



- Summit Daily / Mark Fox

Frisco veteran recalls WWII

An 84-year old World War II veteran from Frisco remembers his fellow soldiers

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BY DREW ANDERSEN

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FRISCO — Sitting at the dining room table of his condominium, a jovial Jack Cowger visibly saddened at the mention of the word “Marines.”

His eyes brimmed with tears as the World War II veteran recalled seeing his fellow soldiers “all chewed up” on the operating table while working as a scrub nurse in the Navy Hospital Corps.

“I don't think it bothered me so much then as it does now,” he said.

Stationed aboard the hospital ship USS Rescue (AH-18) as a teenager, Cowger bore witness first-hand to the devastation hot metal can wreak on the human body. He took off his glasses to clear his eyes and mastered himself.

“I don't think we'll talk about the Marines any more,” Cowger said.

Veteran's Day isn't an opportunity for Cowger to reflect upon how much he did for his country. It's a chance for him to remember his fellow veterans who did so much for him.

Cowger becomes more of a rarity each day. The ranks of World War II veterans diminish by approximately 850 former soldiers daily. As of May of this year, just over two million United States World War II veterans were still alive.

Cowger's story

As a 17-year old high school senior, Cowger saw the writing on the wall. As soon as he graduated and turned 18, he would be drafted. As so many of his peers did,

Cowger preemptively enlisted in the Navy in 1944 so as to choose which branch of the military he would serve under.

“I didn't want to sleep on the ground at night,” he said. “I didn't think a foxhole sounded very comfortable.”

Cowger had two older brothers who both joined the Navy, so the youngest sibling followed in their footsteps. He opted to become a Corpsman, serving the Navy's hospital system.

“I didn't want to shoot anybody because I figured they'd be a better shot than I was,” Cowger said.

One day after graduating high school, Cowger made his way to the Naval Station Great Lakes in North Chicago, Ill. He underwent four weeks of combination boot camp and Corps training before heading to Brooklyn, N.Y., in December of 1944 to catch the USS Rescue. The Rescue was undergoing an operation to transform her from a submarine tender to a hospital ship, and by early 1945 it was deployed in the Pacific theater to support the Allies' efforts against the Japanese.

During the trek to the Pacific, Cowger trained to become a scrub nurse for the ship's surgeons.

The job fell into Cowger's lap, “mainly because the other guys they asked thought it meant scrubbing the floor,” he said.

The USS Rescue arrived off the coast of Japan near the end of the 82-day Battle of Okinawa, where 50,000 Allied troops were lost. Despite constant threat of air attack, Cowger and the staff of the rescue helped fill the ship near its 798-bed capacity and delivered the wounded soldiers safely to the Allied base on Guam.

“It wasn't uncommon to work 20 of 24 hours,” Cowger said. “We'd sleep for about 15 minutes, then be up and at it again.”

Schools honoring Veterans' Day

* Frisco Elementary has invited veterans to speak to students in the classroom and participate in an assembly to honor local veterans.

* Breckenridge Elementary will host an honorary flag raising at 8:45 a.m.

After supporting fleets in the South China Sea, the crew of the Rescue got word that the United States had the atomic bomb, and that the end of the war was imminent. On September 2, 1945, the Rescue arrived in Tokyo Bay with the 3rd Fleet, where Cowger and the rest of the crew witnessed the signing of the Japanese Instrument of Surrender on the USS Missouri — marking the end of World War II — from less than a half mile away.

Cowger took leave in Yokohama as the Rescue took on prisoners of war from camps in Japan. He said the Japanese civilians were polite, even offering Cowger into their homes and offering tea.

“I have to admit, I didn't drink the tea,” Cowger said. “I just didn't have that trust yet.”

Cowger was honorably discharged later that year, having devoted two years of his life to the military before the age of 20.

After the war

Having served two years overseas, Cowger was eligible for four years of college through the G.I. Bill. Cowger decided to pursue a career in medicine, but he did not use the bill to finance his undergraduate education at Hastings College in Hastings, Neb. Instead, Cowger saved the bill to finance his four years at Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine in Kirksville, Mo.

He moved to Aurora where he grossed \$29 in his first month in practice as an osteopathic physician. Two of Cowger's patients had been victims in the Bataan Death March and actually rode the Rescue from Yokohama to Guam.

“They didn't get charged very much,” Cowger said.

In 1960, Cowger's friends Jody and Charlie Anderson bought the Frisco Lodge and introduced Cowger to Summit County. Two years later he bought an acre of land where the Condo Creek Condominiums now stand. Cowger built an A-frame triad on the site, and years later built the condos that now stand there, saving one for himself where he now resides with his partner, Elaine Fogle.

“I really enjoy it up here,” Cowger said of Summit County. “They're gonna have to haul me out of here, because I'm not leaving.”

SDN reporter Drew Andersen can be contacted at (970) 668-4633 or drewa@summitdaily.com.

[http://www.summitdaily.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?
AID=/20101111/NEWS/101119989/1078&ParentProfile=1055&template=printart](http://www.summitdaily.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101111/NEWS/101119989/1078&ParentProfile=1055&template=printart)





REPORT OF CHANGES (Enlisted Personnel)

of U. S. S. RESCUE (AH18)

for the month ending 28th day of FEBRUARY, 1945, date of sailing

from

to

1	2	3	4		5
			Date of Enlistment		
NAMES (Alphabetically arranged without regard to ratings, with surname to the left and the first name written in full)	SERVICE NUMBER (The service number must under no condition be omitted)	Rating at Date of Last Report			Place of Enlistment
1 ✓ COCKRELL, Alan Lee	877 70 58	PhM2c(T)			
2 COHEN, Richard Phillip	202 34 95	F1c			
3 ✓ COLINAN, George Harper jr	205 71 65	HA1c			
4 COLLINS, Robert Vincent	607 11 95	F1c			
5 ✓ CONRAD, Ray Willard	250 54 69	CFM(T)			
6 ✓ COOK, Henry (n) jr	285 62 38	HA1c			
7 ✓ COONEY, John Amborse	726 51 47	PhM2c			
8 ✓ CONGER, John Leland	317 18 51	HA1c			
9 ✓ CRANE, William Henry	810 50 09	PhM3c(T)			
10 ✓ D'AGOSTINO, Alphonse (n)	816 14 12	PhM3c			
11 ✓ DAHL, Frederick Andrew	758 12 91	HA1c			
12 ✓ DAIL, Harold Allen	262 86 50	PhM1c			
13 ✓ DANKO, John Emil	922 18 88	SCB3c			
14 ✓ DYCKES, George Wallace	608 21 07	PhM1c			
15 ✓ ECKSTEIN, John Henry	322 07 25	HA1c			

6	7	8	9
Branch of Service	Received, transferred, deserted, discharged, change of rating, death, or any other change of status	Date of Occurrences in column 7	Vessel or station from which received, to what vessel or station transferred, where discharged and character of discharge; where deserted, and amount due or overpaid. Where died, cause of death and where and when buried. If rated and authority for same. If disgraced, give cause; if on detached duty, give place of duty. If passenger, give purpose of travel and final disposition.
1 V-6 USNR(SV)	REC ✓	2/3/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
2 USN	C R ✓	2/5/45	To F2c. CO MAST: Refusing to stand necessary fire watch. Auth: BuPers Man. D-5113(3).
3 V-6 USNR	REC ✓	2/3/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
4 V-6 USNR	C R ✓	2/1/45	To WT3c(T). To fill vacancy. Auth: BuPers G/L 297-44.
5 USN	REC ✓	2/3/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
6 USN	REC ✓	2/3/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
7 V-6 USNR	REC ✓	2/3/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
8 V-6 USNR	REC ✓	2/9/45	From USNH NTC GREAT LAKES ILL for duty.
9 V-6 USNR(SV)	REC ✓	2/2/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
10 V-6 USNR(SV)	REC ✓	2/2/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
11 V-6 USNR	REC ✓	2/9/45	From USNH GREAT LAKES ILL for duty.
12 USN	REC ✓	2/5/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
13 USN-I(SA)	TRAN ✓	2/7/45	To USNH BROOKLYN NY for treatment. Auth: Form "G".
14 V-6 USNR	REC ✓	2/5/45	From RS BROOKLYN NY for duty.
15 V-6 USNR	REC ✓	2/9/45	From USNH GREAT LAKES ILL for duty.

REPORT OF CHANGES

of U. S. S. RESCUE (APH 118)

for the month ending APR 2 1946 day of APR 29 1946, 19, date of sailing
from to

	1 NAMES (Alphabetically arranged without regard to ratings, with surname to the left and the first name written in full)	2 SERVICE NUMBER (The service number must under no condition be omitted)	3 Rating at Date of Last Report	4 Date of Enlistment		5 Place of Enlistment
16	BUCKNUM, Arthur Lee	782 02 09	SM3c			
17	BUCKNUM, Arthur Lee	782 02 09	SM3c			
18	BUHL, James Howard	965 86 78	WT1c			
19	BYRNE, Edward Matthew	728 05 05	SM3c			
20	CADDIS, Richard Benjamin	272 52 27	SC1c			
21	CANNON, Hugh John	225 31 87	PhM1c			
22	CARE, Richard Henry	246 22 66	Slc			
23	CATRI, Leonard Joseph	285 80 90	S2c			
24	CATRI, Leonard Joseph	285 80 90	Slc			
25	CHAMBERS, George Wilson	970 57 82	St3c			
26	CLARK, Dayton Hornby	314 04 06	PhM3c			
27	COCKRELL, Alan Lee	877 70 58	PhM1c			
28	CONE, Charles Elliott	808 21 39	RM2c			
29	COWGER, John Leland	317 18 51	PhM3c			
30	DE CORSO, Nicholas Francis	249 79 10	CM3c			

	6 Branch of Service	7 Received, transferred, deserted, discharged, change of rating, death, or any other change of status	8 Date of Occurrences in column 7	9 Vessel or station from which received, to what vessel or station transferred, where discharged and character of discharge; where deserted, and amount due or overpaid. Where died, cause of death and where and when buried. If rated and authority for same. If dirated, give cause; if on detached duty, give place of duty. If passenger, give purpose of travel and final disposition.
16	V6 USNR	REC	4/18 : From RS SEATTLE WASH for duty.	
17	V6 USNR	TRAN	4/24 : 276231 of 4/24/46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FURAS by CWSF. Auth: COM 13 serial	
18	V6 USNR(SV)	TRAN	4/26 : 276204 of 4/25/46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FURAS by CWSF. Auth: COM 13 serial	
19	V6 USNR	REC	4/18 : From RS SEATTLE WASH for duty.	
20	USN	TRAN	4/26 : 276204 of 4/25/46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FURAS by CWSF. Auth: COM 13 serial	
21	USN	TRAN	4/24 : 276231 of 4/24/46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FURAS by CWSF. Auth: COM 13 serial	
22	V6 USNR	TRAN	4/24 : 276231 of 4/24/46.	
23	V6 USNR	C R	4/16 : To Slc. In excess. Auth: NavAct 14-46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FURAS by CWSF. Auth: COM 13 serial	
24	V6 USNR	TRAN	4/26 : 276204 of 4/25/46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FFT PSC SHELTON for separation from the	
25	V6 USNR(SV)	TRAN	4/2 : naval service. Auth: ALNAV 395-45.	
26	V6 USNR	TRAN	4/24 : 276231 of 4/24/46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FURAS by CWSF. Auth: COM 13 serial	
27	V6 USNR(SV)	TRAN	4/15 : To PSC BREMERTON WASH for separation from the naval service. Auth: ALNAV 395-45 and COM 13 Desp. 131900 of April 1946.	
28	V6 USNR(SV)	TRAN	4/15 : To RS SEATTLE WASH FFT PSC LIDO BEACH for separation from the naval service. Auth: ALNAV 395-45.	
29	V6 USNR	TRAN	4/24 : 276231 of 4/24/46. To RS SEATTLE WASH FURAS by CWSF. Auth: COM 13 serial	
30	V6 USNR	TRAN	4/15 : To RS SEATTLE WASH FFT PSC BAINBRIDGE for separation from the naval service. Auth: ALNAV 395-45.	