



# Heroes Among Us: Remembrances at Sea



## Raymond M. Gibbons, DDS, CDR, USNR

Born: 1921  
Navy; Lts (JG) Dental Officer  
Served 1945-1954  
Korean War 1952-1954  
Naval Reserves, 1955 - 1981,  
retired Commander  
U.S. Naval Training Station,  
Sampson, NY  
and USS Hyman, USS Deuel

Father knows best. According to Raymond M. Gibbons, DDS, CDR, USNR, it was his dad that gave him the best advice when he turned eighteen. “In September 1939, when England declared war on Germany, I can remember my father saying to me, ‘You are 18 and the United States will be in this war sooner or later, what are your plans?’”

The young man decided to follow in his father’s footsteps. His dad, Raymond M. Gibbons Sr, served in the US Army Dental Corps. “Dad was far-sighted enough to suggest that I join the Naval Reserve as an Ensign HV (P), which ‘could help me later’ and of course, it did.”

In 1942, after three years of pre-dental study at Canisius College, the Buffalo native was accepted at the University at Buffalo Dental School and became enrolled as a Midshipman in the US Dental Corps.

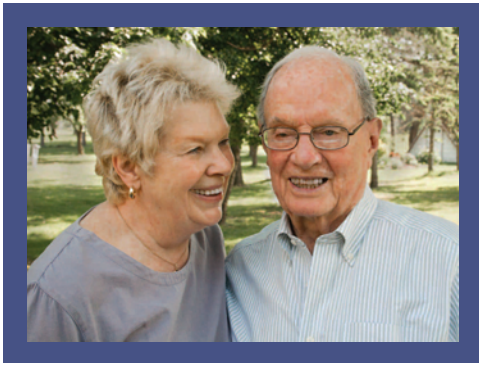
The day after graduation from Dental School, Dr. Gibbons and his five Navy classmates reported for duty to the Commanding Officer of the U.S. Naval Training Station in Sampson, NY – a Naval recruit station which processed 10,000 Naval recruits every two weeks.

After ten months and ten days at Sampson and thousands of fillings and tooth extractions, Dr. Gibbons returned to civilian life in Buffalo, joining his Dad in the practice of dentistry (a profession he practiced for 61 years, retiring in 2006 at the age of 85). As the Korean conflict escalated, Dr. Gibbons learned that the need for dentists was so severe that many dentists with Navy Commissions were going to be recalled and placed on active duty with the Army. Since he had not had any previous sea duty, Dr. Gibbons decided that he would trust the Navy and volunteer to join the Active Reserve where he began two years of active service, attending weekly drills. He was ordered to report for duty to the USS Hyman, a Destroyer with no dental officers on board. He promptly became seasick and was detailed to ‘help out’ in Sick Bay – a small room below deck with no doors or portholes.

“The Hyman had over 30 anti aircraft guns and a maximum speed of 36 knots and the ship showed an alarming tendency to roll in heavy seas,” wrote Dr. Gibbons in his book, Remembrances at Sea. “I read later that the Hyman did go to Korea where the ship and crew performed admirably against heavy odds. Little did I know that I would eventually end up there myself!”

In between his naval duties, the young dentist married and had four children, one of whom arrived while he was stationed overseas. Dr. Gibbons learned of his next assignment on his 31st birthday when he reported for duty in Norfolk, VA. It was a two-week shakedown cruise on the USS Deuel (APA160), an Attack Transport and World War II Victory ship that could carry one Infantry battalion

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Ginger and Ray Gibbons

## *Heroes Among Us:* Personalized Care for Veterans

Hospice Buffalo is honored to provide the highest quality end-of-life care to veterans. Military service affects how veterans live and how they die.

Through the *Heroes Among Us* initiative, Hospice is focusing on increasing awareness to staff and the veterans community to provide extraordinary care for veterans unique needs when they are nearing the end of their lives.

### Services for Veterans' Unique Life Experiences

- ★ Palliative (comfort) care for pain and symptom management
- ★ Music and massage therapy
- ★ Spiritual care and counseling for veterans' needs
- ★ Advance care planning (health care decision-making)
- ★ Resources for benefits for veterans and dependents
- ★ Excellent relationship with the VA

of 1500 Marine troops, and 26 Landing Craft to transport the troops to “the beach” as well as evacuate casualties. On the completion of the shakedown cruise, Dr. Gibbons was informed that he would be leaving for a six-month tour of duty in the Mediterranean.

The USS Deuel would be carrying 45 Marine Officers and 2,000 Marines, in addition to its complement of 40 officers and a crew of some 500. After spending the weekend loading the Marines and their equipment, the Deuel left the pier in Moorhead City, NC on its way to take part in Operation Mainbrace in Europe.

“There was much to be learned on my part,” recalled Dr. Gibbons. “My first experience in General Quarters was a fiasco! Everyone (but me) was running in one direction or another! Later I found that the correct routine was “forward on starboard and aft on port side” and that I was to wear a helmet along with a Mae West life jacket. My assigned station was ‘the after battle dressing station’ down in the bowels of the ship. This was to be used for minor wounds, dressings etc in case of battle.”

Several exercises were completed and the Deuel anchored at many ports including the Firth of Forth, Scotland; Denmark; Algiers, North Africa; Porto Scuto, Sardinia; Marseilles, France; Bone, Algeria; Izmir, Turkey; Rhodes, Greece; Naples, Italy; and Golfe Juan near the French Riviera. Sixteen months after first coming aboard and 35,443 miles later, Dr. Gibbons bid farewell to the Deuel’s officers, crews and captain.

“During my time on active duty with the Navy, I had earned credits for several college courses and I had broadened my dental education by my experiences on the Deuel and at Quonset Point (Naval Air Station, Rhode Island).” Dr. Gibbons reflected, “A Mandibular fracture case, multiple extractions of impacted third molars (wisdom teeth), multiple surgical root canal cases, countless amalgam restorations, many dentures and bridges were memorable highlights!”

Immediately following active duty, Dr. Gibbons re-joined the local Naval Reserve Unit, attending weekly drills and two weeks of annual training duty. He was promoted to the rank of Commander on July 1, 1959. “Unfortunately, my dad never got to hear the news, which would have made him so proud. He had died on June 1, 1959. There is no doubt that I was only in the Navy because of his farsightedness.”

On his sixtieth birthday, Dr. Gibbons officially retired from the Navy, having been credited with a total of twenty-three years, combined active and reserve duty.

Hospice Buffalo salutes Raymond M. Gibbons and the many officers and crew who gave their all for our country’s freedoms. Through his personal story, and others like his, we can better understand the unique life experiences of veterans.

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