

Seagate's Tin Can Sailor

John Shoemaker

In a continuing effort to bring recognition to Veterans residing in the Town of Highland Beach, Florida, in this month's article, we bring you a very special story about Ben Bishkoff who resides in, appropriately enough, the Seagate Condominium. A condominium where he and his wife has lived for 10 years.

Years ago, Mr. Bishkoff lived near the Jersey Shore and in 1965, he joined the US Navy. He loved the ocean and believed it would be a "safe harbor" from Army duty, during the Vietnam War. Mr. Bishkoff's basic training was in San Diego and he elected to deploy to the Pacific area – initially stationed at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, he was assigned to the USS Renshaw DD-499, a destroyer with a 300 members' crew. His expertise was in electronics, he operated an Underwater Fire Control System (for anti-submarine warfare), and was lead Sonarman. Thereafter, he joined the Carrier Strike Forces in the Pacific Ocean from Hawaii to Guam, Wake Island, the Philippines, and off the coast of South Vietnam. During the war, Mr. Bishkoff's primary missions included aircraft or "plane guard" to follow up on any potential aircraft mishaps in the approach/take-off from the carriers.



Off the coast of Vietnam, members would conduct gunfire support missions against enemy positions near the coast. The destroyer had five-inch guns that had a range of over 10 miles with 50 lbs projectiles. The ships were lightweight and could travel as fast as 28 knots per hour. Mr. Bishkoff would spend six months at a time on cruises. He spent three cruises in the South Pacific alone. Some of the cruises would include rough seas where the entire ship bow would submerge into the waves or was lifted right out of the water, as it crashed over 60 foot plus waves. He also served on the USS Courtney DE-1021, the USS Cromwell DE-1014, and the USS Fiske DE-842 destroyers.

While on the USS Renshaw DD-499, Mr. Bishkoff earned the confidence of the Captain and trained to become "Officer of the Deck" on the regular watch bill. Even though he was enlisted, he was awarded a Navy Achievement medal. On his many cruises, he experienced many ceremonies: Crossing the Arctic Circle qualifies for the "Order of the Blue Nose," Crossing the International Dateline for the "Domain of the Golden Dragon" and others.



USS Renshaw DD-499

After six years of active US Navy duty, Mr. Bishkoff spent an additional 10 years in the US Navy Reserve. Upon entering into partnership with an insurance agency business, his civilian life grew busy and he has

spent nearly 50 years growing it. Mr. Bishkoff is a 31 years devoted husband to Norma, who is a former Administrator for the Plainsboro New Jersey Police Department.



USS Courtney DE-1021



USS Cromwell DE-1014



USS Fiske DE842



USS Fiske DE842

In seeking his ultimate safe harbor, Mr. Bishkoff and Norma found it in the Town of Highland Beach and describes living in the town as peaceful, quiet and safe. Mr. Bishkoff enjoys people, his friends at Seagate, and marvels at the wealth of knowledge in this small oasis. For several years, he has served as Treasurer on the Board of Directors at Seagate Condominium and looks forward to continuing his contributions to the community.

Mr. Bishkoff clearly loves the Atlantic Ocean and the Intracoastal Waterway, as he has great views of both from his "Captains Chair".

Mr. Bishkoff, thank you for a job well done!