

Petty Officer Kurt W. Meyer

Born 11/29/1941

Died:

Period of Service: Viet Nam
Coast Guard

Source: Himself

His family vacationed on Washington Island at Jens Jacobsen's cottages on Little Lake, and bought adjacent farmland from the Bjarnarson family about 1945 with the idea of raising potatoes to pay off the mortgage. Neither his father or mother were farmers and their potato farming was not a profitable venture. His father returned to Chicago to teach high school, and Kurt and his mother stayed on the Island, where Kurt went to grade and high school. He graduated in 1959, attended one year of college and then worked one year in Illinois.

He enlisted in the Coast Guard in Spring of 1961, and took basic training at Cape May NJ. He was assigned to the Eighth Coast Guard District in New Orleans in early summer and reassigned to the Coast Guard cutter *Salvia* (WAGL-400, a 180 foot buoy tender based out of Mobile, AL. Their area of operations was from Mobile Bay to Southwest Pass, LA. Their duty was to maintain buoys for channels and shoals, perform search and rescue missions (overdue shrimp boat, etc.) and fill in for other tenders that were down for repair.

In January of 1963, he was reassigned to the 17th Coast Guard District in Juneau, AK, and subsequently reassigned to the CGC *Balsam* (WAGL-62), another buoy tender in Ketchikan. Their area of operations on that tour of duty was from Dixon Entrance, the southernmost part of Alaska, to Juneau, and the duties were the same as in Mobile. The main difference was the continuous fog, rain (300 inches per year) and tides that reached 17 feet at times as well as currents in excess of twelve knots due to the water rushing between the islands and the channels of the "inside passage" in their duty area. The problem was that the maximum speed of a 180 foot buoy tender is 12 knots. They were under way for a minimum 20 days of every 30 days on all buoy tenders.

In late summer of 1964, he was reassigned to the ninth Coast Guard District in Cleveland, Ohio, and reassigned to the CGC *Acacia* (WAGL 406) in Port Huron, MI. After a year and a half of clouds and rain, it was a relief to see sunny skies again: there were only about a dozen days of sunshine in his entire tour of Alaska. The duties were the same as his other tours of duty minus the wet conditions and currents. Now, however, the duties included ice breaking during the freeze up on the Great Lakes which included 'Operation Coal Shovel' the entire winter of 1965. Operation Coal Shovel was the code name for making it possible for the huge lake carriers to load coal in Toledo, Ohio, and unload it near the Detroit power plants on the Saint Claire River.

Kurt achieved petty officer rating of Quartermaster 2C (E-5) by the end of his four year enlistment in March 1965, and was recommended for reenlistment. Quartermaster in the Navy or Coast Guard is different from the Army or Marines, and involves all aspects of navigation of the vessel, proper placement of buoys, actual ship handling, voice radio communications, deck log record keeping, etc. He is married to Carol who works in the Ferry Line office.

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