

STORIES FROM PIPA BILL

APA217 U.S.S. NEW KENT

Now hear this! Now hear this! Now Peverill! Now Peverill! Report to the bridge!
NOW PEVERILL! REPORT TO THE BRIDGE!

This would not be the first nor the last time this announcement would blast from the ship's loudspeakers.

The bridge is the central headquarters of the naval ship. All commands originate here, and the ship is managed and steered from here. It was certain that I was not being called to the bridge to steer the ship, but it was not completely impossible. At one time, our Captain managed to run the ship aground in Miami. We were pulled off the sandbar by a Chilean tug and, as we cruised up the causeway leaving Miami, autos honked their horns in celebration and derision.

The crew "scuttlebutt" was that the Captain was "passed over," the last of his Annapolis class (still in service) not to be made Admiral. There were symptoms of Queeg-like (*Caine Mutiny*) discipline: Some of us referred to the ship as the Beeno ship: Now hear this! There will be no liberty this weekend! Now hear this! There will be no ice cream with dessert! Now hear this! There will be no ship's movie tonight!

As you will read, I managed inadvertently to achieve some revenge.

The U.S.S. New Kent (APA217) was an Auxiliary Passenger Attack ship. When I was aboard, it carried 1,500 Marine troops and had a ship's (Navy) company of 350. With 20 plus landing crafts carried topside, it served to make amphibious landings. In 1947 when I came aboard, the war was over although the Russians were making mischief and some island-bound Japanese were yet to be subdued.

The New Kent was commissioned in 1944, and its wartime activities are described in the attached "A Short History as of 31 December, 1945." We continued amphibious training operations during which invariably some Marines would accidentally lose their lives.

The ship's description, including armament, is in the reference pages. Left out of the description is the ship's electronic gear which was substantial: Surface radar, air search radar, sonar, Loran, five sizeable transmitters, over twenty receivers, countless walkie-talkie devices and portable announcing devices ("blow horns").

The officer group listed on page 2 of the ship's history may include those on board during my service. I do not remember their names. Absent from the list is an electronics officer whose name I do remember: Chief Warrant Officer Bein, but six months after I arrived, he went to the hospital with an ulcer, leaving in charge ET/3 Electronics Technician Third Class William Peverill, 19 years of age, the only knowledgeable electronics person on the ship.

I joined the Navy in July 1946, along with about a dozen high school and prep school friends, seeking the G.I. Bill and avoiding the inevitable and still existent draft. Because of exceptionally high math aptitude scores (I finished the tests with enough time left over to go back and improve upon my mechanical aptitude score.) I was asked to take the Eddy Test which qualified me for electronics school. I received training first at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, then at secondary electronics school in Washington, D.C. This took about a year. The rest of my two-year stint was spent on the U.S.S. New Kent.

Electronics gear then used vacuum tubes unlike today's technology which incorporates solid-state components. Radio transmitters and receivers were mostly manufactured by Collins Radio Company (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) and were well made and sturdy. The radars were products of Raytheon Corporation.

There was much to do here, especially for a nineteen-year-old kid. To say I was busy would be a gross understatement.

Now hear this! Now Peverill report to the bridge!

Just before this announcement, there was an overwhelming explosion – KA-BOOM! – which was audible throughout the ship. During amphibious maneuvers, it was the executive officer's role, using a high-powered blow horn, to dictate commands to the landing boats which were being lowered over the side. This powerful audio unit used special batteries which, unfortunately, gave off hydrogen gas. Consequently, these units needed to be vented before use (each morning during maneuvers) or, when they were triggered for use, an electric arc would ignite the gas and result in an explosion. Sadly, this was "state of the art" at the time. That morning, I had not yet vented this unit. (It was not the only thing I had to do.) When I arrived on the bridge, I was met by an executive officer who was very visibly shaken and who called me every name – four-lettered included – imaginable.

It would not be the last time that my name would circulate at the officer's mess. It is hard to believe that there would be a "ship's alt" (a required alteration issued by Naval Operations) to install a radio in the Captain's cabin that would take precedence over other demanding shipboard tasks, but there was one. This procedure provided one of the early sources of endearment of the Captain for me. I smoked then, and his wood chest of drawers would be punished with a two-inch scar, a result of my cigarette left to burn there. The carpenters shop cured this. Band-Aids would mostly deal with the next episode. It was necessary to drill holes in the cabin's bulkhead as an outlet for the antenna and inlet for the power source. Metal shavings with cutting potential were left on the deck and, of course, the Captain cut his feet there. Now hear this! Now Peverill report to the Captain's cabin!

The New Kent at sea was part of a group flotilla, the flagship for which was the U.S.S. Taconic. Aboard the Taconic was a two-star Admiral. Ships in the flotilla-rotated responsibilities, one of which was to maintain "radar-guard" including air surveillance, especially for enemy aircraft. One evening when the New Kent was Radar guard and the crew, including officers and the Captain, were watching the movie, this announcement was made: Now hear this! Now Peverill report to C.I.C.!!! C.I.C. was the acronym for Combat Information Center. In this special room was located both air and surface search radar, together with plotting tables. When I arrived, I was shown a fluttering and unstable, unreadable picture on the radar screen. In this instance, in order to work on this gear, the Captain had to be notified, he then had to request that the U.S.S. Taconic be responsible for and assume radar-guard. This was done; after which I looked for the problem, could not find it, and concluded it could only be the result of an inoperative component and one which defied testing such as the main transmitter tube. This tube, the global portion of which was larger than a basketball, could only be "tested" in operation. I replaced it, and the radar began working. I pitched the replaced tube (original cost \$10,000 plus in today's dollars) over the side, notified the Captain who notified the Taconic. We reassumed radar-guard, and we all went back to the movie.

About a half-hour later comes this announcement: "Now hear this. Now Peverill. Report to C.I.C." And I did. Deja Vu – or rather, no view – no picture! Same ritual: The Captain, the Taconic, released radar guard, etc. I searched again. Same result. It must again be an untestable component this time: The huge condenser (weight about 50 pounds) that is part of the power transmission circuit. I replaced it; the radar worked. We notified the Captain, he notified the Taconic, we became radar-guard again, and we went back to the movie.

And a half hour later ... you guessed it! Now Peverill.....Report to C.I.C! I went to the Captain. He then demanded of me an estimate: "Peverill, how long is it going to take you to fix that unit? And I mean for good!" He was not about to

incur criticism from the two-star on the Taconic who apparently couched his last permission with veiled criticism. What most people don't realize is that fixing electronics equipment usually does not take long; what takes time is finding out what's wrong. (The schematic diagrams for the air search radar alone would cover a basketball court.) But rest assured, I furnished the Captain an imaginative answer. I empathized with his concerns about the two-star which were like mine for the Captain. I found the solution: Using the vocabulary acquired on this seagoing vessel, I told the two radar operators, "Turn off the - - cking radar and just rotate the - - cking antenna!; There will "beeno" - - cking aircraft! And I will try to fix the - - cking radar when we reach Newport, Virginia."

Which I did. I happened on the solution quite accidentally and, in fact, probably would not have discovered it any other way. On a radar screen as on a TV screen, the picture is held in place by so-called "locking voltage" which derives from the same principle that two horns blown at the same frequency will cancel out each other. The U.S.S. New Kent was a DC (direct current) ship with a couple exceptions: The gyroscope required AC (alternative current) as did a couple of small motors. The locking voltage frequency was derived from the AC generator that powered these units. One of these motors was a compressor that maintained air pressure in the tube that housed the cables (so as to minimize losses) leading to the air search antenna. When this motor started, its starting current was enough to disrupt the frequency of the locking voltage and cause the radar picture distortion. A leak in the tube would and did cause this to happen about every half hour.

Just a few days after I made this discovery but before fixing the leak, the chief electronics officer said to me, "Peverill, if you fix the air search radar, I will see that you are made second/class." I did and he did. Becoming a second class petty officer (the equivalent of Army Staff Sergeant) at nineteen was just short of unheard of. It came at the surprise and chagrin of the Captain who probably celebrated my discharge just a couple months later.

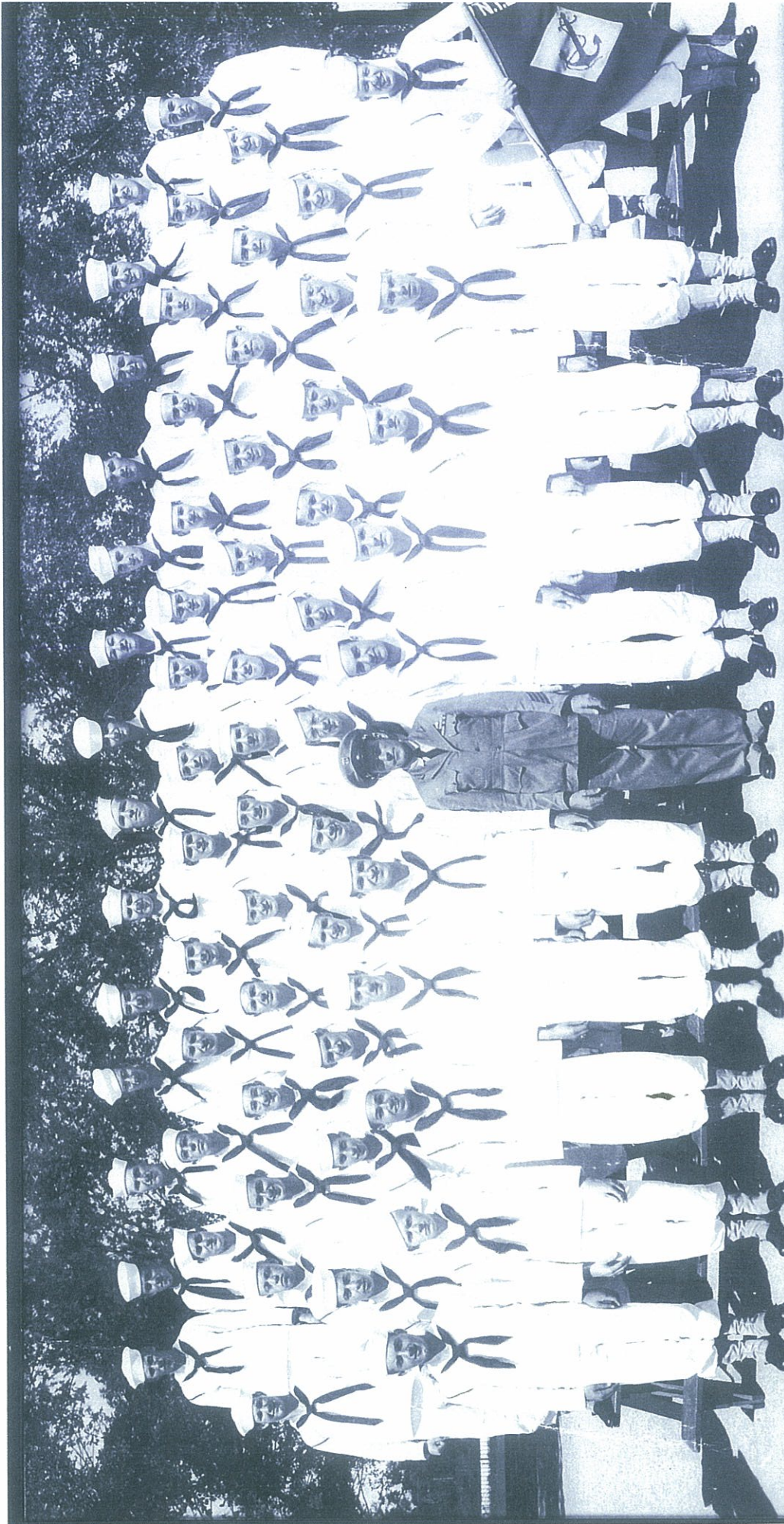
On July 16, 1948, I was honorably discharged from the Navy. I flew home. When I arrived home, the cab driver asked, "Where to?" "Take me to Wakonda Club" as I contemplated spending the rest of the summer partying and "watching the girls go by" before I entered Amherst College. The cabby said, "You don't want to go there. It burned to the ground last night."

EPILOGUE

In a way, the Navy had the last laugh. In the spring of 1951, I was re-called from my junior year in college for the Korean War. I made the poor choice when discharged in 1948 of joining the Naval Reserve. They told me it was unlikely that I would be called ahead of others my age; moreover, with college, I would be made an officer. Neither promise was true. I was dumb enough to believe them.

The Navy sent me to Anacostia, D.C. where I was in charge of a transmitter station which provided radio communication for the Naval Air Station. Compounding the depressing experience of being recalled, the station was located between Saint Elizabeth Hospital (whose inmates mostly included the criminally insane; e.g. Hinckley, the would-be assassin of Reagan) and a Jewish cemetery. Days sometimes included a funeral during the day and inmate howling at night.

My contribution to the completion of the Korean War was to repair officers' television sets. I contemplated suing the U.S. Government for involuntary servitude. If only I could have provoked Truman enough to have dealt with me as he did MacArthur.



CO. 235 - J. G. CLARK CGM, CO. CMDR - 19 AUGUST 1946

U. S. NAVAL TRAINING CENTER - GREAT LAKES, ILL.

BOOT CAMP

This is a picture of my Navy "boot camp" company 235. I am in the front row, second from the right. I was made a platoon leader because of my experience (from Shattuck!) with close order drill. The group was mostly made up of academic achievers headed for electronics training and there too for obtaining the G.I. Bill.

The "company commander" (In the Marines, he would be called a "D.I.") was a Chief Gunner's Mate who had been in the Navy over twenty years.

I remember his admonishing the group: "You people will cease and desist conjugating in the head" to which one of the recruits, demonstrating his Latin knowledge, spoke up: "Hey, Chief, you mean no

Shito Shitamos

More: Shitas Shitais

Shitat Shitant"

Most of the group laughed out loud, but the joke went over his head.



was taken shortly after graduation from secondary electronics school in 1947 at the

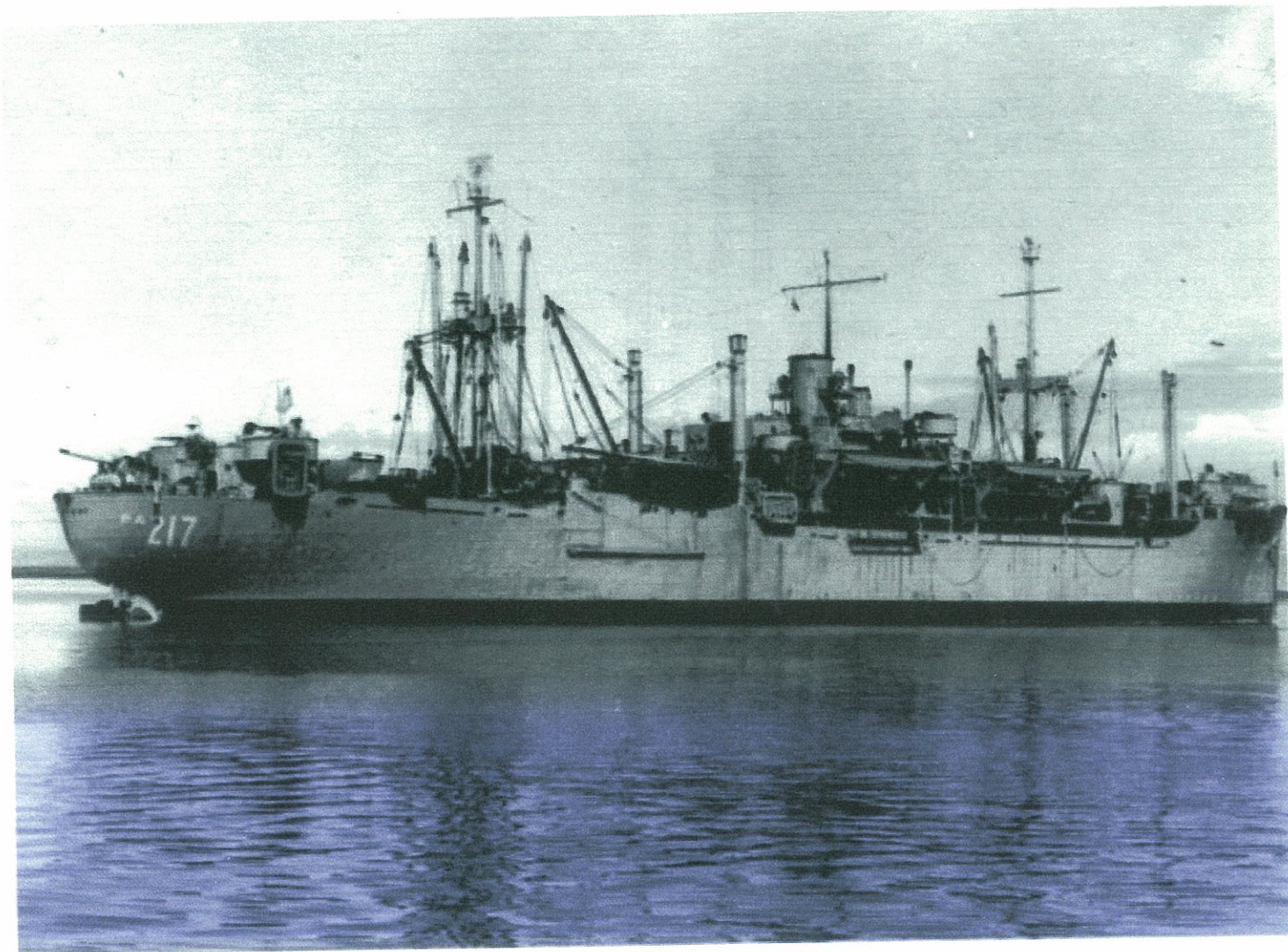
Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, D.C.



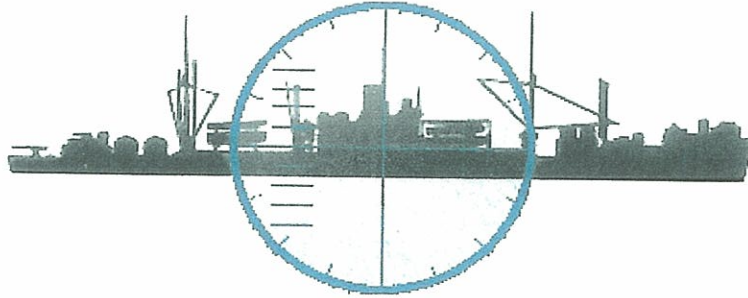
ON BOARD THE U.S.S. NEW KENT

This is one of my few Navy pictures and the only picture of me aboard ship. It is not too representative because, while I swabbed a deck on two, mostly I was busy fixing electronics gear.

The picture shows one of the landing boats we carried.



This is the U.S.S. New Kent (APA217)
My "home away from home" in 1947/1948.
The airsearch radar antenna is atop the
tallest mast. Picture it rotating!



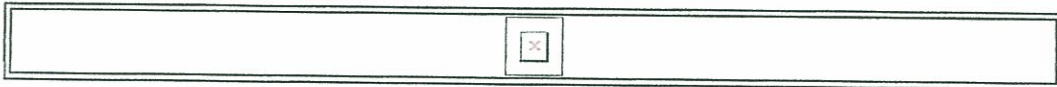
Ships of the U.S. Navy, 1940-1945

APA-217 USS *New Kent*

- Haskell class Attack Transport:
- Displacement: 12,450 tons
- Length: 436'6"
- Beam: 24'
- Speed: 17 knots
- Armament: 1 5", 12 40mm AA
- Complement: 532; Troops: 1,562
- Maritime Commission VC2-S-AP5 "Victory" type modified to carry fully equipped Army and Navy Units. Vehicles and heavy stores are stowed in the lower holds. Troops are quartered in upper cargo spaces. About 20 landing craft are carried topside.
- Built at Permanente Metals, Richmond, Cal., and commissioned 22 November 1944

Additional Links:

- ["Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships" -- USS *New Kent*](#)
- [A Short History of USS *New Kent*](#) (by commanding officer C. F. Swanson, USN)
- For additional photos, see the [Main Page](#).
- For crew lists, and reunions see the [Veterans Info Page](#).
- For ship's logs and personnel records, see the [Reference Page](#).



Return to [Ships of the U.S. Navy, 1940-45: Attack Transports](#)

The *New Kent* departed Leyte on 7 October and arrived in Davao Gulf on the following day. She moved to Talomo Bay, Davao Gulf, the following day and departed 15 October, having embarked the 2nd Battalion, 21st Infantry RCT and attached units bound for Okayama, Japan. The convoy arrived off Hiro-wan, Japan on 21 October, troop and cargo being discharged during the next two days. During the week spend at Japan, sightseeing parties from the ship visited the nearby large Japanese naval base at Kure as well as the site where the first atomic bomb was dropped at Hiroshima.

The *New Kent* together with the U.S.S. SIBLEY (APA 206) sailed on 28 October for Manus, Admiralty Islands, arriving at destination on 3 November. After loading 2,000 passengers, the ship sailed for San Pedro, California on it's first iMagic Carpeti trip. Enroute destination was changed to San Diego, California, at which port the ship arrived 19 November.

On 26 November, Commander C. F. Swanson, USN, relieved Commander J.E. Baker, USNR, as commanding officer. The *New Kent* sailed from San Diego on 5 December for Guam, Marianas Islands to make it's second iMagic Carpeti run. Destination was again changed to Saipan, Marianas Islands, at chich port the ship docked 21 December. After loading 1,980 passengers, the ship sailed for San Pedro, California, destination later changed to San Francisco, on which cruise the ship is presently engaged. Christmas and New Year's were celebrated aboard ship with special programs for all hands including Roman Catholic mass, Christmas carols, Christmas gifts distributed by Santa Claus, and a turkey dinner.

Since the ship has been commissioned, she was underway on 228 days and during this period steamed a total of 195 days, 5 hours or 58,733 miles. At the present time, the senior officers of the ship are as follows:

Commanding Officer: Captain C. F. Swanson, USN; Garden City, Long Island, N.Y.

Executive Officer: Lieutenant Commander E. N. Hoffman, USNR; Woodmere, L.I., N.Y.

Senior Medical Officer: Commander V.F. Woldman, USNR; Shaker Heights, Ohio

First Lieutenant: Lieutenant Commander S. H. Bridge, USNR; Forrest City, Iowa

Engineering Officer: Lieutenant D. H. Johnson, USNR; North Weymouth, Mass.

Chaplain: Lieutenant J. S. Rice, USNR; Richmond, Va.

Supply Officer: Lieutenant O.S. Davies, USN; San Leandro, Calif.

Navigator: Lieutenant (jg) W. K. Gilkerson, USNR; N. Minneapolis, Minn.

Communications Officer: Ensign S. L. May, USNR; Portland, Ore.

Transport Quartermaster: Ensign C. L. Bradshaw, USNR; Mascott, Tenn.

Gunnery Officer: Ensign G. E. Lerner, USNR; Hancock, Md.

C. F. Swanson
Captain, U.S. Navy
Commanding, U.S.S. *New Kent*

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
Naval History Division • Washington

USS *New Kent* I (APA-217)

A county in Virginia.

(APA-217: dp. 7,190; l. 455'; b. 62'; dr. 24'; s. 18 k.; cpl. 536; a. 1 5", 12 40mm; cl. *Haskell*)

The first *New Kent* (APA-217), an attack transport, was laid down under Maritime Commission contract 11 July 1944 by Permanente Metals Corp., Yard #2, Richmond, California launched 12 October 1944, sponsored by Mrs. W. J. Maher and commissioned 22 November 1944, Captain Frank Monroe, Jr., in command.

Following shakedown off the California coast, *New Kent* departed San Diego 20 January 1945, sailing by way of Pearl Harbor for the Marshall Islands with replacements for the 4th Marine Aircraft Wing. Arriving 4 February, the transport unloaded her cargo at Majuro and Kwajalein and then cleared 10 February for Guadalcanal for training in preparation for the invasion of Okinawa. The ship sailed for combat 15 March, arriving off the western beaches of Okinawa on the morning of D-Day, 1 April. Landing her troops that afternoon, *New Kent* sent a beach party ashore the next day and then remained in the transport area, subject to frequent enemy air attack, until departing for Guam 7 April, sailing thence to Pearl Harbor, arriving 23 April.

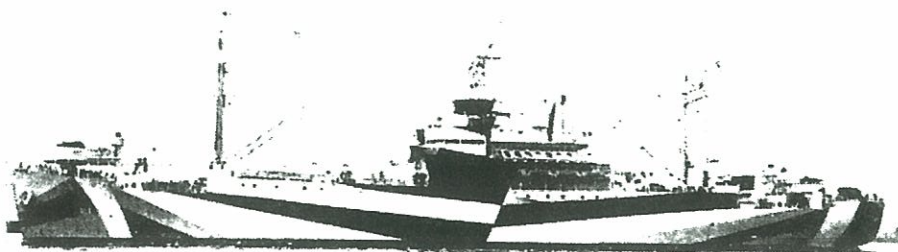
The attack transport remained in the Hawaiian Islands for one month and then sailed for the west coast 29 May, arriving Seattle 6 June. There the ship underwent overhaul until 26 June when she departed for Honolulu to bring 300 Japanese prisoners to the United States. Returning to San Francisco 11 July 1945, *New Kent* had her berthing compartments enlarged for more troops and then sailed on the 28th for Eniwetok and the Philippines to deliver cargo. At sea when Japan accepted surrender terms, the ship arrived San Pedro Bay, Leyte 17 August. She remained in the Philippines transporting Army troops to positions on Luzon until departing Lingayen Gulf 20 September with occupation troops for Wakayama, Japan. Arriving on the 25th, the ship completed unloading the next day and sailed for Subic Bay that afternoon, arriving 1 October. Following a second trip to Japan with occupation troops, 15 to 28 October, *New Kent* sailed to Manus, arriving 5 November, where she embarked 2000 passengers for her first "Magic Carpet" voyage, bringing the troops home to San Pedro, Calif. 19 November. The transport made a second voyage, to Guam from 5 to 21 December, and then greeted the New Year, 1946, at San Francisco.

Transiting the Panama Canal in mid-March, she arrived at Norfolk on the 20th and for the next year conducted amphibious training exercises along the East and Gulf coasts and in the Caribbean. Decommissioned 29 July 1949, she was berthed with the Orange, Texas Group, Atlantic Reserve Fleet, until recommissioning 10 October 1951. Then reassigned to amphibious training duty, she resumed exercises along the shores of the western Atlantic.

With the exception of a voyage to Casablanca in July of 1952, *New Kent* continued her training operations until the Spring of 1954 when, again inactivated, she returned to Orange, Texas 12 July, where she remained until struck from the Navy List 1 October 1958.

New Kent earned 1 battle star during World War II.

Amphibious Force Flagships.



MOUNT MCKINLEY.

1945, U.S. Navy Official.

Adirondack

Appalachian (Jan. 29, 1943)

Auburn (ex-*Kathay*)

Blue Ridge (March 7, 1943)

Catoctin (ex-*Mary Whitridge*)

Eldorado (ex-*Monsoon*)

Estes (ex-*Morning Star*)

Mount McKinley (ex-*Cyclone*)

Mount Olympus (ex-*Eclipse*)

Panamint (ex-*Northern Light*)

Pocono

Rocky Mount (March 7, 1943)

Taconic

Teton (ex-*Witch of the Wave*)

Wasatch (ex-*Fleetwing*)

Displacement: 12,750 to 12,800 tons. Dimensions: 435 (*w.l.*), 459½ (*o.a.*) × 63 × 24 feet (*max.*). Guns: 2—5 inch, 8—40 mm. AA. Machinery: Geared turbines. S.H.P.: 6,000 = 15.5 kts. Boilers: 2 Combustion Engineering type. (AGC 1-3, 5, 7-17.)

General Note.—Originally rated as Combined Operations Communications H.Q. Ships, these vessels are fitted as flagships for Chiefs of Combined Forces, with accommodation for Marine or Army units attached. Radar and radio equipment is exceptionally elaborate.