

17Jul1925

Robert S. Holden

26Apr2017

Bob Holden was born July 17, 1925 in Syracuse NY. He grew up in Pennsylvania and enlisted in the US Marine Corps in 1943 at age 17. After attending boot camp, infantry training, and gunnery school, he joined the crew of the Light Cruiser, USS *Santa Fe* (CL-60) as an anti-aircraft gunner. During 1944 and 1945, the *Santa Fe* with Bob aboard, supported carrier battle groups and participated in strikes and engagements throughout the Western Pacific. On the 5th of November 1944, *Santa Fe* experienced its first *kamikaze* attack near Manila during the allied invasion of the Philippines; an exciting day for a young Marine anti-aircraft gunner. This may have been the day that Bob shot down *Santa Fe's* signal flags.

After the war, Bob returned to Pennsylvania and in April of 1947, he married Betty Hirnisey. They will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary this month.

He enrolled at Penn State University in 1947 and played defensive end for the Nittany Lions in the 1949 Cotton Bowl. He graduated in 1950 and began a career in heavy equipment operation, maintenance, and sales which took him and Betty and a growing family to Philadelphia, Syracuse, NY, Lorraine OH, and Savannah GA where he was in charge of crane sales and service throughout the Southeastern United States for Pettibone Crane Company. Bob and Betty have five children.

He retired from paid employment in 1995 and joined the Coast Guard Auxiliary on Virginia's Eastern Shore. He was soon elected Flotilla Commander of Flotilla 054-12-2 and a regular at CG Station Parramore Beach where he crewed on the 55' and 22' boats. During periods of sustained heavy operations, he often manned the station alone. While there, he embarked RADM Thad Allen for a tour of CG facilities in the Eastern shore area and also represented 5th District, Southern Region, in the annual Auxiliary International SAR Competition.

Bob and Betty moved to Clearwater in 2002 where he joined Flotilla 11-10 in Dunedin. He quickly assumed the tasks of Flotilla operations officer, coxswain, vessel examiner, and instructor. He was a mentor, advisor, and friend to everyone in the Flotilla.

We honor and cherish the memory of our shipmate, but we do not mourn for him for he has found refuge in the great harbor of eternal peace. Rather, it is for ourselves that we mourn for a good friend has slipped his moorings and is no longer with us. We will miss his hand on the helm. We will miss his shoulder next to ours. We will miss his encouragement and counsel as we meet the storms and strife of life.

We of the Coast Guard Auxiliary mourn our loss, but we are consoled by the abiding faith that when the final watch changes for us, and we too cross the bar, our shipmate will be waiting to lead us into safe anchorage.