

# CAMBRIA PRESS NEWS

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## OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF USS CAMBRIA



### TALES OF LEAVING THE NAVY

*Editor's Note: I recently sent out an e-mail asking for an answer to this question: "What was the process of leaving the Navy like? Was there any kind of ceremony, or did you just pack your sea bag and walk off the ship? Did you have any kind of celebration, either with your Navy buddies or back at home? How was your trip home?" We are happy to print the following responses:*

**Tracy W. Deane, RM2 Comphibron-6  
Flagship USS Cambria, 1963-69:**

None of the above. I was detached from the USS La Salle LPD-1 in Norfolk with instructions to return to my recruiting station in Cleveland, Ohio where I would muster out. When I arrived there I gave my orders to the Chief who had the duty. He read the paper work and started to say, "You wouldn't be interested in joining the Navy Reserve..." At this point he looked up at me, paused, said, "Nah," signed the papers and sent me on my merry way.

**Don Snyder:**

Sorry, but my separation from the Navy was not from Cambria but from

Kingsville Naval Air Station, Kingsville, Texas (January 1959) and it was an uneventful one. The trip home was pleasant, but with trepidation as I knew I would be faced with choices to pursue for my future endeavors.

**Bob Tomoser, USS Cambria 1961-63:**

When I left the ship for the last time, it happened very fast. I was told to pack my things—I wasn't going with the ship on the up-coming Med cruise. I packed up and I was piped off as I left. I was happy to leave, but I knew I would miss the guys.

**Dan O'Brien:**

I served in the Marines while spending 6 months on the Cambria. The day I left the Marines, I packed my gear, quietly left the base with no goodbyes and took the train home.

**Craig Head:**

They offered me \$6,000.00 to re-up, but they wouldn't give me the ship I wanted so I just packed my seabag and walked off when that final day came. My brother and sister-in-law picked me up

and they let me drive most of the way home (IN). Nothing great was planned. I just wanted to get on with my life.

**Dennis Smith:**

Actually the whole process for me was kind of kept on the quiet side, no celebrations of any kind, but then for most of us in uniform back in the 60s and 70s, there really wasn't any welcome back buddy like there is now for the guys fighting over in sandland. If I see any desert colored uniforms, I plan on shaking his/her hand if allowed.

**Jack Shuler:**

The war had ended and the services were reducing their forces. We would have to have taken a reduction in grade so we left and returned home to our pre-war status.

**Stan Labacz:**

My shipmates, especially those in E-Division, all wished me good luck. It was a weird feeling walking off the ship at Pier 5 NOB, Norfolk, knowing that I wouldn't be coming back the following Monday. I

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hopped on the Greyhound bus just outside the base gate and away I went. I'll never forget that ride from Norfolk to Philly; all the time thinking of what the future would hold for me. My future bride and family welcomed me home with open arms. I was due to get married a month earlier but was extended 30 days because of Viet Nam. We had to postpone the wedding and move everything from July to August. However, it wasn't that bad since I enjoyed making the new wedding plans with my future bride.

**Charles Harless:**

Leaving the Navy was easy for me. Signed some papers and checked out. I left USS Cambria on midnight of my release date with my sea bag. Said goodbye to everyone. I left in my car and drove all night to get home. After I got home, I met up with family and friends and started my civilian life.

**Raymond Dashnaw (1963-65):**

Nope, no ceremony, just a few beers with my shipmates the night before. Packed my sea bag and left for home a BM-3. Trip home was great! Went back in the Reserves and left a BM-1 after four more years. Then after a few weeks at home, went to work and stayed there 36 years with the same company. Now retired and living in the sun in Myrtle Beach, SC.

**Nelson Hadley:**

I was discharged in 1966 after a four month extension because of the Vietnam War. There was word I may be extended for another four months, but some wonderful person placed my discharge papers in a pile of papers to be signed by the Captain, and my wife and I left Norfolk quickly.

**Stuart Eason:**

I was a Marine, so when I left the Cambria, I went back to Camp LeJeune with pleasant memories of the six months we spent in the Mediterranean. Six months later I was discharged and I had a lonely bus ride home to Shreveport. No celebration. I still remember my shipmates.

**Samuel A Culotta:**

After the Okinawa Invasion (Easter

Sunday, April 1945), I was sent home from San Francisco by train (5 days) for a 30-day leave and then reported to the Brooklyn Navy Yard for duty. I celebrated VJ Day (August 14th) in Times Square. On or about September 28, 1945, I was sent to Bainbridge Naval Base in Maryland. There I was medically examined and honorably discharged the next day (Regular Navy, age 17 to 21, completed). There were no formalities or ceremony—just one of the many Navy veterans. I remember hitchhiking home to Baltimore where I arrived a few hours later and surprised my parents with my arrival! It was a very happy occasion, never to be forgotten—Thank God!

**Ramon Stafford:**

I had the full retirement ceremonies. After 22 years in the service I retired off the USS America CVA-66 on 1 May 1973. I inspected the troupes and I got piped off the ship with 8 of the Chiefs that worked with me as my side boys. Here is a picture where I was leaving the ship. *(See picture directly below.)*



WILLIAM IACARUSO'S FAREWELL SALUTE

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By David Stoll:

Here it is January already and just three months or so before our reunion in Washington, D.C. I have been to Washington several times in my life and I have yet to see it all. It will be a pretty time of year to see it. The trees should be in bloom and the weather should be nice. I hope all of the men that have never been to a reunion will show up this year. You will make new friends and renew some old ones. In the past we have had up to fifty men and wives there, and that is a nice group. This year I hope to see a lot more there. I know Larry will give us a nice tour of the city and see things that maybe we would not have seen otherwise.

Every year we get to pick the place. The members that are there get to nominate the place and then we vote on it. Like next year we are going to Boston, Mass. Where we will go the following year will be up to the ones that are at the reunion. I have said this before and I will say it again. The first year that Ellen and I went to a reunion we knew no one there, but when we left we had met a lot of new people and are still friends with them. That has been over fifteen years and I still enjoy going to the reunions. I hope to see a lot of new faces at this reunion.



## TAPS

The Association was saddened to learn of the following shipmates' deaths. The entire membership extends our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the deceased.

**George Wilhelm (1960-63)**  
Died December 1, 2007

**Gary Kistner (1959-62) RM2 CR Div**  
Date of death not reported

**Harold Gray**  
Date of death not reported

Howard Brandt's email should be pap-brandt@aol.com & address Claratin, PA.



## WELCOME MAT

We are proud to announce that the following USS CAMBRIA shipmates have recently been located. Welcome Aboard and we hope to see you at the next reunion. Also, you are invited to become an active member of the Association.

**Ronald Kulak**  
3774 Gordon St  
Terrell, NC 28682

**Kenneth Coe**  
(1945-46) S 1/c Amphibious  
13 Briggs Dr  
Ormond Beach, FL 32176  
386-441-0218

**James McKeon**  
(1958-61) RM2 CR Div  
104 Lincoln Dr  
Reading, PA 19606  
610-582-6952

**Charles Harless**  
(1966-68) RM3 CR Div  
8310 NE Meadow Ct  
Vancouver, WA 98662  
360-885-7600

**Howard Brandt's email should be papbrandt@aol.com & address Claratin, PA.**



## MAIL CALL

Hey Ramon,

I'm Frederick Smith, Jr., a former USS Cambria (APA-36 & LPA-36) crewman who served on board from 1969-1970 when it was decommissioned. I was a third class Radioman, of which the Navy no longer has Radiomen. It's now ITT something.

Serving on board the USS Cambria was my second enlistment. My first enlistment I spent in San Miguel, Philippines (NAVCOMSTAPHIL) on shore duty.

Recently I was listed as deceased in the July 2008 issue of the Cambria Newsletter in two places. The Taps column had me listed as having died on 25

March 2008. And the Mail Call column had an Editor's Note saying that I had died after submitting the letter.

It was my father that died of Alzheimer's at the age of 84. And he was in the 41st Infantry Division of the Army. I am now 61 years old and still alive.

I'm also in touch with a handful of other shipmates from the USS Cambria. You probably don't know these guys as we served on board during the late 60s until the ship was decommissioned in 1970. I communicate with Tom Bergen, John Charlton, John (Ozzie) Arsenault, Mike Retherford, Jerry Vargas, Richard Houston, and Jack Norton. I've gotten together with three of the aforementioned. I've also called a couple of others by telephone.

I live in Massachusetts, but when visiting my mother in South Venice, Florida one year, I made an arrangement to meet up with a Richard Gustafson who was a Quartermaster in 1943. We met up at a pancake house and had a good time. I gave him some mementos from the ship.

More than likely I won't be attending the Washington, DC reunion in 2009, but hope to attend the 2010 reunion that's supposed to be in Boston. I live in Massachusetts about 77 miles from Boston. Take care buddy.

Frederick Smith  
1013 Chestnut St  
Palmer, MA 01069-1803  
Phone: 413-283-3282  
E-mail: rister863@samnet.net

Dear Karen & Ramon,

I have just read my initial copy of the Cambria Press News and my name etc is in the "Welcome Mat." Thank you for (1) your good work in publishing the newsletter from the financial AND journalistic sides and (2) including my name, etc, so that ANY Navy Flag (COMTRANS 12) shipmates from 1945 that see it, and are interested in doing so, please contact me by mail or phone or e-mail at [billfrancis.cdc@att.net](mailto:billfrancis.cdc@att.net), and I WILL reply!

Congratulations to you two and David Stoll, and any other volunteers who contribute to the story of the good ship Cambria! Most ships don't have the good fortune to have former crew interested enough to have an association, reunions, a newsletter, a cap, inter-communication between shipmates, etc. After a 63 year "interval," it wasn't until fairly recently that I began learning of all of this. I made contact with David Stoll via a very small

notice of a Cambria reunion upcoming in Philadelphia printed in our local newspaper's "Reunions" column, which is normally 98% high school and college events. Since then, I have hit all the Cambria websites, made contact with 2 former COMTRANS12 signal bridge shipmates, sent several e-mails, received photos, and now participating as noted above.

Coast Guardsman and Water King on the Cambria, Art Andrewsen and I were classmates in high school in Martinez, CA and met at Tulagi when the Cambria and my then ship, USS Noble APA-218, were staging (including R&R on Tulagi) to leave for Ulithi in the Carolines. Later at Ulithi, I received my transfer to COMTRANS 12 on the Cambria, and met Art at the head of the gangplank serving the OD as master-at-arms! Then followed Okinawa, Nagasaki, etc. And, I would be VERY interested in hearing from any Coast Guard or Navy Cambria shipmates who have any photos of the action at Okinawa, and/or of the Japanese surrender of the Nagasaki area that took place in the wardroom of the Cambria in the harbor at Nagasaki!

I'll drop anchor now with very best wishes to every shipmate who sees this news, good health to you and yours, and eternal rest to those shipmates who have left us.

Bill Francis

Hi Karen & Ramon,

I'm one of the younger members—I served on the USS Cambria from June 1962 to March 1964—age 19.

Attached are a couple photos taken of my younger, thinner self on the ship—you might get a kick out of them. The serious looking guy in front of me in our compartment was Ralph Joseph Dewey from Pittsburgh, PA (or near there)—don't know if Ralph is a member or not. He said he fought Golden Gloves before joining the Navy, so we took him with us on shore leave for protection.

We did two six-month Med Cruises and I got to see a lot of Europe at an early age. We were in the Boats Div. so they would send us off with the Marines for their training exercises. We were taught to fire their weapons in case we got marooned on a beach during a real landing. I still remember catching a hillside on fire with 50 cal. Tracers. Turned 21 in Izmir, Turkey and a Marine buddy introduced me to a drink called 7& 7—

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about a dozen of them. Don't remember much of that night except sitting down with my buddy in front of a Mike boat, rainy and muddy, in dress whites, heading back to the ship anchored out singing "Georgia on My Mind." My first son was born while we were in Genoa, Italy—I remember the Red Cross teletype. They woke me up at 2:30 in the morning to read, "Mother and son doing fine," was about all it said. They wanted their cigars I was waiting to give out.

We didn't see any serious war action like most of your older membership, but we were involved in the blockade of Cuba in the winter of 1962—November I think it was. We had just come back from a 6-month Med Cruise and had fought the tail end of a hurricane (confined below decks for 3 days and Marines barfing all over the ship). We no sooner hit port at Morehead City, NC, and all leave and liberty was cancelled. We took on stores all night and steamed out of port the next morning. It was blistering cold in NC, but suddenly, within a day, we were back in summer dress. We didn't know we were part of a blockade until President Kennedy's speech was broadcast over the ship's loud speakers. I remember all the "jarheads" sharpening their bayonets itching to "hit the beach". We were in the boat's division and were scared to death at the thought of real combat and the first boat waves getting shot out of the water.

Also we steamed about 60 miles off the Coast of Cyprus in the Med for 30 days in February of 1964 on standby to evacuate American citizens due to unrest there. We were relieved from the Med Cruise on location off the coast of Cyprus instead of Rota, Spain and returned to Norfolk. My tour ended and I got off the ship then as a YN3. I later heard the Cambria steamed south, through the Panama Canal, loaded up in California with Marines and headed off to Vietnam.

I came back to St. Louis, later joined the St. Louis Police Department, and retired in 2004 as a detective—starting my own advertising-printing business which I still run.

Ron Young

## TREASURER'S REPORT

By Ramon Stafford

Money at beginning of reunion April 2008	\$2,853.82
Money received for dues	\$ 130.00
Money received for hats/pins	\$ 320.50
Money received fro newsletter	\$ 1,304.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$4,608.82</b>

Money Expended:	
Paid for Newsletter 7/23/08	\$599.82
Paid for Postage	\$ 14.54
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$614.36</b>

**Money on hand as of 12/8/08 \$3,994.46**

I WANT TO THANK ALL THE CAMBRIA CREW MEMBERS for the response to the last newsletter. We did enclose envelopes with the newsletter in July and with that response we brought in \$1,755.00. Breaking this down we received \$130.00 for Dues, \$320.50 for hats and pins, and \$1,304.50 for the newsletter. From all the money we receive we put it in the fund for the newsletter. As we run out of hats, pins, patches etc, we buy them from the funds. At the present time we do not have any more patches or pins. Our hats will remain as stated below. Even though we have about \$4,000.00 in our fund, with 2 newsletters a year it will not take long to deplete those funds, so any donation will help.

If you have a e-mail address, please send it to me and MLRS. If you wish to have the newsletter sent to you by e-mail, please let Karen at MLRS know and that will get the cost of the newsletter down. My e-mail address is rstafford@kinex.net and Karen, who writes the newsletter, is karen@mlrsinc.com.

At our meeting in Philadelphia it was decided to increase our hats to \$15.00 if they are to be mailed, that includes postage. At the reunion the hats will stay at \$10.00. If you want a USS Cambria cap, please send a check for \$15.00 to Ramon Stafford, 5324 Tower Hill Rd, Gladstone, VA 24553 and I will mail it in the return mail. Phone number 434-969-4811. Thank you.

Ramon Stafford  
Treasurer

## PHOTOS SUBMITTED BY RON YOUNG



Editor's Note: We have a treat for those of you who can receive attachments by e-mail. David Wright, whose dad William F. Wright, Jr., was aboard the Cambria in 1945, sent us a copy of THE CAMBRIA NEWS dated Thursday, May 3rd, 1945, and a certificate from Neptunus Rex. We will send each of you a copy as an e-mail attachment. We will not be able to mail copies USPS.