.4 • Telephone 787.741.4100

2019 Reunion: Buffalo / Niagara Falls, NY



The USS Rankin Association's Sixteenth Annual Reunion will be held in Buffalo/Niagara Falls, NY, from September 5-9, 2019. Reunion Headquarters will be the beautiful and centrally-located Millennium Hotel Buffalo. The hotel provides a free shuttle to and from the airport, and there is a huge shopping mall across the street. You can walk there or take the hotel's shuttle. The room rate is \$129 per night, including free breakfast.

In addition to our own group, there will be reunion groups there from the USS Algol, USS Bexar, USS Cambria, USS Pickaway, USS Telfair, and USS Yancey, as well as people from other amphibious ships, mostly AKAs and APAs.

You will like the people from those ships. They're just like the Rankin people who were aboard at a different time than you. You all have the same experiences in common – boot camp, seabags, heavy weather, landing craft, cargo handling, ONE ALFAS and more.

The inclusion of several ships in our reunions insures the longevity of the Rankin's reunion and theirs. As time goes on, membership in each group declines. Eventually the group gets so small that it isn't practical to hold reunions. Holding joint reunions keeps us large enough to postpone that day for many years.

SCHEDULE OF REUNION EVENTS

Thursday, September 5

- 1400 – Registration begins, Hospitality Room opens.
- 1800 – Group Welcome Buffet

Friday, September 6

- 0700 – Free breakfast buffet
- 0900-1500 – Erie Canal Cruise with Lunch

Saturday, September 7

- 0700 – Free breakfast buffet
- 0930-1530 – Tour USS Little Rock & Buffalo Military Park

Sunday, September 8

- 0700 – Free breakfast buffet
- 0900-1500 – Buffalo City & Niagara Falls Tour
- 1530 – Membership Meeting at the hotel.
- 1700 – Photo Session & Cash Bar
- 1930 – Banquet dinner

Monday, September 9

- 0700 – Free breakfast buffet.

After breakfast, check out of the hotel, say your goodbyes, and head for home!

The Hospitality Room, featuring abundant quantities of top-shelf beer, wine, liquor and snacks, will be open every day and evening during the reunion. It will close for good when the banquet-goers finally retire for the night. We hope to see you in Buffalo!

Invite your Friends

Some of our reunion attendees are groups of guys who served together many years ago. For them, the reunions are special times. They can relive their past adventures together, and they can renew close friendships that the years have allowed to cool off.

One such group is from the Operations Department in the early to mid 1960s. Beeler, McCubbin, Devault, Grant and McCourt (now deceased) have enjoyed many reunions together. This year they are contacting others from their group and inviting them to attend.

You can do that, too. Just get in touch with your buddies and invite them. If you contact Skip Sander at ussrankin@aol.com, or call him at 412-367-1376, he can send you a list of everyone who was aboard the ship during your years, complete with current contact information if we have it.

Play the Lottery

The USS Rankin Lottery Pool has been playing the Powerball and Mega Millions lotteries for ten years. It's a lot of fun, and we might just get rich one day. Learn how to join us by visiting the website at www.ussrankin.org/lottery or calling Skip at 412-367-1376.

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