

Memorial Day Salute to a Bennett Veteran

This Memorial Day 2009, a salute goes out to Wayne “Dale” Bennett, a veteran of World War II. Dale Bennett, son of Luther Philip Bennett (1898-1980), grandson of George Washington Bennett (1870-1943), and great-grandson of Marion Francis Bennett (1844-1922), was born in Spring Grove, Missouri in 1922.

In 1934, Dale’s father moved the family from Missouri to Oklahoma in search of employment in the oil fields of Oklahoma. It was the middle of the Great Depression and folks had to go where they could best support their families. The following picture was taken in 1930 in Buffalo, Missouri. Pictured left to right are sister Jewel (1924-1996), Dale, and sister Letha (1920-2009).



In October 1942, at the young age of 20, Dale enlisted in the U.S. Navy in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. His first assignment was training at the Navy’s Great Lakes Training Center north of Chicago. After Great Lakes, Dale transferred to Treasure Island Naval Base near San Francisco. In July of 1943, Dale was assigned to Pearl Harbor Naval Base for a tour of 27 months as a submarine repairman. Dale was an experienced welder, which was a much needed skill at the submarine base.

Dale arrived at Pearl Harbor 19 months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. During his tour at Pearl Harbor, sunken battleships were still being raised. Fortunately, the Japanese made a huge mistake when they spared the submarine base at Pearl Harbor, instead concentrating on the battleships. As it turned out, it was submarines that immobilized the Imperial Japanese Navy's heavy ships and brought Japan's economy to a standstill by crippling the transportation of oil and raw materials. Thanks to troops like Dale, these submarines were kept in shape to do their duty. Some days, Dale worked 24 hours straight, without food, in order to ensure the subs could accomplish their mission.

Having lived in Oklahoma and joining the Navy there, Dale was especially excited to acquire a memento from the USS Oklahoma when it was raised in 1943. It is an Issue Chit for a gallon of kerosene.

U.S.S. OKLAHOMA
INSTRUCTION AND REPAIR DEPT.
ISSUE CHIT

Date... *Jan. 24, 1934*

It is requested that the following listed items (s) be issued to the *J.* Division for use in *Boat Deck, 501*

Quantity	Description of material
<i>1 gal</i>	<i>Kerosene</i>

Approved: *S. F. Ryan*
U.S. Navy,
Division Officer.

.....Issue.
 (shop or locker) *501*

.....U.S. Navy,
 for First Lieutenant.

above.....
 (name) (Rate)

Dale completed his tour at Pearl Harbor and returned to the States on October 1, 1945. Wasting no time, he married the love of his life, Clara Beabout, on October 2nd. They were a sharp looking pair during those Navy days.



After getting married and enjoying a 30-day leave, Dale and Clara headed to his next assignment at the naval base in Norfolk, Virginia. During WW II, servicemen accumulated points that determined when they could be discharged. With all the time spent at Pearl Harbor, Dale accumulated enough points to accept an honorable discharge from the United States Navy on December 5, 1945.

Dale recently stated “I wouldn’t take a million dollars for my experiences in the Navy, but would not want to repeat it. The older we get, the more we value peace and quiet and admire the good things past and present.”

Following his Navy career, Dale and Clara returned to Oklahoma where Dale utilized his welding expertise to service pipe lines. Later, they transferred to west Texas and then in 1954 moved to the San Fernando Valley area of California. Dale started his own welding company and contracted his services to companies and other larger welding firms. Dale retired from the business in 1987 after a long and successful career.

In 1992, Dale and Clara moved to their current home in Paso Robles, California. Dale and Clara have two wonderful daughters Dalene and Jimalee who live in Nevada and Arizona and visit their parents often. Dale celebrated his 87th birthday this year and on October 2nd, Clara and Dale will celebrate their 64th anniversary. Dale and Clara both have a wonderful sense of humor, which has served them well during their many years together.

The Bennett family salutes Dale for his service to country, his hard work and successful career, and his dedication to family and marriage. We wish you and Clara many more years of love, laughter and health.

