



## George Frank (Rip) Kirby

As we get to our twilight years or the autumn of our lives, things change rapidly and we cannot keep up with the changes. For many years I have been nagged by Pat to write down some of my experiences, but now unfortunately it is too late, as my memory seems to go on its holidays without letting me know in advance, luckily she does remember some of them and has put this story together.

Shipmates – I will ask this of you! - please ensure that your memories do not go walkabouts, either put them to disc or write them down for your grandchildren, they might not be interested now, but at sometime in the future they will ask what Grandad did in the Navy and their parents will be able to tell them.

I was born on 11 May 1931. So what makes a sweet gentle child become a Chief Gunnery Instructor? Well I lived on Stanley Road, Portsmouth, and for those who do not know Portsmouth very well it is the road that leads to **Whale Island**, when GI's passed me they patted me on the head!

After a normal misspent youth, including being a soloist in the local school and church choir, [a GI with the voice of an angel!], my future in the RN seemed a foregone conclusion as my father was on **HMS Cornwall**. Unfortunately I never met him as he was killed in an accident in Shanghai in 1932.

I joined the navy at **HMS Vincent** as a boy seaman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class April 1947 and progressed to Boy 1<sup>st</sup> Class through to February 1949. Imagine my surprise when I was called into the Chiefs Mess by one of the instructors, who asked my name and had my father been in the Navy, when I answered yes – he produced photos of my father showing they served together and were run ashore oppo.

I started at the dizzy heights of Able Seaman February 1949 and then joined **HMS Charity** this was the stepping stone for my career as a very gentle man. It was aboard **HMS Duchess** that I achieved Acting Leading Seaman.

When I attended the hallowed ground that is Whaley, I met Fred Sutton and we became the only two Leading Seaman GI's in Royal Navy at the time.



So many ships so I will keep it short.....

**1954 HMS Ariel, HMS Scorpion**

**1958 HMS Newfoundland** (acting PO GI.)

**1960 HMS Condor**

**1961 HMS Ganges**

**1962 HMS Alert**

I had the honour to train the ceremonial street liners for the handover of Singapore.

On the day of the parade, I was standing on the perimeter and to my surprise the Parade Commander got flustered and gave a wrong command, I marched out to him and discretely in his shell- like gave him the right command stating he had to wait until I was off parade before giving the correct one.



Pat and I went to Singapore on a visit in 2000 and decided to visit Sembawang museum. Imagine our surprise when we were taken into the CPO's Mess as we entered a voice said afternoon Chief and there was one of the lads that I trained for that special day, so we both went down memory lane.

### 1964 HMS President

**1967 HMS Caprice** We were relieved by the Eskimo on Beira Patrol and music playing that day was the Mighty Quinn ("When Quinn the Eskimo gets here everybody's gonna jump for joy") Rated Chief GI.



**Rip Inspecting the Ships Guard -  
Beira Patrol 1968.  
Note the shiny boots!**

**1969 – 1971 HMS Victory** – As Officers Training Instructor, before leaving the RN after 22 years service.

All through my career there have been many unusual incidents, which unfortunately I cannot place at this time, if any of you shipmates know of these, and can fill in the gaps I would appreciate the information. Well here goes.

A Royal Marine that went to action stations in his turret wearing a pair of 6 guns.

An officer instructing how to handle a primer, told to be careful, he then dropped it and it exploded on the deck.



**George & Pat on their  
engagement in 1987**

Any memories from our time on Caprice would be welcome.

Pat and I this year will celebrate our Silver Wedding and hope that we will be at the reunion this year, being an ex Wren she keeps me on the straight and narrow and we had hoped to visit Whale Island for the Marine Band Concert but she told me I was not allowed to use my voice on the Bootnecks (party pooper!). In the end we visited Pony Moore.

**Likes** - good music, chocolate and ice cream

**Hates** - crowds