

Eugene Gilbert Goodlet

Born: 9/19/1919

Died: Dec 19, 1981
New York

Period of Service: WW II
Coast Guard
Sources: Monument, B10
F2a, Cemetery 376 S, Carol
O'Neil

Service # 203-656

Gene Goodlet used to proclaim that he did nothing in the service but have a good time. This is belied by the fact that he was involved in five invasions in the Pacific Theater: Guam, the Marshall Islands, Saipan, Manila, and the Leyte Gulf. He was also present at the fall of Singapore.

As a result, he was awarded the Good Conduct ribbon, the American Area Ribbon, the Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon with three bronze stars, the American Defense ribbon with an 'A' attached, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two bronze stars, and the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign medal. After the war, he was also granted a 30% disability.

He enlisted in the Coast Guard on August 27, 1940 in Chicago. Discharged honorably as boatswain's mate second class at the Brooklyn Navy Yard on September 28, 1945.

Carol, his daughter, recounts that Gene joined the Coast Guard during depressed times as a way of making a living. He traveled completely around the world twice, met many kinds of people and saw things he never would have seen otherwise. He loved Cape Town best, would like to have seen Ireland but never landed because of the Irish pro-Nazi sentiment. He hated Hawaii and San Diego, and liked New York where he eventually settled.

He sailed aboard the Cruiser *Wakefield*, the largest ship built in the US (in 1932) at that time, and originally called the *Manhattan*. Its War Cruise History recounts the fall of Singapore:

"The vessel was docked at Keppel Harbor, Singapore, on the morning of January 30, 1942, when a formation of Japanese bombers appeared overhead.... They began dropping their destructive cargo in the vicinity of the ship.....one bomb landed approximately fifty yards off the port quarters, another only fifty feet off the port beam. A direct hit was reported at 11:05. A bomb landed port side forward, abreast of number two hatch. It penetrated to C Deck, entered Sick Bay, exploded killing five men, injured nine others and started destructive fires above the waterline. Thus in the second month of the war the ship bore the scars of battle."

Nonetheless, it continued evacuating British evacuees including children and women, one of whom gave birth at sea, and named the child 'Wakefield'. Gene was one of two men who prepared the dead for burial at sea. He didn't talk about that, except to refer to the ceremony itself as "the most beautiful, dignified and moving of all burials" and unchanged for enemy deaths, and all hands turned out to give them their due, since it "was the law of the sea" that they would do the same. The ship suffered another fire on September 10, 1942 when, as a transport ship for German prisoners of war, flames broke

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out simultaneously in several parts of the ship, obviously sabotage, and the ship had to be evacuated. The fire "reduced the ship to a charred hulk."

Gene wrote a poem, "Cruise of the Wakefield". The music by an unknown friend has been lost.

1 'A transport shoved off from the bay
Leaving New York far behind
Heavily laden with wonder and doubt
Knowing what they will find.
Many a sailor was leaving his babe

They'll get no promotion this side the ocean
So cheer up m'lads! Bless them all!

CHORUS: Bless them all! Bless them all!
The snipes, the swabs, one and all
Bless the captain and officers, too
Bless all the P.O.S. the whole blessed crew
We are bound for the next port of call
So into our soft bunks we crawl.
We'll get no promotion this side the ocean
So cheer up m'lads! Bless them all!

2. We anchored on Old Halifax
All hands made one trip ashore
A few came back sober and others late
They won't get the chance anymore.
Then we took a cargo of blokes
And put each one in his stall
We'll get no promotion this side the ocean,
So cheer up m'lads! Bless them all!, etc.

3. At Trinidad, then we did call
Anchored eight miles from land
Liberty granted, the brave and the free
Left for the distant strand.
Two days later we steamed out again
With no one regretful at all,
We'll get no etc.

4. We sailed southward and over the line
Capetown then hovered in sight
Four days we stopped there to everyone's joy

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Some stayed ashore all night
Capetowners treated each man like a king
Many good times we recall
We'll get no etc.

5. Now we're sailing along to Bombay
Knowing that war's no joke
All we can hope for and fervently pray
Is to be rid of each bloke
Sailing once more for the old U.S.A.
Hoping to get there by Fall
And get those promotions on this side the ocean
So cheer up m'lads! Bless them all!

He married Kathleen (Kay) Jensen of New York on 9/17/1942. Became a fireman in New York.
Daughter is Carol O'Neil.

