

“WHY DID I EVER LEAVE WYOMING” The words to this song are etched in the hearts of folks living in Wyoming. BT-1 Richard Black lived on the evening side of the Big Horn mountains in Cody, WY. Following high school, Richard enlisted in the Navy, boarded a train in Greybull, Wy to attend Boot Camp in San Diego, CA. He graduated from Boot Camp as a Fireman apprentice (FA) and he was directed to join USS Frank Knox in, Yokosuka Japan, early 1952. Richard made friends with Jim Blehm, a Montana boy in Boot Camp. Blehm was assigned to Frank Knox as well. This friendship lasted a lifetime until Blehm passed away a couple of years ago.

The friendship grew as the two FA SERVED aboard the Frank Knox in Japan. Jim Blehm was a FA, like Richard, but served in the After-Fire Room while Richard served in the Forward Fire Room.

RICHARD BLACK



In 1952 the method of transportation to Japan was a troop ship called the Wm. Mansfield Richard remembers. After arriving in Yokosuka, the two friends were assigned quarters in a 26- man tent pitched inside the Naval Base at Yokosuka to wait the return of Frank Knox to Yokosuka. One night a fierce rain storm pounded the tent and broke the ridge pole, collapsing the tent on the sleeping sailors. The “city boys” headed for the nearest barracks in their “skivvies” but the hardy western men gathered the collapsed canvass around them and slept the night away.



Richard Black and Wife

The memorable evacuation of Taschen Islands (February 7-11, 1955) led to the withdrawal of forces loyal to Chang Ki Shek, and their equipment, to strengthen their positions on the Islands of Quemoy and Matsu. The evacuation was discussed in newsletters during 2018. The weather is rarely good in the Formosa Straits and many times ships are forced to fight for survival in storms. Captain Goodfellow was CO (Commanding Officer) when the order came down to man the firerooms with your best men to ride out a fierce storm. Black and Blehm were awakened and reported to their firerooms. The ship was able to keep her head into the waves and survived. The memory of the hours in the forward fire room watching the water level in the boilers is fresh in Richard's mind today. When the Frank Knox returned from Yokosuka to Mare Island, CA for an overhaul and added equipment Jim Belhm and Richard Black lived with their wives in quarters close to each other. The "quarters" were Quonset huts. Richard left the Navy December 15, 1955 as a BT-1. He started a career in Billings, MT as a lineman for Montana Power and Light which lasted 37 years, 311 days. His wife and Jim Belhm passed away a couple of years ago ending the 60+ year marriage and a friendship started in Boot Camp and strengthened for life aboard USS Frank Knox. *Note: The editor grew up on the morning side of the Big Horn mountains near Buffalo WY.*