

Remembering Dick Howland

Richard (Dick) Howland reported on the USS DeHaven (DD-727) in 1963 within several months of when I was due to depart in 1963. He was quiet and reserved, but when you asked him a question, you got an answer that was forthright and well thought out. He became the Electronics Material Officer, succeeding me. I was the Communications Officer. Dick was in charge of the Electronics Technicians, a group of very smart electronics men who maintained the radars, radio transmitters and receivers, and teletype equipment. In short, any outside communications on the ship depended on the Electronics Technicians.

Dick reported to Lt. David Dickmann, a very smart Operations Officer. Lt. Dickmann had one very bad habit, which was chewing on the filtered cigarettes he smoked!! Also in the Operations Dept. was Ltjg Steve Barber, a guy who was hard working and loved raising hell on Liberty. He put me on the train in Kaohsiung, Taiwan as I was leaving the ship to go back to the states at the end of my active duty enlistment of two years in 1963. Luckily, we got back together in 2016 when my daughter and her family moved to Alameda, CA in the San Francisco Bay. Steve lived in nearby Burlingame, CA, and we met for lunch each year when my wife, Betty, and I visited our daughter, Heather, and her husband and two sons. Steve unfortunately died in 2019, because he knew Dick better than I did.

As we reviewed the other officers on board the DeHaven, your partner's name came up in our luncheon conversations. Steve said he thought Dick was living in NYC, but had lost track of him. I'm so glad he went to law school and became a lawyer, he must have loved doing that. Another name who served was Ltjg Jim Davidson, who became a Supply Corps Admiral. We lost our Engineering Officer, Lt. Charles (Don) Witt, who was killed in Vietnam while commanding a Swift Boat on the Mekong River. The Captain of our ship was Cdr. James Montgomery, who became a Rear Admiral. His brother commanded an oiler, and when they were in the same port played tennis together.

My personal friend was Ltjg Jerry Henkener, who was in the Engineering Dept. He was the best man at my wedding when I married my wife, Elizabeth (Betty) in 1965 in Syracuse. We have lived in the Syracuse, N.Y. area since 1963. Jerry lives outside San Antonio, TX with his wife, Sandy Patin.

Others who served when Dick was on board DeHaven were Ens. Tom Murray, who married the daughter of the Secretary of the Navy. He later became captain of a nuclear submarine. Ltjg Jerry Cooper, who was a Naval Academy graduate, was in the Gunnery Dept. Revell Carr was aboard, too, but I don't remember much about him. Ltjg. Richard Marquis was also in the Operations Dept., and he retired to the Virginia area after he retired from the Navy.

Since Dick served when the Vietnam war was heating up, the ship operated in great danger. We ran many gunnery exercises, and each one of them was fraught with danger. He probably witnessed shore bombardment in Vietnam, which would have been frightening. I missed that!

The best thing about DeHaven was that the crew was extremely competent and hard-working. Despite the danger of war and weather, you always felt safe. When we escorted aircraft carriers, we always protected them at all costs. I'm sure Dick served honorably and with distinction as all heroes did. I am sorry you lost your partner, and the grief you must feel at his passing. Please accept my heartfelt condolences to you on this, his day, Veterans Day.

Sincerely,

John P. Burlew, Lt.

USS DeHaven (DD-727)