

William Douglas Margheim (Doug)

LHS Class of 1965

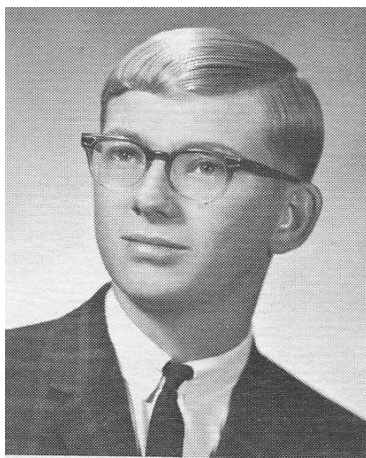
US Navy

June 7, 1966 – March 10, 1970

Radioman Second Class – RM2

USS Annapolis (AGMR-1) February 1967 – March 1968

USS Rowan (DD-782) April 1968 – March 1970



Doug Margheim



After graduation and ready to attend CSU, my high school sweet heart (Gloria Thornton) and I got jobs in Estes Park for the summer, me at Moorehead Grocery and she as a waitress at the Sundek Restaurant. After my first semester at CSU, they asked me to sit out the next semester until I decided what I really wanted to do with my life. So I got a job at the Colorado Bean Factory in Denver and roomed with John Tesar and Gary Cissell. Gloria just happened to be going to school at Colorado Business College just down the street from where we lived. It didn't take long for me and John to get our draft notices so we signed up with the Navy on the "buddy system". John ended up being inducted two weeks before me so we never spent any time together in the Navy.

I went to three months of boot camp at San Diego Naval Training Center June 6, 1966. On two weeks boot leave, Gloria and I got married August 28th. John happened to be home on leave the same day and was a groomsman in our wedding. Gloria and I then moved to San Diego where I attended BE/E and RM/A School (Electronics and Radio School) at the Naval Training Center until early February, 1967. I was then assigned to the USS Annapolis (AGMR-1) as a Radioman Seaman Class and served on her until March 1968.

Commissioned on March 7, 1964, the USS Annapolis was the first of its kind – a WWII Sunset Bay Escort Carrier named the USS Gilbert Islands (CVE-107) converted into a floating radio station. Its sister ship, the USS Arlington (AGMR-2, commissioned August 27, 1966) was also converted from the light aircraft carrier USS Saipan (CVL-48). Until the USS Arlington came on line in late 1967, we spent the majority of time floating in the Tonkin Gulf providing multiple kinds of communications between ships, ship / shore both between military bases and Forward Observers to aircraft, and back to the states. It was the first ship to have the ability to connect directly to Washington DC via satellite. There were a couple times we went to General Quarters being threatened by Vietnamese patrol boats but nothing serious. A typical time on duty station would be two to three months at a time with a two to three week break for fuel and supplies at "local" ports such as Sasebo and Yokosuka, Japan, Subic Bay Philippines, Kaohsiung, Taiwan and Hong Kong. We would also drop anchor outside of Cam Ranh Bay a few hours every couple of weeks to send and receive mail and transfer crew members. While there, Navy swift boats would come along side to receive containers of ice cream the ships galley crew had prepared the night before.

Some more notable times of the ship during the year I was on it - On one occasion the Annapolis performed search operations when a Hong Kong ship reported a man over board. On another occasion above the DMZ the ship performed search operations for a downed pilot. Annapolis also provided firefighting foam when the USS Forrestal (CVA-59) aircraft carrier experienced its huge onboard fire. And then there were at least a couple times we had to perform typhoon evasion maneuvers. On January 6, 1968 after we had just crossed the equator headed for Perth, Australia, after we had just completed the traditional shellback initiation ceremony (graduating from a pollywog to a shellback), Annapolis received word to return to duty station off Viet Nam to relieve the USS Arlington so she could steam to off the coast of North Korea. This is when the USS Pueblo (AGER-2) had been boarded and seized by North Korea. In the emergency return, we were sailing at the highest speed the Annapolis had ever reached, 20 knots, (around 23 MPH) and the dual engines' vibration was felt throughout the ship but mostly in the stern. In August of 1967 I received word that my wife Gloria was to undergo emergency gallbladder surgery. I was able to secure a two-week emergency leave which required me to be helicoptered to a nearby carrier and then hitch a ride on a mail plane off the carrier to Clark Air Force Base, Philippines, to catch a plane home. I arrived home late on the day of the surgery, which was successful, and also managed an additional two week extension. It was especially great to be home for that month since I got to be with our first son for the first time after he had been born three months earlier.

I was transferred off the Annapolis February 1968. The Annapolis was decommissioned December 20, 1969 at Naval Station Norfolk, transferred to the Atlantic Reserve Fleet and immediately towed to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard where she was placed in mothballs. The ship was removed from the Navy List on October 15, 1976 and sold for scrap on November 1, 1979.

In March of 1968 I was transferred to the USS Rowan (DD-782), a destroyer. Commissioned on March 31, 1945, it spent almost all of its life serving in the West Pacific. She was first involved in Okinawa and Japan at the end of WWII during cleanup exercises. From then on, through the Korean War and the Viet Nam War, her time was spent mostly off the coast providing fire support to ground troops or patrolling the west coast of the United States. When I came on board, she had just completed an overhaul and all of 1968 was spent patrolling the west coast and training. Then in April 1969 we were sent to the Sea of Japan as part of Operation Formation Star until we were sent to the coast of Viet Nam. We remained there providing fire support for ground troops until January 1970. On our return to the states we were immediately sent to dry dock at Hunter's Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco for more overhaul. While there, the Navy was scaling back some of its operations and I was scheduled for a three-month early discharge. I was discharged on March 10, 1970 while the Rowan was still in dry dock.

After I left the Rowan, it continued to serve both our west coast and the coast of Viet Nam. In 1972 it was involved in a night raid in Haiphong Harbor along with three other US war ships. After the raid the four ships were engaged by two North Vietnamese torpedo boats, both of which were sunk, one by the USS Newport News and the other by the Rowan. The Rowan was also one of 50 ships involved in Operation Frequent Wind on April 29 and 30, 1975, when over 6,000 US citizens and Vietnamese nationals were evacuated by military and Air America helicopters to waiting US ships in a 24-hour period when Saigon fell. The Rowan was decommissioned on December 18, 1975 at the 32nd Street Naval Base in San Diego. It was removed from the Navy List January 30, 1976 and was transferred to the Republic of China on June 1, 1977 and given the name ROCS Chao Yang (DD-16). As she was being towed to her home port of Kaohsiung, Taiwan on August 22nd, the tow cable broke during Typhoon Amiee which caused her to be grounded on the shores of the Pingtung Fangliao. It was decided it could not be repaired so it was stripped of parts for other war ships. Rowan's sister ship, the USS Haynsworth (DD-700) was also being transferred to the Republic of China around the same time. It received the three boilers from the Rowan. The Haynsworth was given the name of Yue Yang (DD-5) and served the Taiwan Navy for 28 years before being decommissioned.

When I returned home to San Diego after my discharge, Gloria and our son were waiting there. I wasn't met with disdain or jeering by protestors like so many of our soldiers were, but I also wasn't met with a "Welcome home" and "Thank you". I was just happy to be able to resume my life with my young family. It wasn't until after I retired from years of work in February, 2013 that I started becoming aware of my short time in the Navy and what it meant to me. And then I was involved in creating a Veteran video of our Class of 1965 Veterans for our 50th Class Reunion and I became personally aware of their sacrifice and, in turn, what that sacrifice was for. Most of us didn't realize it at the time but we were answering the call of our country in which we have such precious freedom and safety to live the life we choose, because of the sacrifices of so many. Without those sacrifices, our lives in this country could have been so different. We will never be able to repay all those that served to this end, and some making the ultimate sacrifice, but we can always do the work of never forgetting them, always remembering and honoring them, for doing what it took to give us what we all enjoy today.

USS Annapolis (AGMR-1)



USS Rowan (DD-782)

