

Departed Comrade

We have just learned that another old salt and a great guy of our Net Tender group has passed away. He is Charlie Theobald from Rock Hall, MD. He was 93 years old having been born in 1919 and passed away in early October of 2012.

Charlie was a plank owner on USS Yew AN-37 (former YN-32). He boarded her in July 1942. She was one of only 3 Steel Net Tenders out of 47 that crossed the Atlantic Ocean. She was part of Operation Torch that was part of the North African Campaign to force the Axis armies out of Africa. More than 800 war vessels were involved in this campaign.

Yew sailed from Norfolk in a slow convoy of 28 small craft vessels, arriving Casablanca Morocco in November 1942.. In April 1943 Yew was joined by Net Tenders Hackberry and Pepperwood and together with 2 yard tugs (YT's) they laid a 3 mile net across a cove at Arzew, 20 miles east of Oran.

Following this assignment the 3 Net Tenders had other assignments before being turned over to France in November 1943.

Charlie returned to U.S. and was assigned to the new cargo ship USS Lumen AKA-30. He served in the navy for 8 years, didn't sign over, then married the love of his life and traded his sea life for a home on land. Charlie left the navy as a Chief Boatswain's Mate.

Charlie's time on this earth probably did not involve monetary success, but a much richer involvement than that. Like many men living by the sea we used to say men like him were born with salt water in their veins. He was a good sailor with natural ability of good seamanship, working the deck of a Navy Net Tender. He liked to talk and tell stories. He loved to entertain like he did at a reunion when he dressed up in a funny outfit, pulling his Net Tender model around in a wagon around the banquet room.

His son Steve said that his Mom passed away in January 2012. In late September they got most of the family together, including great grandchildren in order to go out on a family friend's working sailing Oyster Skipjack and sprinkled his Mom's ashes in Chesapeake Bay as per her wishes. It was a beautiful day and Charlie did a stint at steering as they sailed. A week later he laid down on the floor to take a nap as he's always done and just never woke up. He enjoyed good health and that day felt the sun warm him and the breeze kiss his cheek. Steve said; I only hope I can go like that.

Another quote from Steve: Dad was a master story teller and never failed to leave you laughing...A tough act to follow!

Charlie attended a couple of our reunions, one with Steve and the other with his brother Charles Jr.

Glenn Paulson