

# **THE WAR YEARS**

**A Biographical Sketch**  
**of**  
**Robert H. Rifleman, MD**  
**&**  
**Janet E. Rifleman**

Compiled & Written by  
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# INTRODUCTION

World War Two, "the war to end all war's," ended just seven years prior to my birth. However, it could have been a century ago. My generation, "the baby boomer's," knew of the war from history classes and movies. Our parents either served in the military or were greatly affected back home by the war. In the case of my family, like I'm finding with other families, little was spoken of the war. It was a time most wanted to forget. The war was a most necessary evil. One that has been glorified by movies yet internalized personally by those that fought in it. My father, Robert Rifleman, was one of them.

Through the years my father and mother would speak in tidbits about the "war years." I would hear of my father being rushed through basic training, how my mother was so impressed when she met this dashing naval officer in uniform. My father spoke in great respect about Admiral Spruance, whom he worked under and served with. About a few encounters with kamikazes and torpedoes destroying his bunk. As a child we would play with Dad's uniform's, combat helmet, and stored "stuff" in his naval trunk. I have even been displaying a Japanese rifle in my home for years. But I never really knew of his naval history and how my mother, Janet Benn Rifleman, parlayed into the picture.

For years my father really never spoke in great details about his life before kids, and this kid never really asked. Until now. Over the past four to five years I've been asking more and attempting to gain further information. I've purchased books on the war in the Pacific Theater and read a lot. However, I never really knew a time period on my father's involvement. Suddenly, one day, a few months ago, my father plopped a large file in front of me. What I was handed was a treasure. It was all of Robert Rifleman's indoctrination, orders, promotions, ship assignments and much more. I became fascinated and obsessed. It has since consumed a lot of my time, but well worth the effort.

From this point it became fairly easy to follow my father's steps through the Pacific. Knowing and then finding through orders that my father had served with and alongside Admiral Spruance I was able to trace and follow a time line using Spruance's biography *The Quiet Warrior*. This, along with several other references and of course interviews with both my father and mother, have culminated into this paper. At the time of this writing my father is eight two years of age and my mother, seventy seven.

Several revelations came to light during this research. First and foremost is the horror of war and the hell that comes with it. Our generation, other than Vietnam, can only imagine. When I read about battles, then place my father in them, it can only bring tears. Several times during this research and writing I found myself becoming quite emotional. No wonder our fighting personnel never wished to relive this time. Encounters that my father has spoken of, were found written in Spruance's biography. A little spooky. There were some differences, however, I'm sure our father's encounter is more accurate! Especially when our father saved Spruance's and his life at the fall of a kamikaze. The encounter is written. They just failed to mention our father's name.

One other interesting revelation was more personal to our family. I was surprised at how little time our parents had spent with each other prior to marriage. They met in the summer of 1944 and married in August of 1946. However, the vast majority of that time dad was away at war. There was a tremendous amount of letter writing, but, according to my calculations on the time line, they were only physically together four to five months over a period of twenty-seven months.

This document was a joy to compile and write. I must admit that it has brought with it a roller coaster of emotions and has been all consuming. Here it is, and to the reader, enjoy it and prepare, for you to are about to be consumed.

Scott Warren Rifleman  
December 13, 2002



# **TIME LINE**

**1920 June 12-** Robert Henry Rifleman was born, Mosinee, WI.

**1925 December 27-** Janet Edith Benn was born, Stevens Point, WI.

**1938 May-** Robert H. Rifleman, Graduate, Mosinee High School

**1938-1940-** Robert Rifleman attends Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio

**1939 September-** Germany invades Poland, the beginning of World War Two

**1940-1943-** Robert Rifleman attends Wis. State University- Stevens Point  
Graduated 1943, degree in physics & chemistry

**1941 25 November-** Japanese Fleet begins to sail toward Pearl Harbor

**7 December-** Pearl Harbor attacked by the Japanese. United States declares war on Japan.

**11 December-** Germany declares war on the United States

**1943 June-** Janet E. Benn, Graduate, P.J. Jacobs High School, Stevens Point, WI.

**June to May-** Robert Rifleman taught physics, WSU-Stevens Point

**1943-1944-** Janet Benn attends Milwaukee Downer Woman's College

**1944 May-** Robert Rifleman began active duty, reports to Hollywood FL.

**29 May-** Robert Rifleman commissioned as Ensign, USN

**6 June-** D-Day invasion of Normandy, France

**June-** Janet Benn is introduced to Robert Rifleman in Stevens Point

**22 July-** Ensign Robert Rifleman reports to Naval Training School, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

**15 November-** Orders- Ensign Rifleman reports to Naval Station, Astoria, OR.

**1944-1945-** Janet Benn attends Wisconsin State University- Stevens Point

**1944 30 November-** Orders- Ensign Rifleman reports to Twelfth Naval District,



Communications Core, San Francisco, CA.

**1944 29 December-** Orders- Ensign Rifleman reports to active duty as  
Communications Officer with CINCPAC Communications

**1945-1946-** Janet Benn attends University of Wisconsin- Madison

**1945 2 January-** Orders- Report to Admiral Spruance, Commander Fifth Fleet  
Sailed on Flag Ship *USS Indianapolis*

**14 February-** Carrier raids on Tokyo began

**19 February-** Capture of Iwo Jima

**14 March-** Sailed to Japanese coast

**18 March-** Carrier raids began on Kyushu

**31 March-** Kamikaze strike disables *USS Indianapolis*, Ensign Rifleman  
transfers with flag ship to *USS New Mexico*

**March - April** Invasion of Okinawa

**1945 May-** Capture of Okinawa

**10 July-** Ensign Rifleman granted 23 day leave of absence. Returned to  
Mosinee / Stevens Point

**30 July-** *USS Indianapolis* sunk

**6 August-** Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima

**8 August-** Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasocki

**11 August-** Ensign Rifleman reported back to duty after delayed travel due to  
weather in Hawaii. Began duty on Flag Ship *USS New Jersey*

**15 August-** Japan surrenders to the United States

**2 September-** Instrument of surrender signed aboard *USS Missouri*, Tokyo Bay

**1945 September - December** Ensign Rifleman involved in occupation of Japan

**1 December-** Promoted to Lieutenant Junior Grade

**December-** By letter Lt. Rifleman asks Janet Benn to marry. By letter she  
accepts

- 1946 23 May-** Detached from duty aboard *USS Appalachian*
- 5 June-** Detached from active duty, Great Lakes Naval Station, Illinois
- 30 August-** Lt. Robert Rifleman and Janet Benn marry.  
Benn residence, West River Dr., Stevens Point, WI.
- September - May 1947-** Robert Rifleman taught general science  
Oshkosh High School, Oshkosh, WI.
- 1947 June - May 1948-** Robert Rifleman taught physics & radio electronics  
University of Wyoming, Laramie, Janet Rifleman continues school
- 1948 September-** Robert Rifleman begins medical school  
Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI.
- December-** Janet Rifleman graduated with honors, University of Wyoming  
Dietetics & Nutrition, School of Agriculture
- 1948 - 1952-** Medical school
- 1952 April 19-** Scott Warren Rifleman was born  
St. Joseph's Children's Hospital, Milwaukee, WI.
- May-** Robert H. Rifleman graduates from medical school
- June-** Robert Rifleman begins one year residency program  
St. Lukes Hospital, Denver, Colorado
- 1953 June** Drs. Rifleman & Haskins begin private medical practice  
Center, Colorado
- 1954 January 25-** Laurie Ellen Rifleman was born, Monte Vista, Colorado
- 1956 February 22-** Robert Clarence Rifleman was born, Monte Vista, Colorado
- 1958 Summer-** Family returns to Stevens Point
- November 04-** Gregory Todd Rifleman was born, St. Michaels Hospital, Stevens Point
- 1960 June-** Moved into our new home on the Wisconsin River
- 1975-** Robert Rifleman & Janet Rifleman divorce



In 1938 Robert Rifleman graduated from Mosinee High School. From 1938 until 1940 he studied electrical engineering at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio. In 1940 Robert Rifleman transferred to Wisconsin State College-Stevens Point (now UWSP) and double majored in physics and chemistry. He graduated from Stevens Point in 1943. From 1943 until joining the Navy in May of 1944 Robert Rifleman taught physics and dynamics of flight to future military pilots at the University in Stevens Point.

In May of 1944 our father, Robert H. Rifleman, began his naval military career and active duty. His first orders were to report to Hollywood Florida for indoctrination. On 29 May 1944, Robert Rifleman was commissioned as an Ensign, United States Navy. After basic training and orientation Ensign Rifleman on 22 July reported to the Naval Training School at Harvard University in Cambridge Massachusetts. He began training in naval communications. This training continued through the summer and fall of 1944. While on a brief leave back in Stevens Point in the summer of 1944 Ensign Rifleman was introduced to Janet Benn by Janet's mother Beth Benn who had known Robert Rifleman while at the University in Stevens Point.

After training at Harvard University, Ensign Rifleman was ordered to report to the US Naval station in Astoria Oregon on 15 November, 1944 for assignment. From there he was assigned and ordered to report on 30 November to the Twelfth Naval District, Communications Core, San Francisco, California. On 29 December orders were received to report to duty as communications officer with CINCPAC Communications (Commander-In-Chief Pacific Fleet).

On January 02, 1945, Ensign Robert H. Rifleman received orders to report to Admiral Raymond Spruance, Commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet. The *USS Indianapolis* in mid-January 1945 once again became the flagship, and Admiral Spruance and the staff moved aboard. Our father at this point was among the staff. Ensign Robert H. Rifleman was one of five radio communications officers for Admiral Spruance. On 14 January *Indianapolis* got underway in Pearl Harbor and began her journey toward Iwo Jima, 3600 miles to the west. *Indianapolis* entered the Ulithi lagoon on the morning of January 25, 1945. That evening, the *Indianapolis* was joined in harbor by the *USS New Jersey*, flag ship for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Fleet, commanded by Admiral Chester Nimitz. Admiral Spruance took command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Fleet which combined, became the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet. The 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet was also joined by a Royal Navy task group. Spruance commanded more than 900 ships, more than 100,000 troops, and more than 250,000 total Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen. This group was about to embark on carrier assaults upon Japan, invasion and capture of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

By the first week of February the ships of Task Force 58, which were Admiral Spruance's 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet carrier group commanded by Rear Admiral Marc Mitscher, had assembled in mass within the Ulithi anchorage. Planning was underway for the Carrier raids on Tokyo which began on 14 February. Of concern to Spruance was the weather. Three staff radiomen operated two radio receivers which were tuned exclusively to weather report broadcasts, providing Spruance with continuous weather data. Our father recalls, "the fleet was caught in a bad typhoon. I remember waves covering the entire ship. Many of the destroyers escorting us were overturned."



## CARRIER RAIDS ON TOKYO

Dad recalls "I almost missed going on these raids. I was busy getting messages & sending them on the mainland of Saipan. My ship went underway before I could get back. I climbed on one of the patrol boats which pulled along side & they threw a ladder overboard which I had to climb with bags strapped to my back."

Two days after leaving Saipan, 13 February, *Indianapolis* made rendezvous with Task Force 58, 500 miles southeast of Iwo Jima and 1200 miles from Tokyo. The morning of 14 February the Carrier raids on Tokyo began.

Written in the book THE QUIET WARRIOR was a description of this morning.

*On the weather decks the sodden, shivering lookouts noticed that the rain that slapped their faces now was mixed with snow. Indianapolis rolled and pitched in the angry sea, and Spruance, standing alongside Burns in the swaying, stuffy compartment, had to fight down the nausea that always came with heavy weather. With restricted visibility and clouds over the target, Spruance passed the information to Mitschner. Despite the bad weather, nothing could deter Mitschner from predicting the "greatest air victory of the war for carrier aviation."*

*The strike was on.*

By early evening Rear Admiral Mitschner, commander of the carrier Task Force 58, reported to Spruance that the task force had destroyed 350 aircraft, had damaged airfield installations, and had sunk or damaged 33 small ships. By late afternoon the task force headed toward Iwo Jima. With landings due in thirty-six hours, *Indianapolis* hurried toward Iwo Jima.

## INVASION OF IWO JIMA

On 19 February the landings and attack on Iwo Jima began. THE QUIET WARRIOR reads:

*In the darkness, Indianapolis cautiously threaded through the hundreds of ships surrounding Iwo Jima and took station several thousand yards seaward of the landing beaches. The island stronghold was first dimly seen as an indistinct mass at daybreak; then the image sharpened as the sun rose behind the flagship in a clear, bright sky. A cool refreshing northern breeze blew soft, scattered clouds above a tranquil ocean. It would be a beautiful day.*

On the fifth day of the battle a small group of Marines struggled toward the summit of Mount Suribachi. At midmorning the summit was conquered, and the American flag unfurled in the breeze. Triumphant cheers swept the field of battle. This became the famous photo of the Marines raising the flag on Mt. Suribachi.

Our father writes, "I shudder to think of what would have happened to us on the invasion of Iwo Jima if Mitschner had not been successful. I still have vivid memories of watching the flag being raised over smoking Mt. Suribachi. It is an active volcano which you don't see in the photograph. Sad was seeing the dead laying in the volcanic ash below."

In a letter to Margaret Spruance, the Admiral's wife, a copy of the famous photograph was enclosed. Admiral Spruance called it "the finest photograph this war



has given us to date. When we settle down, I want to have this picture framed. Some first class sculpture should do this in bronze. It is so perfect."

Years later, the sculptor Felix de Weldon fulfilled Spruance's prophecy by creating the heroic bronze monument at Arlington National Cemetery. It was also de Weldon who sculpted the bust of Admiral Spruance that is now at the Naval War College.

Our father spoke of Admiral Spruance's disdain for publicity and the news media. During this time period Spruance was being sought after by the news media. It was required that at certain intervals, progress reports and quotes would be written, placed in a capsule and sent aloft in a gas-filled balloon. A military plane would fly over and snag the capsule and report back to the new media. At one such snag, to the enjoyment of Spruance, the capsule was missed and plunged into the ocean.

Dad recalls an incident with the news media. "I was standing alongside Admiral Spruance when he ordered one of the reporters off our ship because he was so busy trying to direct naval movements. The reporter was killed by a mortar which landed on the boat he was riding on. The press never forgave him for that."

Admiral Spruance is quoted as saying, "personal publicity in war can be a drawback, because it may affect a man's thinking. A commander may not have sought it; it may have been forced upon him by zealous subordinates or imaginative war correspondents. Once started, however, it is hard to keep in check." Dad has spoken of the rift between Spruance and Admiral William Halsey. Halsey was one to seek publicity and this bothered Spruance. In THE QUIET WARRIOR it mentions how Spruance feels a "man's judgement and reputation" can be altered by publicity and the news media.

*Spruance had Halsey in mind - among others - because Halsey recently had given an interview that was more flamboyant than usual. "I did not think much of Bill Halsey's interview," he wrote Margaret. "In the first place, I do not think we should call our enemies a lot of names the way Bill does. In the second place to belittle their resistance and fighting qualities is no way in which to prepare the country for the hard and perhaps long war that still lies ahead of us."*

The battle for Iwo Jima lasted more than a month. It is written that Spruance was a patient observer and quietly waited for the Marines to finish. Weighing heavily on his mind was the imminent landing on Okinawa, on 1 April, 1945. On 6 March Admiral Spruance and our father sailed on the *Indianapolis* to Ulithi to prepare for the Okinawa invasion. Iwo Jima was captured on 19 March. The Americans had suffered more than 14,000 casualties, including 2,500 men killed in action. More than 6,000 were killed before Iwo Jima was secured.



## PLANNING FOR THE INVASION OF OKINAWA

During the planning phases of all conflicts and the eventual planned invasion of Japan, Ensign Rifleman was the primary encoder for incoming and outgoing messages from and to Spruance. During certain periods of time Spruance's location was to be kept secret. It was common for our father to fly to islands such as Ulithi Atoll, Mog Mog Island, Ie Shima Island, and back to Guam to receive or send messages to or from Spruance. At times Ensign Rifleman was the only passenger on a DC-9 plane with an escort of five fighter planes. These, of course, were the most top secret messages that had to get through to the Admiral.

On 9 March *Indianapolis* was anchored in crowded Ulithi lagoon, in the midst of Task Force 58 preparing for the invasion and battle at Okinawa. On 14 March *Indianapolis* weighed anchor at Ulithi, made rendezvous with Rear Admiral Marc Mitschner and Task Force 58, and the 16 carriers and their escorting battleships, cruisers, and destroyers set sail for Kyushu, 1700 miles to the north. On 18 March the carrier raids began on Kyushu.

The final days of March were devoted to preparations for the D-Day invasion on Okinawa scheduled for 1 April, 1945. It is written that the desperate Japanese were fighting for their nation's survival, because the fall of Okinawa would doom the Japanese Empire. The Japanese had decided that the time had come to hurl their remaining air and naval resources against the American invaders.

As D-Day approached, Spruance became suspicious of the Japanese defenders' unexpected silence. The mammoth invasion fleet approached silent, menacing Okinawa on the evening of 30 March, two days before the invasion.

On 31 March, the morning before the invasion, Ensign Robert Rifleman was aboard the *Indianapolis*. At 07:10 an unexpected Kamikaze struck the *Indianapolis*. Ensign Rifleman was in the mess hall "just talking with friends." Prior to this they had been on the fantail of the ship but had moved indoors because it was "quite warm outside." The following excerpt of the incident is taken from THE QUIET WARRIOR:

*It was a cloudy day, and the flagship was standing into resume shore bombardment. An aircraft emerged through the clouds, rolled over, and dived. Indianapolis managed to fire one gun before the suicide plane crashed into the fantail. The plane's bomb tore through the hull and exploded beneath the ship. The plane itself disintegrated against the ship.*

*Everyone knew the flagship was hurt. The shock had knocked people off their feet, and the explosion had been deafening. Now clouds of acrid smoke engulfed the ship. Men's voices rose above the sounds of the roaring fire, some yelling orders, others in pain and calling for help. One thought was on everyone's mind. Save the ship. Spruance's first reaction was to give his flag lieutenant two orders: ascertain the ship's damage from the commanding officer, and determine whether the kamikaze carried a code book. The flag lieutenant departed and upon his return reported that the ship's propellers and propeller*



*shafts had been damaged and that the after compartments were flooded. No code book had been found. (Dad states that Spruance was concerned because he thought that the Japanese knew that the Indianapolis was the flag ship.)*

*The crew extinguished the fires and temporarily repaired the structural damage. Indianapolis cautiously spun her starboard propellers and limped into the recently captured anchorage at nearby Kerama Retto. A salvage ship moored alongside, divers inspected the flagship's wounds, and they reported severe damage. That evening Spruance had to inform Turner that Indianapolis would not participate in the D-Day bombardment.*

*The Indianapolis remained immobilized at anchor out of sight of the battle. The crew of the salvage ship hoped to remove and repair her damaged propeller while afloat, and Spruance paced the wrecked fantail while divers struggled underwater with their strenuous task. The chief salvage officer, his face crestfallen, approached the admiral. "Sorry to report, sir," he said, "my men have dropped the propeller off and it is at the bottom of the harbor." The officer expected a torrent of reproof, but Spruance quietly replied, "That's too bad," and resumed walking.*

Due to the repairs required on the *Indianapolis*, the flagship of the 5<sup>th</sup> fleet with Admiral Spruance and Ensign Robert Rifleman transferred to the battleship *New Mexico* on 5 April, 1945. The crew of the *USS New Mexico* welcomed Spruance's staff because of the prestige and excitement associated with a flagship of a fleet commander, and the crew-staff relationship was instantly cordial.

The *Indianapolis* departed to the United States for repairs. It would never again serve as Spruance's flagship. Following shipyard repairs, *Indianapolis* transported the components for the Nagasaki and Hiroshima atomic bombs to the Air Force at Tinian in late July 1945. After delivery of her cargo, she sailed for the Philippines. On 29 July, 1945, two weeks before the end of the war, a Japanese submarine torpedoed *Indianapolis*, and she quickly sank. 900 sailors perished; our father knew many of them.

## INVASION OF OKINAWA

The Invasion of Okinawa was "equivalent in magnitude to the invasion of Normandy." Raymond Spruance commanded 1500 ships, the largest and most powerful fleet in the history of the world. It never again will be duplicated, for fleets never again will be as large as those of World War II.

The air, sea and land invasion of Okinawa began on 1 April, 1945. The first massive enemy air attack on Task Force 58 began 6 April, the day after Spruance and Ensign Rifleman had transferred to the *New Mexico*. More than 700 Japanese planes, half of them kamikazes, flung themselves against the Fifth Fleet surrounding Okinawa. Twenty-two kamikazes evaded the American defenses and crashed into the ships of the Fifth Fleet. It was a continuous air assault until 17 April. The campaign lasted three months, and continual, relentless enemy air attacks eventually sank 30 ships and damaged 368, killed 4900 sailors, and wounded 4800 more.



Our father, Ensign Robert H. Rifleman was aboard the *New Mexico* during the entire Okinawa campaign. For those of us that try to place ourselves in that position, we can only imagine, and I'm sure we fall terribly short of reality. Our father was twenty five years of age at this point. Older for a fighting sailor, but still a young man. It was not until recent years that he really began to speak of encounters while at sea. Dr. Robert Rifleman is now eighty-two years of age and he recalls several encounters. I'm sure many more are still blocked out, or may not wish to be spoken of.

An incident our father speaks of occurred several days after the campaign began. He recalls that at about 02:00 a general alarm sounded "all hands on deck." A knife armed Jap. had managed to sneak aboard the ship by swimming from shore, about one mile, climbing the anchor chain, then killing the security guard. He was never found. Presumed to have gone overboard and swam back. Dad stated it was "very spooky" looking for this individual. The incident is written in THE QUIET WARRIOR. It reads:

*The battle had its absurd moments. Shortly after the landings began in early April, the flagship was swinging peacefully at anchor off Okinawa. Just before taps the crew was jolted into a frenzy by the public address system blaring, "turn on all lights, search all compartments! There may be a Jap aboard!" The Marines doubled their guard on Spruance while the staff tried to discover the reason for the alarm. They soon learned that a Marine sentry on the main deck had been assaulted by a mysterious figure whom he had discovered coming aboard along the boat boom. His assailant never was found.*

Our father, during this campaign, was a witness to multiple attacks during this relentless assault. Dad told me, "I saw a torpedo coming right at us and thank God the guys on the bridge saw it too and turned just in time to avoid it."

Dad has stated that he was witness to several kamikaze attacks. One was most memorable. He states that he and Admiral Spruance were coming up from a lower deck near the bridge. Spruance was behind and following. As dad came up onto the deck, he saw the plane coming into the ship. He jumped back, pushing Spruance backward. The plane smashed into the deck near the bridge. What appears to be the same incident is documented in THE QUIET WARRIOR, and reads:

*On the evening of 12 May, New Mexico had finished replenishing ammunition and was approaching her anchorage for the night. The day had been quiet and peaceful. Suddenly, two low-flying kamikazes appeared at sunset and streaked toward the flagship. The ship's antiaircraft fire got one, but the other smashed into the side of the ship abaft the bridge. A huge fire roared from a gaping hole amidship. The carnage was horrible, the blast killed 50 men and wounded more than a hundred.*

*Spruance was missing, having last been seen in his cabin aft. The staff frantically searched the ship, fearing for his safety. They found him manning a fire hose. His instructions were the same as they had been before on Indianapolis: ascertain the damage and check for code books.*

*Spruance later described his narrow escape from death. "I had just started for the bridge when the AA batteries opened up," he wrote Moore, "so I remained under cover while going forward on the second deck. We were hit before I got very far, which was fortunate for me as the two routes to the bridge lead right through the area where the plane and bomb hit."*



Another kamikaze attack our father recalls occurred after being on duty and on the bridge for 20 hours while under heavy constant attack. Dad was walking below deck heading for his bunk. For some unexplained reason, he recalls, he stopped and turned around heading back to the bridge. Shortly after, a kamikaze struck, the missile from the plane went through his bunk where he had been heading. A term our father used was "premonition." In a spooky sense, this writer could say that this paper may never have been written. Thanks to the "premonition," it was.

The Okinawa campaign became a grueling and long battle. Dad recalls: "we were under a constant smoke screen which made our lungs burn. Sleep was impossible! Many of the men fell asleep on their turrets. I remember a British officer waking them up and cheering them on. He was killed in one of the attacks. I still have a prop gear from the kamikaze that killed so many men which I use as a paper weight. Many of the tired men were so angry they turned into animals pulling gold teeth out of what remained of the pilot's head."

Naval Commander Chester Nimitz realized the strain imposed on his high commanders and their staff at Okinawa, a strain that "could lower his commanders efficiency and harm their health." They needed a rest, and he ordered Halsey to relieve Spruance in late May. Spruance and his commanders would recuperate and then begin planning for the invasion of Japan.

Admiral Halsey arrived in his flagship *USS Missouri* on 26 May, and the staffs began the turnover procedure. Halsey relieved Spruance at midnight, 27 May 1945 in the midst of one of the heaviest and most prolonged Japanese air attacks of the campaign.

The *USS New Mexico* with Admiral Spruance and Ensign Rifleman got underway for Guam early the next morning. As the *New Mexico* made her way to sea. THE QUIET WARRIOR reads: *Two destroyers took station on either bow, and New Mexico sailed away from Okinawa. The war was over for Raymond Spruance. As the battles were for our father, Ensign Robert Rifleman.*

On 1 June, 1945 Spruance shifted his flag from *USS New Mexico* to headquarters ashore on Guam. There he joined Admiral Nimitz, who had moved his staff to Guam in order to be nearer to the fighting. Spruance's task in Guam was to plan for the next American offensive against Japan. Military leaders differed about what that step should be and had been debating for months about American strategy following the seizure of Okinawa. Many hoped to defeat Japan through a blockade, while others believed that Japan would not surrender until the Americans invaded the home islands.

Generals Marshall and MacArthur consistently opposed the Navy and insisted upon an invasion of Japan. The Army generals finally convinced President Truman, who approved the concept in June 1945.



From 1 June until 10 July Ensign Rifleman was working among the Naval leaders, Admirals Spruance and Nimitz. For a period of time Admiral Byrd (Antarctic explorer) was also with this group and worked with our father. Ensign Rifleman's work consisted of receiving, sending and delivering messages between the leaders and planners. Island hopping with messages that were too top secret to send, continued to be part of his duties.

One such message received, our father recalls, was one that was sent by President Truman to Admiral Spruance. It came in coded and when Ensign Rifleman encoded the message and handed it to Spruance it read "Raymond, are the American people ready for this war to end?" It was a code for the final plans to begin. Only a few war leaders knew that this included the possible use of the atomic bomb. Spruance was one of those leaders.

Many of Spruance's staff were granted a leave. Ensign Rifleman was granted a 23-day leave beginning on 10 July, 1945. Prior to leaving Admiral Spruance stated to our father, "you know as well as I do that the occupation of Japan is not great and our chances of our survival are pretty slim. We do know that we have more ships and planes and troops than they do. Therefore, our victory will be assured at a horrible price. Go and be with your family for a few weeks." Dad vividly remembered this statement and had the feeling that he may not return from the war. Dad, during the interview for this paper, made the statement: "many do not realize that dropping the atom bombs saved hundreds of thousand American lives including the Japanese."

Ensign Rifleman took leave on 10 July, 1945 and returned to Mosinee and Stevens Point. He spent a great deal of his time with our mother and his parents. Mom also recalls that dad was preoccupied with the immediate future and harbored a great many secrets that he could not share.

During June and July Admiral Spruance was deeply involved in the planning of the invasion with consideration of using atomic weapons. In June Spruance took a one week leave to the mainland with Admiral Nimitz. After, Admiral Spruance returned to Guam and "sadly began plans to implement the President's decision."

After repairs and overhaul in San Francisco, USS *Indianapolis* received orders to proceed at high speed to Tinian, carrying parts and nuclear material to be used in the atomic bombs which were soon to be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Due to the urgency of her mission, *Indianapolis* departed San Francisco on 16 July, forgoing her post repair shake down period. Touching at Pear Harbor 19 July, she raced on unescorted and arrived at Tinian 26 July, having set a record in covering some 5000 miles from San Francisco in only 10 days. After delivering her top-secret cargo at Tinian, *Indianapolis* was dispatched to Guam where she was to begin routine duty. From there she was to report to Vice Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf for further duty off Okinawa. *Indianapolis* was expected to become the flag ship, once again, to Admiral Spruance.



Ensign Rifleman's leave had expired. He flew to San Francisco, then to Hawaii. His orders were to report to Guam and rejoin the staff of Spruance and the *Indianapolis*. Due to weather, Ensign Rifleman was unable to fly from Hawaii to Guam as scheduled. 30 July the *Indianapolis* was sunk at 12:15 A.M. by the Imperial Japanese Navy submarine I-58, Commander Machitsura Hashimoto commanding

*Indianapolis* was en route to Leyte and was scheduled to arrive on 31 July. No report was made that she was overdue. It was not until 10:25 A.M. on 2 August that survivors were sighted. 316 men of the crew of 1,199 were saved. Our father knew many. Dad also stated that it had been reported, at the time, that the *Indianapolis* was carrying a third atomic bomb. However, the ship was so badly damaged and sunk so fast in deep water that nothing was ever recovered.

After a several day delay Ensign Rifleman arrived in Guam. He resumed regular duty and was assigned to the USS *New Jersey* which now became Spruance's flag ship.

August 6, 1945 an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. August 9, 1945 an atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Radio reported peace overtures by Japan. Admiral Nimitz warned his forces to remain vigilant against "Japanese treachery." On 15 August, 1945 Japan surrendered to the United States of America.

It is written in the QUIET WARRIOR: *Spruance later admitted to mixed emotions on the use of nuclear weapons. In August 1945 he was brooding that the Japan invasion "would have been a terribly bloody, unnecessary proposition. I was very glad in a sense when, finally, the two atomic bombs that we dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki decided the Japanese to surrender. It is impossible to know how long the war would have lasted, but it is certain that the bomb shortened it by a great length.*

September 2, 1945 the Instrument of Surrender was signed aboard the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. General Mac Arthur had invited Admiral Spruance to attend, but Spruance had declined, saying that if Nimitz had wanted him there Nimitz would have told him so. Nimitz did not want Spruance in Tokyo. Spruance's orders were to plan for the occupation of Japan. When the Japanese signed the surrender documents on 2 September, Spruance and Ensign Rifleman were aboard the flagship *New Jersey* in Buckner Bay, Okinawa. It has also been speculated that Spruance was away from the ceremonies so that he could take command of the Pacific Fleet should the Japanese, rather than surrendering, treacherously attack the *Missouri* and kill the high-ranking Americans aboard.

Ensign Rifleman was involved with the occupation of Japan alongside Admiral Spruance. On 21 August the *New Jersey*, with Spruance and Rifleman arrived in Manila Bay. Spruance and Rifleman first arrived in Japan on 15 September 1945. *New Jersey's* first stop was the port of Wakayama, located on the eastern entrance to the Inland Sea, where more than 1300 POW's were being received onboard the hospital ship *Sanctuary* and two small transports.



The *New Jersey* then sailed and entered Yokosuka in Tokyo Bay on 17 September and Spruance began occupation conferences with Admiral Halsey. When I asked Dad what he did during this period of time he stated "toured Japan and sat on my ass!"

In early November 1945 Admiral Towers relieved Admiral Spruance as Commander of the Fifth Fleet, and Spruance returned to Pearl Harbor. It is assumed that at this point our father parted ways with Admiral Spruance. Dad sailed back to the mainland, San Francisco, aboard *USS Appalachian* on 22 November where he remained assigned as communications officer until his detachment from active duty.

On December 01, 1945, Robert Rifleman was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant(jg). Shortly there after Lieutenant Rifleman asked Janet Benn to marry him, by letter. She accepted. Lt. Rifleman remained assigned to the *USS Appalachian* operating out of San Francisco. On 12 April, 1946 the *Appalachian* and Lt. Rifleman were assigned to San Diego, CA. Dad's commitment to the Navy was complete in May of 1946. He was asked to continue to serve with the *Appalachian*, which became the flag ship of the Fifth Fleet 13 September 1946. He declined and opted to discontinue active duty.

Shortly after Dad left the *Appalachian* it sailed to the Bikini Islands and became involved in Operation "Crossroads." This was a series of atomic bomb tests that were conducted between May and July 1946. Dad recalls that he was not disappointed that he missed this piece of history.

May 23, 1946, Lt. Rifleman was relieved from duty with the *Appalachian*. He traveled to the Great Lakes Naval Station in Illinois. On 5 June, 1946, Lt. Rifleman was detached from Active Duty. Lt. Rifleman remained in the Naval Reserve out of Oshkosh, WI. He was promoted to Lieutenant Senior Grade late in 1946.

In 1948, during dad's freshman year in medical school, he was offered the rank of Lieutenant Commander which he turned down. Dad states, "I became very suspicious of this move because of the potential of the Korean War. It didn't take much for me to figure out that with my training and war experience they needed an officer to be assigned as commander of communications to one of the fleets assigned to Korea, which would have pulled me out of medical school." Lt. Rifleman asked for a discharge from the Naval Reserve. It was granted. Robert Rifleman's naval career ended.

During the summer of 1946, I'm sure mom and dad spent a lot of time together. On August 31, 1946, they were married. It was then off to Oshkosh, WI. Dad had accepted a teaching position with Oshkosh High School teaching general science. During this period, applications were being sent out to medical schools. One anticdote that I remember both parents speak of during this time was a motorcycle trip. Dad owned a Harley Davidson motorcycle with a side car. They were traveling between Stevens Point and Oshkosh during the evening. While rounding a curve on highway 110 a car crossed the center line into their lane of traffic. Dad in order to avoid a collision laid the cycle down, catapulting mom from the side car into the ditch. Obviously everyone survived. Ironical- shot at, torpedoed, strafed and kamikazed for one full year- then nearly killed in a motor cycle crash by a drunk driver? Luckily, the reaction time was fresh from war!



After a recommendation and offer from a professor that Dad knew, Mom and Dad were off to the University of Wyoming in Laramie in the spring of 1947. Dad taught physics and began and managed the university radio station. Mom enrolled in the School of Agriculture, majoring in dietetics and nutrition.

After years of dreams and waiting for acceptance, Dad was accepted to the School of Medicine, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI. Dad began medical school in the fall of 1948. Mom, however, was still an ungraduated student back in Wyoming. She stayed in Laramie through the winter of 1948. In December 1948, Janet Rifleman graduated, with honors, with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Wyoming. She then joined dad in Milwaukee.

After four years of medical school, Robert H. Rifleman, MD, graduated from Marquette Medical School in May of 1952. On April 19, 1952, Scott was born. I have been told that I was a colicky baby and cried incessantly for a month and a half while dad studied for his final exams. Bummer dad! Also, mom states that dad, being the new doctor, found every conceivable childhood illness in me. He also was concerned about a "crease" I had between my chin and lower lip. Look in the mirror dad! I do, however, wish to raise a protest about my hair "cow licks."

In June of 1952 the three of us packed up a car and drove to Denver, Colorado. I remember this trip well!? Mom states that I did not take to kindly to the long trip. It was hot and air conditioning for autos' was soon to be invented. Meaning we had none!

Dad served a one year residency at St. Lukes Hospital in Denver. During his residency he met Dr. John Haskins. These fine new doctors set out to find a place to practice in Colorado. Dad and mom wished to relocate and begin work in Colorado. In the search process, Drs. Haskins and Rifleman found a small mountain town in central Colorado that was seeking a new physician. Aspen Colorado had a country doctor that was looking to retire in a few years and was seeking a partner. Drs. Haskins and Rifleman felt that the town of Aspen, however nice, was just too small to support two to three physicians. They moved on!.

Just a note from this author: I could have been a major Olympic ski racer, and certainly given Jean Claud Killy (who was racing while I was) a run for the triple Olympic gold. Fate- Rib Mountain vs. Aspen! Their search brought them to a small town in south central Colorado, in the San Louis Valley. The town of Center, Colorado was now home.

The family began to grow. On January 25, 1954, Laurie was born in Monte Vista, Colorado. She came into the world causing trouble- breech! Dr. Haskins, who was supposed to deliver, had never attended a breech birth before. So, Dr. Rifleman took over and delivered his daughter! On February 22, 1956, a more normal birth occurred. Rob was born, also in Monte Vista, Colorado.

In the summer of 1958 Mom and Dad grew restless. Dad had an offer from his father-in-law, Dr. Herbert Benn to join him in practice in Stevens Point, WI. The family moved and settled in Stevens Point. Again, somewhere in the process of relocation, mom became pregnant with their fourth child. Greg was born in Stevens Point at St. Michaels Hospital, November 04, 1958. In 1960 we moved into our new house on the Wisconsin River.

The world of the Rifleman's is now complete! The rest is history! Thank God for our parents, Robert Rifleman and Janet Benn. If it were not for them.....!!



# **RESOURCES**

## **Interviews:**

Robert H. Rifleman, MD- August - December 2002

Janet E. Rifleman- December 2002

## **References:**

Lt. Robert Rifleman- Naval military file, provided by Robert Rifleman, MD

## **Bibliography:**

Thomas B. Buell, *The Quiet Warrior*, A Biography of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland 1987

E. B. Potter, *Nimitz*, A Biography of Chester A. Nimitz, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland 1976

Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War, A Complete History*, Henry Holt & Company, New York, NY. 1989

The History Channel- video, *Battlegroup Spruance*

World Wide Web- Internet, *Department of the Navy,*  
*Naval Historical Center*  
*Naval War College*



COMMANDER FIFTH FLEET

8 November 1945.

From: Commander FIFTH Fleet.  
To : Ensign R. H. Rifleman, (374699), USNR.  
Subject: Letter of Appreciation.

1. While attached to my staff, you participated in the following operations against the enemy:

Carrier raids on Tokyo	Feb. 1945.
Capture of Iwo Jima	Feb. - March 1945.
Carrier raids on Kyushu	March 1945.
Capture of Okinawa	March - May 1945.
Occupation of Japan	Sept. - Nov. 1945.

2. The success of these operations was due to the combined efforts of all hands. Your contribution in loyalty and hard work was a noteworthy one. On leaving this command, I wish to express my sincere appreciation for your capable service.

R. A. SPRUANCE,  
Admiral, U.S. Navy.



THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON

July 16, 1946

My dear Lieutenant (jg) Rifleman:

I have addressed this letter to reach you after all the formalities of your separation from active service are completed. I have done so because, without formality but as clearly as I know how to say it, I want the Navy's pride in you, which it is my privilege to express, to reach into your civil life and to remain with you always.

You have served in the greatest Navy in the world.

It crushed two enemy fleets at once, receiving their surrenders only four months apart.

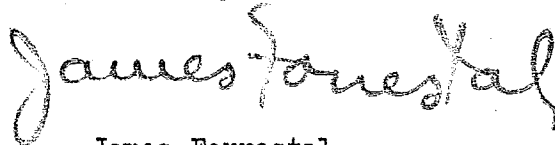
It brought our land-based airpower within bombing range of the enemy, and set our ground armies on the beachheads of final victory.

It performed the multitude of tasks necessary to support these military operations.

No other Navy at any time has done so much. For your part in these achievements you deserve to be proud as long as you live. The Nation which you served at a time of crisis will remember you with gratitude.

The best wishes of the Navy go with you into your future life. Good luck!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Forrestal". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

James Forrestal

Lieut. (jg) Robert H. Rifleman  
Mosinee  
Wisconsin

NAVPERS-962  
(Rev. June, 1943)  
PERS-3650C

ral APPOINTMENT IN NAVAL RESERVE  
374699

From: The Chief of Naval Personnel, Navy Department 3 April, 1944.  
To: Robert Henry RIFLEMAN,  
1411 Main Street,  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Via: OIC, NOP, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Subject: Appointment in United States Naval Reserve.  
Inclosure: Commission.

1. Having been appointed in the United States Naval Reserve the Bureau takes pleasure in transmitting herewith your commission. Effective on the date you execute acceptance and oath of office under your commission you are hereby assigned as:

Rank: Ensign, D-V(S), USNR

Date of Rank: 24 March, 1944.

Appointed: 31 March, 1944

Duties: Deck

Reserve: Volunteer.

RANDALL JACOBS,  
The Chief of Naval Personnel

Code No: 0000-77

Copy to: Com Nine

M. A. Robertson,  
By Direction

Permanent address:  
Mosinee, Wis.

#### ACCEPTANCE AND OATH OF OFFICE

I Robert Henry RIFLEMAN, DO HEREBY ACCEPT THE ABOVE APPOINTMENT As Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve; do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: so help me God. I understand that failure to complete any prescribed training course, or a review of my completed application regarded as unsatisfactory, will be considered sufficient cause for my discharge.

MILWAUKEE

SS:

WISCONSIN

*Robert Henry Rifleman*  
Signature

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1st day of May, 1944

Certified to be a true copy

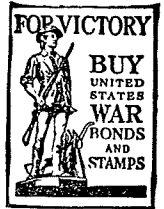
W. W. Yeager, Lt. D-V(S)USNR  
NOP, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

*Robert Henry Rifleman - Ensign*  
Signature



Address Reply to:  
The Office of Naval Officer Procurement,  
110 East Wisconsin Avenue,  
Milwaukee 2, Wisconsin and not to  
the signer of this letter.

BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL  
NAVY DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF NAVAL OFFICER PROCUREMENT  
MILWAUKEE 2, WISCONSIN



REFER TO NO.  
BNOPMIL-8-js(805-44)

17 April 1944

Mr. Robert H. Rifleman  
1411 Main St.  
Stevens Point, Wis.

Re: Commission as Ensign, General Duty

Active Duty Orders to report to Hollywood,  
Florida, on May 29, 1944.

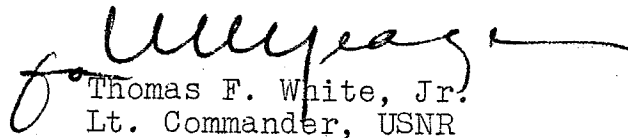
Dear Sir:

This office is pleased to inform you that your application for appointment in the U. S. Naval Reserve has been approved, and the above commission offered.

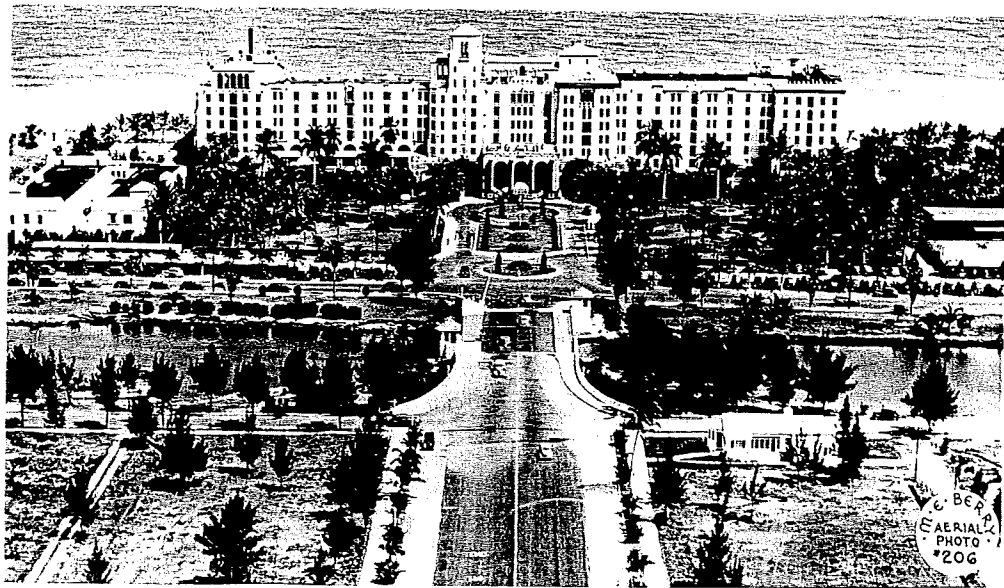
Kindly secure a completion of the enclosed Release and Clearance forms, and present at this office at your earliest convenience to accept the oath of office. Please report in the forenoon.

If you have received an Induction Notice, notify this office immediately and do not report to accept the oath. In this event you will receive further instructions.

Yours very truly,

  
Thomas F. White, Jr.  
Lt. Commander, USNR  
Officer in Charge

NOTE: Please delay reporting to this office until after April 29th, unless you anticipate receiving an Induction Notice.



U.S. NAVAL TRAINING SCHOOL  
HOLLYWOOD BEACH, FLORIDA



ENDORSEMENT

~~End-1~~ **FIFTH NAVAL DISTRICT Orders** ~~and~~ **5 June 1946**

From: **DDP/374699/(-dm)**  
**Serial 22589-46**

The Commanding Officer  
U.S. NAVAL PERSONNEL SEPARATION CENTER (OFFICER)  
UNITED STATES NAVAL TRAINING CENTER  
Great Lakes, Illinois

To:

Lt. (jg) Robert H. KIFLEMAN, C, USNR

1. Reported 15 5 June 1946 (Date)
2. Examined and found (~~not~~) physically qualified for release from active duty.

5 June 1946  
(Date)

Paul F. Kionka  
P.F. KIONKA, Comdr. MG(S) USNR

3. Civil Readjustment Process completed.

5 June 1946

Veterans' rights and benefits made known.

R.W. Hart  
R.W. Hart, Lt. Comdr. S USNR  
Civil Readjustment Officer

4. Detached 5 June 1946 (Date), Proceed to your home. You are granted 0 months and 17 days leave, upon the expiration of which, at midnight of 22 June 1946 (Date), you will regard yourself released from all active duty.

5. Government quarters were available and were assigned for your occupancy from date of reporting to date of detachment.

6. Inform the Bureau of Naval Personnel and the Commandant of your home Naval District of any change of residence.

7. During the period of leave granted you under these orders you may, at your option, wear civilian clothes, and while wearing civilian clothes, you are authorized to engage in any occupation NOT contrary to law.

8. You have certified that you were called to active duty from

No street address, Mosinee, Wisconsin  
(city or town where initial active duty orders were addressed)

9. You have certified that your official residence at time of going on active duty was

No street address, Mosinee, Wisconsin  
(city or town)

10. The Chief of Naval Personnel has determined that your separation from active naval service is considered to be under honorable conditions and that you are entitled to a Certificate of Satisfactory Service at the termination of your accumulated leave.

cc: Disbursing Officer carrying accounts  
DNI Navy Department  
BuPers  
Comdt. Home Naval District

Nav 9ND  
OSCGL Rec 1

D. O. Van Ness  
D. O. Van Ness, Comdr. USNR



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

IN REPLY REFER TO  
Pers B1321/  
Serial 4  
9 Feb 51

From: Chief of Naval Personnel  
To: LTJG Robert H. RIFLEMAN, C, USNR, 374699  
710 Duniway  
Laramie, Wyoming

Via: Commandant, NINTH Naval District  
Naval Training Center  
Great Lakes, Illinois

Subj: Promotion to the grade of Lieutenant

Ref: (a) Public Law 732-75th Congress (as amended)  
(b) Regulations Governing the Promotion of Naval  
Reserve Officers of 5 April 1949

Encl: (1) Instructions for effecting promotion

1. It is a pleasure to inform you that the President of the United States has appointed you to the grade of Lieutenant in the Naval Reserve to rank from 18 December 1950.
2. This appointment is made in accordance with references (a) and (b) and is subject to meeting the established professional and physical requirements.
3. The appointment terminates one year from the date of this letter if you should fail to qualify, or it terminates immediately if you should be placed on the Inactive Status List prior to acceptance.
4. In accepting this appointment you are directed to follow the procedure outlined in enclosure (1).
5. The effective date of this appointment for pay purposes is the date of this letter unless you have performed active duty or active duty for training with pay between your date of rank as stated in paragraph one above and the date of this letter. In the later case, the effective date for pay purposes is the date of commencement of active duty or active duty for training with pay on or after the date of rank stated in paragraph one.

FROM COMMANDANT, 9TH NAVAL DIST  
TO ADDRESSEE  
1. FORWARDED. *B. L. Olson*

6 JUN 1951

*F. L. OLSON*  
BY DIRECTION

*W. G. Reifennath*  
W. G. REIFENRATH  
By direction





DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

SECNAV

IN REPLY REFER TO

374699/1135  
Pers-B1136- emm-2  
22 April 1952

From: Secretary of the Navy  
To: ENS Robert H. RIFLEMAN, USNR, 374699/1135  
1509 East Kane Place, Apartment 33  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Via: Commandant, NINTH Naval District  
Subj: Acceptance of Resignation from the U. S. Naval Reserve  
Ref: (a) Your resignation dated 17 March 1952  
Encl: (1) Honorable discharge

1. In accordance with your request contained in reference (a), and by direction of the President, your resignation from the U. S. Naval Reserve is hereby accepted under honorable conditions, effective this date.
2. The Navy Department at this time expresses its appreciation of your past services and trusts that you will continue your interest in the naval service.
3. Please acknowledge receipt to the Chief of Naval Personnel (attention Pers-B1136), via the Commandant, NINTH Naval District.

DAN A. KIMBALL  
Secretary of the Navy

Copy to:  
VA (Life Ins.)  
BuMed (PQ Branch)  
FldBr, BuSanda (2)  
OIC, NavResOffPerformance  
RecordingActy, NavPersCen  
Omaha, Nebr.  
OIC, CruittNOP, Chgo

Jacket Copy  
Pers-B111a (F-30)  
B111a (#6)  
B11183  
B13a  
B112  
B1136  
B6244  
B111e

27576



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

IN REPLY REFER TO  
Pers B1136/ea  
374699  
22 January 1951

From: Chief of Naval Personnel  
To: Ex-LTJG Robert H. RIFLEMAN, USNR  
1509 E. Kane Place  
Milwaukee 2, Wisc.


Via: Commandant, NINTH Naval District

Subj: Honorable Discharge - forwarding of


Encl: (1) Honorable Discharge No. 12387; effective date 1 January 1951

1. Enclosure (1), your Honorable Discharge from the U. S. Naval Service, is forwarded herewith.

2. Please acknowledge receipt to the Chief of Naval Personnel (attention Pers-B1136) on the copy of this letter attached.

  
G. T. FERGUSON  
By direction



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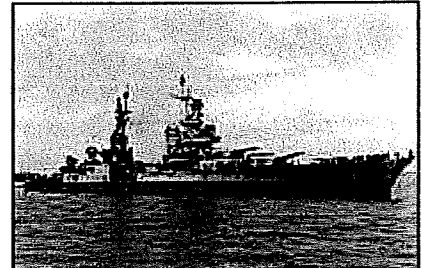
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**Online Library of Selected Images:**  
-- U.S. NAVY SHIPS --

**USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35), 1932-1945,  
Selected Views**



USS *Indianapolis*, a 9,800-ton *Portland* class heavy cruiser, was built at Camden, New Jersey. Commissioned in November 1932, she operated in the Atlantic and Pacific during the peacetime years. During the 1930s, she hosted President Franklin D. Roosevelt on several occasions, among them a voyage to South America in November and December 1936.

Following the U.S. entry into World War II, *Indianapolis* operated with carrier task forces in the southwestern Pacific until Spring 1942, when she took up station in the Alaska area. She served there for over a year, sinking a Japanese transport in February 1943. Later in 1943, *Indianapolis* became Fifth Fleet flagship. In that role, into mid-1944, she took part in operations to capture the Gilberts, Marshalls and Marianas, plus strikes on Japanese positions elsewhere in the central Pacific. She also participated in the Peleliu invasion in September 1944.

In February and March 1945, *Indianapolis*, again flagship of the Fifth Fleet, joined in attacks on Iwo Jima, the Japanese home islands and the Ryukyus. During the latter operation, on 31 March 1945, she was damaged by a Kamikaze plane. In late July, following repairs, *Indianapolis* made a high speed transit from California to Tinian to deliver atomic bomb components. She then sailed for the Philippines. Shortly after midnight on 30 July 1945 she was torpedoed by the Japanese submarine *I-58* and sank quickly. Due to communications and other errors, her loss went unnoticed until survivors were seen from a passing aircraft on 2 August. Rescue efforts over several days saved only about a quarter of her nearly 1200-man crew.

This page features a special selection of views of and on board USS *Indianapolis*, taken throughout her career.

Additional pictures of *Indianapolis* will be found on the following pages:

[USS \*Indianapolis\* in 1932-1941;](#)

[USS \*Indianapolis\* in 1942;](#)

[USS \*Indianapolis\* in 1943;](#)

[USS \*Indianapolis\* in 1944;](#)

[USS \*Indianapolis\* in 1945;](#)


[USS \*Indianapolis\* Actions and Activities: May 1934 Naval Review off New York City;](#)

[USS \*Indianapolis\* Actions and Activities: Presidential South American Tour, 1936;](#)

[USS \*Indianapolis\* Actions and Activities: Miscellaneous World War II activities;](#)

[Loss of USS \*Indianapolis\*, 30 July 1945; and](#)

[USS \*Indianapolis\* Onboard Views, 1932-1945.](#)

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## USS *New Mexico* (BB-40), 1918-1947

USS *New Mexico*, lead ship of a class of three 32,000-ton battleships, was built at the New York Navy Yard. Commissioned in May 1918, she spent the rest of the First World War operating near the United States, but steamed to Europe early in 1919 to escort President Wilson home from the Versailles peace conference. Later in the year she became flagship of the Pacific Fleet. A regular participant in Battle Fleet exercises in the Pacific and Caribbean in the 1920s and 1930s, she visited Australia and New Zealand in 1925, also calling on South American ports during the '20s.



Extensively modernized at the Philadelphia Navy Yard beginning in March 1931, *New Mexico's* work, completed in January 1933, greatly altered her appearance. Her original "cage" masts were replaced by a then-modern tower superstructure, and many other improvements were made to her armament and protection. In 1940, her base was relocated to Pearl Harbor as a deterrent to Japan, but *New Mexico* was sent to the Atlantic in May 1941 to meet the menace presented by German successes in Europe.

*New Mexico* returned to the Pacific in early 1942 to help reinforce a Pacific Fleet that had been badly crippled by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. During most of 1942 she operated off the U.S. west coast and in Hawaiian waters, then went to the southwest Pacific until May 1943, when she arrived in the Aleutians to take part in operations to recapture Attu and Kiska.


In late 1943 and early 1944, *New Mexico* provided heavy gunfire support to invasions in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. A bombardment of Japanese positions on New Ireland followed in March 1944, and in June and July the battleship helped in the conquest of Saipan, Tinian and Guam. Following a Stateside overhaul, *New Mexico* took part in the capture of Mindoro and Luzon. During the later operation, on 6 January 1945, she was hit by a suicide plane that killed and injured over a hundred of her crew. The ship was able to remain in action, however, for several more days.

After repairs, *New Mexico* participated in the Okinawa invasion in March-May 1945. She was again hit by a "Kamikaze" on 12 May, with her crew suffering over 170 casualties. Preparing for the Invasion of Japan during the War's last months, she was present in Tokyo Bay when Japan formally surrendered on 2 September. Transiting the Pacific and Panama Canal for a final time, *New Mexico* arrived in Boston, Massachusetts, in mid-October 1945 and was decommissioned there in July 1946. She was sold for scrapping in October 1947.

This page features selected views of USS *New Mexico* (BB-40).

**If you want higher resolution reproductions than the digital images presented here, see: "How to Obtain Photographic Reproductions."**



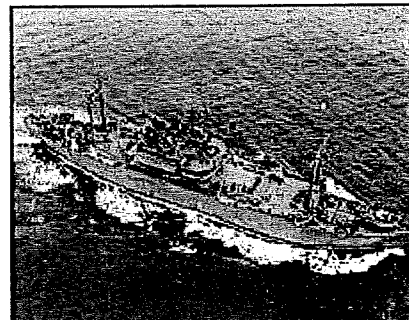
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**Online Library of Selected Images:  
– U.S. NAVY SHIPS –**

**USS *Appalachian* (AGC-1), 1943-1960**

USS *Appalachian*, a 13,910-ton amphibious force flagship, was built under Maritime Commission contract at Kearny, New Jersey. She was acquired by the Navy in February 1943, about a month after launching. After conversion at Brooklyn, New York, *Appalachian* was placed in commission in October 1943. Transferred to the Pacific soon after her shakedown cruise, she served as a command ship for the invasion of Kwajalein in January-February 1944. Subsequently, *Appalachian* supported amphibious assaults at Guam in July, Leyte in October 1944 and Lingayen Gulf in January 1945.



Following a west coast overhaul, *Appalachian* returned to the combat zone just as the Pacific War was approaching its end. In September-November 1945, she participated in the occupation of Japan, then returned to the United States. During Operation "Crossroads", the atomic bomb tests at Bikini in May-July 1946, she was employed as press headquarters ship. Later in the year, she served as a fleet flagship while based in San Diego, California. USS *Appalachian* was decommissioned in May 1947. Following almost a dozen years in the Reserve Fleet, she was stricken from the Navy list in March 1959 and sold for scrapping.

This page features all the views we have related to USS *Appalachian*.

**If you want higher resolution reproductions than the digital images presented here, see: "How to Obtain Photographic Reproductions."**

Click on the small photograph to prompt a larger view of the same image.

**Photo #: NH 97722**

**USS *Appalachian* (AGC-1)**

Underway off the New York coast, 18 October 1943.  
Photographed from a Naval Air Station New York City aircraft.

*Official U.S. Navy Photograph, from the collections of the Naval Historical Center.*

**Online Image: 150KB; 740 x 605 pixels**

