

COMRADE OF THE QUARTER



DAVID HENRY WATTS

I was born on December 10th, 1964 and grew up in E. Northport which is on Long Island in NY. My one Grandfather was a WW I veteran, while my other one was a Staten Island Ferryboat Pilot. My Father, Henry served in the US Army as an infantryman with the 151st Division during WW II. He served in the South Pacific and was part of the invasion force that was to invade Japan until President Truman dropped the Atomic bombs & ending World War II.

My childhood was wonderful & carefree. My dad, Henry was a Design Engineer while my mom, Lynne was a housewife. Both my parents are now deceased. Several of my relatives were service members. My Dad's brother, John was in the US Army at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed, and is a member of the Pearl Harbor Survivor Veterans Association. I enjoyed both Photography and Printing growing up. I decided to enlist in the US Navy on the advice of my printing teacher because of the printing program offered by the US Navy. Both my parents had to give their consent because I just turned 17.

I entered the US Navy on Aug. 19th, 1982 and went to boot camp at Great Lakes ILL. I was then informed that since I had no police record, I was being sent to the USS Coronado (AGF-11) in Bahrain, which is in the middle of the Persian Gulf. I had just turned 18, and to be flying on a MAC C-5 Galaxie halfway around the world was just the beginning of a long list of experiences that the US Navy was to give me. USS Coronado was Flagship for Commander Middle East Force. This assignment included patrolling the Persian Gulf while showing the Flag when we visited neighboring Countries. While in Muscat, Oman, I was a side-boy for the Prime Minister of Oman when he visited the ship. I was lucky to become a printer on this ship because the other printer had transferred and I knew how to run a printing press. I printed classified documents as well as other command & engineering forms for the ship.

When the USS Coronado returned to the US, we took her into the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for a 14 month overhaul. I volunteered to become the Ship's Photographer as well. I photographed the ship in various conditions during dry-dock, as well as photographing Change of Commands and various Public Affairs functions within the greater Philadelphia area. I then attended the Defense Mapping School for 5 months at Ft. Belvoir VA, and was promoted to E-4. I returned to the USS Coronado in time to make an 11 month deployment to the Mediterranean Sea as Flagship for Commander Sixth Fleet. I was also serving as an intelligence photographer. Highlights of this deployment included capturing the Achille Lauro hijackers, Receiving Communion from Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, and the bombing of Libya. When USS Coronado returned Stateside, I was transferred to Naval Air Maintenance Training Group at NAS Memphis TN. I was the print room supervisor there for 4 years. I got promoted to E-5 and





earned an AS degree in Management. I also became a LIFE MEMBER of the VFW in Millington TN at the age of 23. In 1990 I went back to Ft. Belvoir for advance training on printing press & camera repair for 5 months. Then I was assigned to the USS Nimitz in Bremerton Washington. I was the print shop supervisor as well as the divisional career counselor. Desert Storm intensified our works ups and we departed for the Persian Gulf in February of 1991. While the cease fire was holding, we had several alerts as well as several mine sightings. I became a Shellback as we crossed the Equator enroute to Thailand. After a 6 month Western Pacific/Desert Storm deployment, the USS Nimitz arrived back in Washington in Sept. of 1991. In July of 1992 I decided to leave the US Navy because I wanted to spend more time with my aging parents. My Father will always be "my best friend".

I have worked in several areas of commercial printing since my discharge. I have been with The Charlotte Observer since 2000. I work in the print shop printing the advertisements that go in the newspaper. I transferred my membership to VFW Post 9488 in Oct. of 2005. I met my wife Donna there 1 year later, and we were married a year after that. I have two daughters, Crystal and April.

I enjoy serving at this Post! I am currently the Post Photographer & Historian. The thing that I love about the VFW Posts is that I feel safe. I am among Veterans that have served their country and we all have something in common.

Service Ribbons/Medals Awarded:

- . Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Which made me eligible to join the VFW!)
- . Navy Good Conduct Medal (2 Awards)
- . Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (3 Awards)
- . National Defense Service Medal
- .Southwest Asia Service Medal W/ Bronze Star
- .Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal
- .Navy Unit Commendation Medal (2 awards)

