

# YANCEY MEMORIES

Volume 6, Issue 2

April 2002

## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS YANCEY AKA-93



### Special Points of Interest

- One person responded with his story about his first days at sea. Thanks to him and hope others will follow suit.
- Page three has TAPS and WELCOME MAT. We remember four who have passed away and welcome one newly found shipmate.
- Did you ever bring any souvenirs back from Japan? See what Harold Helger tried to get home. His story is under MAIL CALL on pages three and four.
- See if you are depicted on the 35 mm slides that are up for the taking. See page four for details.
- Have you ever seen a sea bat? Read the story on page five.
- A story about Orville Miller is on pages five and six.

## MY FIRST DAYS AT SEA

By George Dawson

*In the last issue, we asked for stories about your first days on board a ship. George Dawson offers his recollections.*

When I joined the Navy, shortly after Pearl Harbor, I was hoping for duty on a destroyer. I didn't get it. After boot camp I was sent to radio school and graduated as an RM3C. Then, to my great surprise, I was sent to an Army signal corps camp along with about 200 other Navy men. About half were radiomen, but others were sailors who could speak certain foreign languages, such as

French or Spanish; and there were many officers. There we were given the same sort of training that soldiers get—learning to shoot rifles, pistols, sub-machine guns; trained in detecting poison gases; going on field maneuvers; and getting commando-type drills. We went through the "overhead fire course" which involved crawling on our bellies one rainy night while machine-gun bullets whizzed overhead, as we tried to get under barbed wire and get to the machine guns intact.

We were also schooled in the use of

Army field radio equipment, tossing hand grenades, and Army-type clothing. When we asked for an explanation, we were told only that "when you come back—IF you come back—you will be covered with medals." We were formed into "communication teams" of about 20 men. Several radiomen, men who could speak certain foreign languages, and some officers made up each team. I was assigned to Spanish Team Three. We assumed that we would be invading Spain, because the Spanish government

*(Continued on page 2)*

*(Continued from page 1)*

was sympathetic with Germany. Our task would be to go ashore with the invasion force and set up field radio stations to communicate with ships off shore, with our allies, and possibly with underground freedom fighters.

After a short leave, we assembled in Norfolk and there boarded a Liberty Ship (the "George Leonard") along with a large number of soldiers. The cargo holds had been converted to sleeping quarters. The racks were so close together that you could not sleep on your side or turn over at night without bumping the person above you. All of our things had to be in our racks with us—sea bags, rifles, gas masks, mess kits, etc. There was no ventilation, and the air became putrid with the stench of unwashed bodies, vomit, cigarette smoke, and engine fuel. I found it impossible to sleep, so I found a way of getting up to the deck after dark. I would wedge myself beside a hatch cover to keep from being swept overboard. Although it was cold and wet, it was better than being in that stink-hole below. The two meals we received each day were vile. We joined a huge convoy and headed out to sea, not knowing where we were going. About half way across the Atlantic our engine failed. The rest of the convoy sailed on, leaving us alone in a sea infested with U-boats. They could not spare an escort to protect just one ship. We sweated it out for several hours, but the engine was finally repaired and we were able to catch up with the convoy (traveling at only eight knots) before dark. As we neared Gibraltar there was a U-boat attack, but the escorts took care of this and no ship was lost.

When the Rock of Gibraltar came into sight we assumed that we were indeed going to invade Spain. One of our Spanish-speaking team members was even making plans to visit his grandmother in Madrid! However, we sailed right past Gibraltar. A couple of days later we anchored somewhere off the North African coast. That night our team was or-

dered to disembark. We climbed down the cargo nets into the landing craft. The sea was rough, and the landing craft was violently plunging up and down. I was afraid that I would break a leg while trying to get into it. I lost my helmet overboard, but did manage to get into the craft. The trip to the shore was long and difficult. There were sunken ships all around. When we finally landed we had no idea where we were or what we were supposed to do. We learned that our officers were still on the ship and would not come ashore until the next day. Nothing was happening at the place where we landed, so we scouted the area, decided that we were in no immediate danger, and looked for a place to make camp. We found a place that seemed to be safe and secure.

After dining on K-rations, we set up our little tents and tried to get some sleep. The next morning we awoke and started to look around. To our great surprise and discomfort, we found that we had settled down in an abandoned French Navy ammunition dump. There were huge shells and cases of gunpowder all over the place. We thanked the Lord that our effort to start small fires the night before had failed! We quickly decided to move to a different neighborhood. When our officers arrived they had no idea what we were supposed to do either.

After a few days, we took off again, landing near Oran, Algeria. A radio station was set up and I served there for several months. We were involved in the invasions of Italy and Southern France. After the defeat of the Germans, I was sent back to the U.S. for a short time, had some leave, and then shipped out for Okinawa. After the great battle of Okinawa was over, we established a sea plane base there, and I was stationed there for a year. So, before joining the USS Yancey crew in 1950, I served on a couple of troop ships and a destroyer escort. The year I spent on the Yancey was the most enjoy-

able of my nine years in the U.S. Navy.

George G. Dawson  
USS Yancey Radioman 1c, 1950-51  
2292 Arby Court  
Wantagh, NY 11793-3852  
516-826-1024

## STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The YANCEY MEMORIES is the official publication of the USS YANCEY AKA-93 Association. From now on it will be published quarterly in January, April, July, and October, *subject to receiving sufficient funding*. The Newsletter is funded by voluntary contributions from the membership. All members are encouraged to support the voice of the YANCEY. A financial statement appears in each issue of the newsletter.

The newsletter is intended to be a vehicle for the members to express opinions, make suggestions and especially share experiences.

Unless otherwise stated, the views and opinions printed in the newsletter are those of the article's writer, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Association leadership or the Editor of the Newsletter.

All letters and stories submitted will be considered for publication, except unsigned letters will not be published. Letters requesting the writer's name be withheld will be honored, but published on a space available basis. Signed letters with no restrictions will be given priority.

Letters demeaning to another shipmate will not be printed; letters espousing a political position will not be printed.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space and grammar limitations.

You are encouraged to actively participate in the newsletter family, by submitting your stories and suggestions.

## TAPS



The Yancey Memories was notified of the following shipmates' deaths. Our deepest sympathy is extended to the families of the deceased. Anyone who knows of a deceased shipmate, or learns of one, please notify ML & RS, Inc so their names can be included in TAPS and be added to the Honor Roll.

*Richard D. Vincent (1954-57)  
Died March 28, 2002*

*Roy L. Soule  
Died January 24, 2002*

*Stanley J. Allemand (1943-46)  
Died December 27, 2001*

*Joel W. Rosenkranz (1962-66)  
Died March 2002*

### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Balance remaining after 01/02 issue  
**\$535.92**

Funds received since 01/02 issue  
**\$270.00**

Funds available for 04/02 issue  
**\$805.92**

Funds expended for 04/02 issue  
**\$221.06**

Remaining balance  
**\$584.86**

#### 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@aol.com (e-mail)  
mlrsnewsletters@aol.com (Newsletter e-mail)  
www.mlrsinc.com  
"Our Reunions Work So You don't Have To"*

## NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE ON LINE

The Newsletter for the USS YANCEY reunion is available to download from the Military Locator & Reunion Service Inc web site.

If you are able to visit our web site and download the Newsletter, and therefore do not need a paper copy mailed to you, please let us know.

Please visit our web site at [www.mlrsinc.com](http://www.mlrsinc.com), then follow the link labeled Reunions, then scroll down until you see the listing for the USS YANCEY. Click on the button labeled Newsletters, and in a few minutes the newsletter should appear on your screen. (As a side note - it took about 4 minutes on my computer). This will only work if you have Adobe Reader 4.0 or higher. You can also download this viewer for free from our web site.

If this works for you and you would like to receive all future mailings from us in this method, please send me an e-mail requesting to subscribe to the YANCEY E-mail Roster. Each time something new is available, we will send you an e-mail informing you something new is available on the web site. **Please let us know if your e-mail address changes so you don't miss any important information.**

**To subscribe to the YANCEY E-mail Roster please send an e-mail to [SubscribeMLRS@aol.com](mailto:SubscribeMLRS@aol.com), put the phrase SUBSCRIBE YANCEY in the Subject line and type your name and e-mail address in the body of your e-mail. You will be placed in the e-mail roster.**

Your name and postal mailing address will remain in our computers and will appear on all mailing lists, etc distributed to other members of your group.

If you have any question regarding this, do not hesitate to ask!

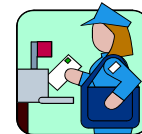
Dina Coffey



## WELCOME MAT

The following shipmate has been located since the last newsletter. Welcome Aboard! We hope to see you at the next reunion. You are invited to become an active member of the association.

*Jere Retallack (1963-65)  
619 Candlewycck Rd  
Lancaster, PA 17601  
717-569-2641*



## MAIL CALL

*This story was sent to me (Ken Groom) recently. It is from former storekeeper Harold Hegler. One has to be reminded that in the early fifties that the Yancey was "A Fleet Issue Ship" which meant that our routine was to take cargo to Japan/Korea off load the cargo to another ship or ships and stay in Japan for about three weeks then return to Oakland to repeat the cycle. This meant that our time in port was somewhat short so we bought gifts for mother such as egg-shell china and a few other hard to get treasures. One of those nuggets was purchased by Harold Hegler—not for his mother. His story follows:*

"One incident a few should remember: After a night of making the bars in Sasebo, Japan, I came up with the brilliant idea of bringing back to East Texas, a big jug of sake. I never could stand the taste of the stuff, but nevertheless I bought a huge jug of the stuff. It

(Continued from page 3)

was either a 3 or 5 gallon jug—packed well which I managed to get back aboard ship and hid it well. The only problem was that a few others knew of what I'd done and about half way home next time, in the middle of the Pacific, it was decided that the sake shouldn't be carried back to East Texas but should be consumed. And it was!

In two or three days, all that was left of my plan was an empty sake jug and several red eyed sailors. I suspect McCulley was one of them. We tossed the empty jug overboard with a good seal. For all I know it may still be bobbling somewhere. East Texas never got to see the big jug of sake."

*The Pacific current flows from Japan past the Aleutians, down the coast of Alaska, then to the Canadian coast and past the coast of Washington. Rest assured, Harold, I will be looking for that jug and will let you know if I find it.*

Submitted by Harold Hegler of Daingerfield, TX to Ken Groom

MLRS,

I have some 35mm color slides taken during my duty aboard the USS YANCEY AKA-93 between 1951 and 1954 of several sailors and will be glad to give them to any of these former sailors if they want them. The slides have maintained their color very well and make excellent photos if anyone wants them.

The names and approximate number of slides are as follows:

Jim Linnell—3  
Dinwiddie—1  
Billy Jo Fields—3  
Jerry Keeney & Selke—1  
Ancel Ray McDuffee—1  
Jim Stokes—1  
Shoemaker (deceased),  
Karides, & Wallace  
Milo Poppen—1  
B.J. Fields & Jim Linnell—1  
Ralph McCulley—2  
Barnes & Nelson—1  
Barnes—1  
J.W. Miller, Jack Trout, & Ai

kin—1  
Al Crispo & Hegler—1  
Johnny Miller—1  
Jerry Keeney—1  
Ed Stephens Milo Poppen 1  
Gonzales (from Hawaii)—1  
Al Crispo—1  
Verl Lamb & Hegler—1  
Mormon Temple grounds in  
Hawaii—several  
Anyone wants any of these, let me  
know.  
Harold Hegler  
170 County Road 1107  
Daingerfield, TX 75638

Dear George Clifton,

I read the Yancey Memories, Volume 6, Issue 1, with great interest.

I would like to clarify one item that was printed under USS Yancey's history on page 6.

I actually mailed the pages of the history to the newsletter, but the information was downloaded from the internet and mostly excerpts from the ship's log, but I did not compile the information. I only printed it and sent it in as a matter of interest.

I don't know who compiled it and put it on the Internet and I hope there will not be any problem with giving me the credit for the information. I have re-opened the html document and am unable to determine who the author actually is.

At the end of the document is a Copyright 1997 by Paul M. Hudy, but that specifically indicates that it refers to the photos included.

The Biography of George Rohrman on page 6, I did write, but as you can see from two other articles in the same newsletter, I do not know if I was coming or going from San Francisco harbor in the fog. The other two articles seem to think we were going.

The current issue of the newsletter is very impressive and I have enjoyed receiving all of the issues and look forward to more in the future. Keep up all of the good work.

George Rohrman  
214 Harding Rd Apt 4  
Freehold, NJ 07728  
georoh@juno.com

Another story for the USS Yancey newsletter:

*"He stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plumb."*

Most of this story is true—I have added a touch of "what probably happened" to make it more complete—I can always blame fading memory with age.

In the early '50s our baker on the Yancey was called "Mother Goodwin"—his real name was Frank E. Goodwin. "Mother" was a former bell hop from Miami, Florida. I was told by someone that they called him "Mother" because of his pleasant personality and his humming while working at his Navy position. If someone knows of his whereabouts today, I would certainly like to know.

One night on our way to Japan and right after the movies on #4 hatch, I happened to go up on the deck above the bakery on the Starboard side. That deck had an outside passage way with railings. It was a very calm night with a sea like glass. In the dim light I saw a group of sailors around the railing above the bakery.

It seems that "Mother" had just baked a bunch of pies and had opened the porthole to allow the pies to cool. Why pies need to cool in fresh air, I don't know, but we do know that our mothers did it that way. Anyway, I assume that during the movie the aroma of fresh pies were sent aft and as the vapors expanded and thinned. By the time these diluted aromas had reached the number four hatch, only the tuned orifices of the most sensitive nostrils could detect them.

Whoever detected the smell of the pies was lured into a devious plan. The bakery was locked, so the only way to get a pie was through the porthole. This would require the skill of a gymnast, a wiry guy as well as one that was willing to be part of this plan. Through some careful selection process, one man was chosen. I

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*(Continued from page 4)*

imagine the ground rules for this selection process included: a gymnast, a daring individual, good looks, friend of the working girl (as Doc said in Mr. Roberts) and a partiality to pies. This narrowed it down to Luke Roberts.

As I walked forward on the 01 deck, there was Luke Roberts hooking his legs over the rail ready to do his act. He had someone holding on to him and then he went over the rail and "pulled out his plumb (pie)." I suppose there was feasting, frolic and fun following this historical event, but I was not a party to that.

If someone has information on the above events, I would like to hear.

Submitted by:

Ken Groom  
Yancey Historian  
e-mail: kdg345@aol.com

### **"SEA BATS— A STORY OF MYSTERY AND INTRIGUE"**

*"I never saw a Sea Bat, I never hope to see one, but I would rather see than be one."* On a long, boring voyage from Sasebo, Japan, to Oakland Naval Supply Center, you might see almost anything. As I remember it, we were out to sea for about two weeks and with things a bit crowded since we were carrying Navy passengers. These Navy personnel were on their way to reassignment or discharge. I don't know who first started this activity, but it probably goes back to the Revolutionary War or is an English tradition that we adopted. We were just carrying on as we had been taught.

Some of the crew would get a cardboard box about the size that contained canned goods—but this box had something else. A small opening would be cut into the top of the box about the size of a baseball. It had to be that size be-

cause the devious crew members that were behind this had to insert some kind of a ball in the box. It was convenient (if not mandatory) that the ship be in calm, but rolling seas.

The next element of this plan included a box of crackers. One of the crew would kneel down and proceed to throw small parts of the crackers into the opening. As the ship would roll, the box would "twitch" and give the appearance of some sort of animal or beast inside the box. His accomplice (sometimes called an Ace Heab) would stand back a few feet with a broom and be casually sweeping the same spot on the deck.

I observed this event near number four hatch. An innocent passenger would happen by and inquire what they were doing. "Why we caught this sea bat and are keeping it as a pet and feeding it," was the reply. Sooner or later, the passenger would bend over for a closer look. About that time the "broom custodian" would advance a pace or two and whack the passenger in the aft midsection (rump). I actually saw one passenger have this happen to him, but he still wanted to see his first sea bat, so he stooped over again. The next instance he ran after the "broom custodian" to try and give him a whack. Usually the first whack was enough, the passenger understood what a sea bat was and he would sit over on number four hatch to watch the next victim. In about one out of five times, the victim would go to find another passenger to see the sea bat.

I am still looking for sight of my first sea bat—but I am cautious that no one has a broom near by. If any shipmates remember this story differently or have something to add, please send it in.

Submitted by:

Ken Groom  
2505 South 259th Place  
Kent, WA 98032  
kdg345@aol.com

Dear Gentlemen:

This letter will come as a surprise

to you I'm sure, and it is even interesting to me how it came about to be. I will try to explain as uninvolved with lengthy details as possible...

First of all, I am a member of the American Legion and I receive a monthly magazine upon which time I always check the reunion announcements regarding upcoming veteran gatherings. My particular interest this past issue involved the listing of a planned reunion for former naval personnel who had served over the years aboard the USS Yancey AKA 93.

Fortunately for me, the name of George Clifton of Charleston, SC appeared as a contact source for Yancey veterans. I decided to call George to find out more details involving the Yancey.

In my early youth I was separated from my biological family. I knew very little about my family as I was adopted from an orphanage and therefore had little or no knowledge of my early beginnings. This was true until one summer day in 1947 in Owensboro, Kentucky, when a young sailor all dressed in white approached me in my grandmother's front yard and announced that he was my brother, Orville Miller, and that he was home on leave from the US Navy. I knew I had a couple brothers, but never figured I'd ever see one of them. Orville changed all that with his surprise visit.

Orville had joined the Navy at an illegal age somehow, and his first duty assignment as explained by him to me was to the South Pole with Admiral Byrd. I found out later that this naval operation was to become known as "Operation High Jump."

He explained to me how he had just returned from a cruise to the South Pole with Admiral Byrd, and of course, at my age of 12, I knew all about the famous admiral, but never realized I had a brother who was aboard his "flag ship." Orville, who was five years older than me, explained to me how he had to endure 75 degrees below zero tem-

peratures and that he had to wear a special fur piece over his nose to keep his nose from freezing and breaking off. I recall very little from whatever else he may have told me at that time, but later in life, I did lots of research on Operation High Jump and found it to be one of Admiral Byrd's greatest naval exploits.

After Orville returned to Pearl Harbor for duty assignment, he wrote to me and told me he would be sailing aboard a cargo ship named the USS Yancey, AKA 93 and sent me a picture of her. I still have that picture after all these years. It was my understanding that the Yancey in those years sailed all over the South Pacific, taking in ports such as at Guam, Wake Island, Samoa, as well as other south sea ports that I'm unaware of. The Yancey sailed out of Pearl Harbor and during most of these voyages I received little or no mail from Orville. He explained to me that it did very little good to write letters as there was nowhere to mail them while sailing in the high seas. So, with that reality, many years went by before I ever saw Orville again. I eventually found him in Evansville, Indiana, located on the Ohio River about 60 miles across the river from Owensboro, his and my original birthplace.

Over the years I eventually resided for the bulk of my life in various towns throughout Michigan and contacts with brother Orville were rare. We would exchange Christmas cards from time to time, but I regret I had limited time to spend with him to acquaint myself more with him. After his discharge from the Navy, he drove semi trucks for a pottery company in Evansville and did that for many years before coming severely injured in a traffic mishap during one of his cross-country deliveries. He became disabled and sadly for me, lived most of his remaining life with nothing but memories.

During the time he was aboard the Yancey, Orville told me his

classification was Fireman, but I don't recall what rating he had. He described how the temperatures got as hot as 130 degrees while executing his duties in the bowels of the ship.

I lost track of the Yancey for many years until one day in the Detroit Free Press I saw an article involving an incident in which the Yancey broke its mooring lines and did considerable damage to a bridge. George Clifton said the incident occurred in the late 1960s in Chesapeake Bay. Clifton said he served aboard the Yancey during the Vietnam War period and that he sailed her around the Mediterranean Sea and other areas in that vicinity. He explained that the USS Yancey now rests on a reef somewhere off the coast of North Carolina, I think, having been sunk purposely by Naval authorities. If anyone of the readership of this letter and its contents can tell me more about the Yancey, I'd surely appreciate it. Although I never personally served aboard her, nor ever saw her, I still have a soft spot in my heart for her as I'm sure many of you who served on board her do as well.

To finalize this lengthy letter, for those of you who may have served aboard the Yancey during the late 1940s out of Pearl Harbor and may have known my brother Orville, I'd appreciate hearing from any of you, or others who served on the Yancey who would care to correspond with me.

Orville Miller, former mate aboard the USS Yancey, AKA 93, passed away May 15, 1996, in Evansville, Indiana and is buried across the Ohio River in the town of Henderson, Kentucky. I attended his funeral proceedings at that time. He was only 67 years of age, my exact age now.

Upon the advice of George Clifton, my contact in my American Legion magazine, I wrote this letter as he thought Orville's involvement in Operation High Jump, as well as his tour on the Yancey, might be interesting reading for some of you

vets in the quarterly publication he described as upcoming.

My phone number is (616) 696-1513 for anyone who might be interested in calling me. And most important, if possible, I'd appreciate a copy of the quarterly publication if your firm does decide to print any of Orville's personal story.

Thanks so much,  
Harold Miller Schmaltz  
PO Box 414  
Cedar Springs, MI 49319

## YANCEY HISTORY

*(Continued from the Jan. Issue)*

Due to the tactical situation ashore, Yancey did not begin discharging general cargo until the morning of the 27th, when she anchored off "Red" beach. There, bad weather and unfavorable beach conditions made unloading slow, and nightly air raids interrupted the process several times. Much of the time, landing craft could not be used due to the high surf, so cargo had to be carried ashore by LST's and LCT's.

During that unloading period, Yancey received her baptism of fire in the form of a long-range mortar shell. The ship, however, did not suffer any casualties and continued her duties offshore, embarking casualties. Thirty of the wounded were kept on board for evacuation, while others were transferred to nearby hospital ships. Yancey finally completed the unloading procedure on 2 March and, screened by a pair of destroyers, got underway for Saipan in company with three other transports.

After discharging casualties and fueling at Saipan, Yancey proceeded via Tulagi to Espiritu Santo where she joined the rest of her squadron and embarked units of Army's 27th Division.

On 25 March, Yancey sortied for the Ryukyus as part of TG 51.3, the group earmarked as the mobile reserve. En route, via a scheduled stop in the Carolines, Yancey towed a disabled LSM to Ulithi.

*(Continued in the next issue.)*