

YOU DON'T KNOW ME!

An Appeal to Those Leaders and Legislators Who Labor on Behalf of This Great Nation From Veterans of World War II



Hear our plea and our story for the support of legislation “Honoring WWII Merchant Mariners Act of 2017” – House bill HR.154. We know that you are besieged with many requests for support of other causes. We know you have many issues, which may be seen as a priority. We ask you to give us who remain what was promised or similar. If there are public hearings, we can provide brief testimony for our cause. We will provide information, which will shed new light on our history and contribution during World War II. Moreover, we ask that you favor this aging group of Veterans and let them know that they are not forgotten.

OUR STORY – By Dave Yoho

We are like grains of sand on the vast seashore of life. We are part of a rapidly eroding station of life. We are old and Veterans of World War II.

There were 16 million U.S. service men in uniform – from a population of about 130 million. Our special group represented 250 thousand of those Veterans. Now less than 2500 of us remain.

We were called to service by a great president (Franklin D. Roosevelt), and legislation was enacted for the creation of this special group.

We were issued and required to wear uniforms, trained and marched in a military manner; we had to go through guards to get in to our base and we could not leave without special documentation. We were taught wartime techniques, the use of anti-aircraft guns, and each day our regimentation was supervised in a military manner with penalties for the violation of good conduct rules or military dress.

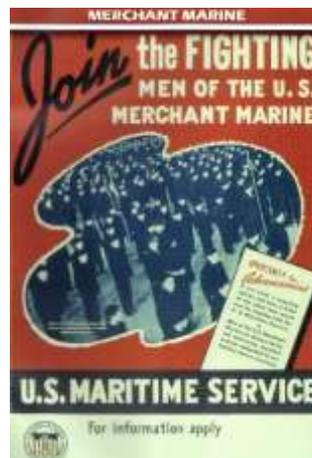
We were all volunteers; we were present on all five continents on which that war was fought. We were wherever allied fighting forces were called upon, at every invasion, on every sea and ocean.

The coast guard administered our records and training and the U.S. Navy controlled the scheduling, departure and destination for those ships on which we served. In the 7 months, which followed our entry into war, many of us served on ships, which sailed through hostile waters off our eastern seaboard.

From Nova Scotia down to Florida and further, these ships traveled without special armament, guns or ammunition and without convoy – following the routes and going to ports mandated by the U.S. Navy.

In those first 7 months of World War II, 300 ships were sunk and 3000 seaman died right off that eastern coastline of the United States.

In a distant place called Murmansk Russia, American and allied ships were called upon to deliver the goods of war. These ships laden with tanks, trucks, planes, ammunition, fuel, clothing and food, sailed through ice and seas so cold that those who were forced to abandon ship survived for less than 10 minutes before going to their watery grave. No ships were permitted to stop or slow down to rescue survivors. On one occasion, supporting combat ships were withdrawn from Merchant ships and their crews were left to face German ships and submarines, which rapidly diminished their numbers.



Recruiting poster
Circa 1943/1944

The beautiful World War II Memorial in Washington, DC pays tribute to Murmansk as a critical battlefield of that war. Yet, this is but of one of those bloody, life-destroying encounters in which we participated and for which we paid dearly with our lives.

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Dave Yoho – (arrow) Age 16 at basic training U.S. Maritime Service, Sheepshead Bay 1944

The majority of us were very young when we enlisted; many under the age of 18; some were 16 or 17 years of age. We were trained in a military environment and put on ships at graduation.

When the war ended, we had the highest casualty rate of any of the services. Even then, President Harry Truman implored us to remain in service to bring home the troops from five continents, to transport and bring supplies, machinery and other equipment of peace to the needy world. At war's ending, we were eager to return to our homes and families, yet most of us responded to the call to continually serve our country.

On June 22nd, 1944, President Roosevelt signed into law "The G.I. Bill", which was presented to him by both houses. On that date, and for the record, he stated:

"I trust Congress will soon provide similar opportunities to the members of the Merchant Marines who have risked their lives time and time again during the war for the welfare of their country."

Unfortunately, President Roosevelt died in April of 1945 and his desires and intent were not fulfilled. It took 43 years (till 1988) of struggle through our own medical bills, getting further education or buying a home. These rights were finally given to us in 1988 when we were in our mid 60s; some over 70.

We served as we were called upon to do. We were volunteers who pledged our lives and service for this great country. We gave up our youth and our maturing years. Three and a half percent of us died in that service. Many thousands more carried their injuries both physical and psychological through their post war lives. Ever proud of our country, we stand as able when our national anthem is played and when our flag is presented.

At functions where the military services are honored we applaud as each service hears their music played. Ours (heave ho) is seldom, if ever rendered.

We support our country, yet in our pain and remembrance, we hear that our earnings far exceeded those in the other services, which was not true. A Boatswain mate in the Navy made approximately \$2250 per year and received tax exemption of \$1500. A Merchant Marine equivalent (an able seaman) was paid approximately \$2600 per year all subject to income tax. If perchance, his ship was sunk or he became a prisoner of war, his pay stopped while the Army or Navy veteran received full pay, medical attention for dependents and medical benefits post war. We received \$1.00 per day if taken prisoner and no access to the benefits afforded to Army, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines.

We suffered post war injuries to both mind and body including but not limited to malaria, ulcers, H-Pylori and post-traumatic stress. For 43 years (til 1988) we were denied those health care benefits, which were made available to all other Veterans.

We waited patiently as others affected by World War II were acknowledged and were given both kudos and compensation. We mourn our brother Mariners who have "passed" and their families who cry out for recognition and ask you to support HR.154.

"Do you, – can you, – will you – ever comprehend that we gave up our youth? For many of us, there were no high school graduations, dances, proms, sporting events, meetings at the malt shop... These are things we, consciously or unconsciously, agreed to abandon when we took an oath and did what we were asked to do."

--Dave Yoho (from speech at National Convention)

Dave Yoho served on a T/2 tanker during WWII and on two victory ships post-war. He completed high school (G.E.D.) and earned a college degree (night school). During his successful business career, he made over 5000 speeches (every state and 22 foreign countries); appeared in over 100 training movies/videos for Fortune 500 companies. He has received numerous awards for his speaking skills. Dave Yoho -- admin@daveyoho.com

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Please review the attached "Facts & Fables" of the World War II Merchant Marines.

THE AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINES IN WORLD WAR II

Please review these and support HR.154

Facts & Fables

Fact: Our war ended 72 years ago. Our life began anew. We licked our wounds. We bound our emotional hurts and moved our lives forward. Today, in our twilight years, we experience the continuing loss of our comrades, the dimming of our senses and the discomfort that comes from disappointment. We've read and heard the rumors and the misinformation. Only we, or those who faced World War II in like circumstances, can cause reflection on these implications. So, we look to you and pray that you will support our plea. Give us hearing and an opportunity to dispel misinformation. Let your actions speak to our plea. Let us be remembered for what we did and how we fulfilled our oath.

Fable: The Merchant Marine was a harbor for those trying to avoid the draft.

Fact: The original wartime draft was for those 18 years or older. Some volunteers might have opted out of the U.S. Army. That was also probably true of some Navy and Coast Guard volunteers. The highest percentage of Maritime service recruits were under 19 years of age. Some were unable to meet the physical requirements of the other services. Some over the age of 35 were draft exempt and still volunteered to do their part. African-American recruits may have opted in because we were the only totally integrated service.

Fable: The Merchant Marine received inordinate benefits when in combat zone.

Fact: There were bonuses if the ship were bombed or sunk and limited bonuses if your ship was in a combat zone. In my earlier example, the coastline of the eastern United States and a vast part of the Pacific Ocean were not considered combat zones (no bonus).

Fable: The Merchant Mariner was well rewarded for all his risk.

Fact: If the ship was sunk, disabled or if a mariner was taken as a prisoner of war (approximately 800 were) their pay stopped and no benefits were extended prior to or during captivity.

Fable: Once in the Merchant Marine, you could no longer be drafted.

Fact: If after a hazardous voyage or otherwise, you waited for another ship for more than 30 days, you could be drafted.

Fable: An injured Merchant Mariner had the right to sue and require the owners of the ship to compensate for medical bills and loss of income.

Fact: In many cases, the ships were owned by the U.S. government. One example would be W.E.T. (War Emergency Tankers) built by the government, sometimes leased but always regulated in terms of usage by the U.S. Navy. The concept of suing for justifiable injuries, lingering diseases or loss of compensation is complicated and largely unmanageable (incongruous).

Fable: Granting Merchant Mariners access to the GI Bill (in 1988) compensated them for any inequities they might have experienced.

Fact: Forty-three years after the war ended the average Merchant Mariner was over 60, sometimes 70 years of age. Any need for a mortgage or college education had long since passed. Merchant Mariners were, and still are in many cases, denied burial in military cemeteries. In many cases, the American Legion and the VFW do not permit membership.