

**"You don't have to agree all the time, but you have got to listen. I have lived my life by this."**

**An interview-biography with Pacifican and Vietnam War Navy Veteran Ed Clements**

By Jean Bartlett ([www.bartlettbiographies.com](http://www.bartlettbiographies.com))

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**July 22, 2025**

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"The Vietnam War was on my mind when I was in high school," longtime Pacifican Ed Clements began. "I knew I was going to get drafted because I was the most horrible student there was. I know now it's because I have dyslexia. Maybe that's what made me a good listener all my life because as a kid, if I didn't listen, I didn't learn. But I told my kids when they were in school, 'If you want to see my report cards, you have to graduate.' And when they graduated from high school, I showed them my report cards. That was their graduation present."

←This Navy man received his Draft Notice in August of 1965.

"My high school graduation present was a Draft Notice." Ed stopped to chuckle. "I got that and shortly thereafter, I went and took my physical

in Amarillo. Then I went right home. 'Mom, is Dad home yet?' 'Well, no he isn't. He's still at work.' So I went to his shop. 'Hey Dad, I went and took my physical today.' And he said, 'Physical for what?' 'My Draft Notice, I thought I told you.' 'No, you never mentioned that.' 'Well, I passed it.' 'Well, you're not going.' I asked my dad, 'What do you mean, I'm not going?' He goes, 'I did that. You can be in the Air Force or you can be in the Navy. But you will not be a Marine and you will not be a soldier.' I said, 'Okay.'

"So I went down and joined the Navy, which turned out to be perfect because it was just before Thanksgiving and the Navy recruiter said, 'Oh, it's your lucky day.' 'What's lucky about it?' 'We've got a delayed program. You sign up today and you don't have to leave until after New Year's. You get to spend Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's at home with your family.' I said, 'That's fantastic!'

"I told the Navy Recruiter I had gotten my Draft Notice from the Army and I had taken my physical. And he said, 'You haven't signed anything yet. There's no reason why you can't sign with us. The only thing you did was take your physical and you passed it. There is no report date.' That sounded good enough to me and I signed on the dotted line."

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"My dad was drafted into the Army in World War II – there's a side story there – and there's a lot he didn't tell me about. In fact, he told my sons Chris, Scott and Nate more about it than I ever knew. But I'm grateful he talked to them. Sometimes you have to skip a generation before you can open up about a really hard experience."

\* \* \*

Edgar Ross Clements was born on August 20, 1946, in Lubbock, Texas. He is the second child of Jack and Fern (Cook) Clements. His older sister Jackie was born in 1945, his brother Glenn was born in 1947, his sister Cyndy came along in 1950, and his sister Julie arrived ten years later. All of his siblings but Jackie, who died in May of 1976, are all still going strong.

"My dad Jack was the third born of Thomas Edgar and Cora Irene (Cavin) Clements' children, and he was born in Bradley, Oklahoma. His brother Newt was born in 1915. Edgar, who I am named after, was born in 1917. My dad was born in 1920; Geraldine in 1922; John in 1924; Billie in 1926; and then they lost a set of twins in 1928. My grandfather Thomas was a sharecropper. We can track my dad's family by their residences in Bradley, Lindsay and Chickasha, all in Oklahoma, then in: Terry, Texas and Lubbock, Texas. My dad's dad died in Lubbock in September of 1941, by suicide, which I did not know until I was grown. I was out visiting my Uncle John when he lived in Salinas, California, and Uncle John started talking about the family.

"Do you know how your grandfather died,' Uncle John asked me. 'No.' 'He took his own life.' 'Whoa, my dad never mentioned it.' But that's all my Uncle John said. End of subject.

"My dad and all his siblings pitched in to help their mom and she also worked. Grandma was a seamstress and she went to work for Bud's Men's Shop in Lubbock when it opened. She did that for the rest of her life.

"My dad, who was quite smart and capable, only went to fourth or fifth grade. None of the brothers had a complete education because during the Depression they had to work on the farm. When the U.S. entered the War after the attack on Pearl Harbor, all of Grandma's sons went to sign on for service or had already signed on. Uncle Newt was already in the Calvary."

In 1940, Horse Cavalry units began converting to mechanized Army units. The last U.S. Cavalry Regiment was the 26th Cavalry Regiment in the Philippines. During their defense of the Philippines, they made their last mounted charge on January 16, 1942. While there are still some ceremonial cavalry units, by March of 1942, the Horse Cavalry, as a distinct branch of the U.S. Army with roots dating back to the Revolutionary War, was discontinued by the War Department.

"My Uncle John joined the Army Air Corps, Uncle Billie was in the Navy and sadly Uncle Eddie died in an auto accident just before he was inducted into the service in 1944. As to my father, he failed the physical because he had flat feet.

"My dad had been working for an auto shop in Lubbock when the War started. He was a natural mechanic. But he quit that and went with his friends to sign up for the War. When he found out he couldn't go because of his flat feet, he was really disillusioned. 'I can't go? All my friends are going. I don't want to be here in Lubbock with everyone asking – 'Why didn't you go, Jack?' So my dad decided he would move out to California and work as a mechanic in the war industry. His mom, his sister Geraldine, and his brother Billie, who was too young yet to enter the War, all moved out to California, to Los Angeles. Also the wives of the brothers moved in with Grandma too.

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"I know that after all the girls married her sons, Grandma said, 'You are all going to live with me, so I know where you're at.' I'm guessing that's because Grandma wanted a guarantee that she could trust the wives. If her boys were at war, she didn't want them out catting around. She wanted them doing what they were supposed to do. Ha! Ha! Grandma was in charge. My dad's sister, Aunt Babe, or Geraldine, ended up having four husbands. She used to say, 'I was just one of those ladies that had to be married. If I was going to go out with a guy, I was going to get married to him.' Her first husband, Cecil Browning, was a lot older. He was a friend of my Uncle Newt's in the Cavalry and when he came home to visit, he met Aunt Babe. This was before the War and Aunt Babe was a teen. When Cecil went off to War, Grandma wanted her daughter under her watchful eye!

"When my dad was working in Los Angeles, he met my mom, Fern."

Fern Irene Cook was born on September 18, 1919, in Creston, Montana, to Stella Mabel (Dyer) and Henry "Harry" James Cook. Her sister Eleanor, born in 1914, was the eldest of the four Cook children. James, born in 1915, came along next. James was followed by Fern and then the youngest, Ross, was born in 1922.

"My mom grew up on a dairy farm, in Hot Springs, Montana. Grandpa was from Winona, Minnesota, and they came out and they settled right next to the Flathead Indian Reservation. They had a homestead that they set up there and they had 140 acres. Grandpa stayed on that farm until he passed in 1975.

"When Jackie, Glenn and I were teens, we found out that Mom's mom Stella died when Mom was 7. When she died, my mom's older sister Eleanor Stella – who was only five years older than Mom – raised all her siblings. Mom's dad did remarry, but he waited until all his children were grown and they all really respected that he never tried to replace their mother. When he did find another mate, Helen, everyone loved her. Mom never called her anything but Helen, but Mom told us, 'She's your grandmother.' And Helen was our grandmother and we loved her. She was so nice. The only vacations we ever went on were to see my grandparents in Montana. We drove out there and we loved those vacations – being with Grandma and Grandpa, being on the farm, fishing with Grandpa, seeing Yellowstone, and always getting a visit in with my mom's brother Ross and his wife Dorothy in Billings.

"My mom's childhood was all in small towns. Where she was born, in Creston, is a little less than 10,000 residents now. Hot Springs, where she grew up, had just a little over 600 people a few years ago, and where she went to school in Lonepine, which was then the largest town closest to Hot Springs, that's less than 200 residents now. But other than the sadness of losing her mom, my mom didn't have any complaints about her childhood. It was a good childhood. She knew plenty about farming and milking cows, but she wasn't really interested in staying on the farm because she wasn't making any money. She went off to college and got a degree in business."

When the War started, Fern's youngest brother Ross went into the Navy. Her older brother, Jim, did not serve. As a farmer he was given a deferment, as most farmers were, to do his part in providing food for a nation at war. Ed's mom moved from Montana to Los Angeles to be a "Rosie the Riveter." With the men off to war, Rosie the Riveter became a cultural heroine, a recruiting tool, to bring women into the workforce to do jobs typically held by men. Women who signed on for defense industries jobs, primarily in shipyards and factories, became vital contributors to the country's war efforts.

"My mom headed out to California to put rivets in airplanes. It was a good paying job and she knew it was a lasting job, at least until the War was over. They weren't going to lay anybody off. So now we've got two people, my future parents, who left their hometowns because of the War and moved to Los Angeles. How did they meet?"

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"If you asked Dad he always said, 'This older woman was chasing me!'



"Mom was born in 1919 and Dad was born in 1920 and they weren't even a year apart in age. Mom was five months older. When we told Mom what Dad said about how they met, she said, 'No. He followed me to the theater and just as soon as we got there, he tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Can I buy you a ticket to the movie?' They married on October 13, 1943, in Lubbock, Texas, right before Dad went overseas."

← Fern and Jack, wedding photo, 1943.

"I guess the government decided flat feet weren't so bad after all. When they had the buildup for the Invasion of Normandy – (planning began in July of 1943, and the invasion, also known as D-Day, launched on June 6, 1944) – that's when my dad got called up. Dad said, 'When they really needed to start killing people, that's when they called me. Jack, you need to come!' But he always felt when he went in, he was coming home. He wanted to do his part. He was at Omaha Beach, in the Battle of Normandy (which lasted 77 days). He was also in the Battle of the Bulge." (The Battle of the Bulge, the last German major offensive on the

Western Front, launched in the Ardennes Forest on December 16, 1944, and lasted until January 25, 1945.)

"While Dad was overseas, Mom was living in Lubbock, Texas, with his mom, Dad's brother's wives and Dad's sister. As soon as Dad went off to War, Grandma moved everyone back to Texas, including my mom. Dad was wounded at the Battle of the Bulge.

"Dad got his Purple Heart at the Battle of the Bulge. He did his medical rehab in Texas and when he was close to finishing it, a soldier came to his hospital room, while Mom was sitting there, to tell him they wanted to send him back to Japan to complete what was left of his time in the service. Mom told us, 'They handed him his orders and Dad said, 'What do you need a dead sergeant in Japan for?' And the soldier goes, 'What?' And my dad said, 'You saw what I looked like when I got here? I'll kill myself before I go back there. I did my time, I am not going back.'

"Mom said right after that this officer came in and said, 'Jack, you have orders.' And my dad said, 'Do what you're going to do with those orders. I'm not going.' They changed his orders and discharged him. He had a Purple Heart, a letter saying that he had a Silver Star and a bunch of other medals. He was hit in the back at the Battle of the Bulge and then a shrapnel metal bomb blew up. The doctors were able to keep the major arteries in his legs but they took out whatever minor arteries they could. He hated 4th of July because of the fireworks, his legs would go numb. We didn't realize that until we went out to Buffalo Lakes in Lubbock for the 4th of July in 1960 or 1961. When we got home from the fireworks show, everyone unloads from out of the car. When Dad opened his door, one step out of the car and he was down.

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"My brother Glenn and I, we couldn't pick him up. He was too heavy. Dad was 6 ft. 3 and weighed 260 pounds. That's when I gained so much respect for my Uncle Jasper. He was Aunt Babe's second husband. He was 5 ft. 8 at the tallest and maybe 175 pounds. He came over and picked up my dad and carried him into the house like he was as light as a baby. We went, 'Whoa, Uncle Jasper.' And Uncle Jasper said, 'Well, we've got to get your dad into the house.' Once my dad got back in and calmed down, he could feel his legs and he could walk again. But we didn't know anything about that and he finally told us, that's why he went to the VA. You don't know how you can help somebody, if it's not obvious, unless they tell you what's going on with them. But not talking about the War was not just my dad. That was most of the World War Two vets.

"I was in the Navy when I found out more about what happened to Dad on D-Day. It was 1969 and the 25th anniversary of D-Day and the local paper did an article on Dad. They went out to his shop to interview him. Mom sent me the article and I learned more. Then many years later I learned more again when my youngest son Nate made a shadow box for school with all of Dad's military stuff in it. Here's the long and the short of what I know now.

"Jack Clements served in the U.S. Army 331st Infantry during World War II. He was involved in the D-Day Invasion at Normandy and fought and was injured during the Battle of the Bulge. He received decorations and citations including the Good Conduct Medal, World War II Victory Medal, European-African-Middle-Eastern Campaign Medal, American Campaign Medal, the Purple Heart and eventually, the Silver Star.

"When Dad landed in Normandy, he ran off the landing craft and the first thing he did was step in a hole that was 8-feet deep and he didn't know how to swim. When he and his buddy came to the surface they had nothing. They lost their packs and their weapons. The guy my dad was with said, 'Jack, we don't have a gun.' And my dad said, 'Oh yes we do,' because there were dead soldiers lying there and they took their weapons and started going up the beach. He and his infantry came in early with the group of engineers that were clearing obstacles, including minefields, in the face of pretty terrifying German resistance. Dad was lucky to come out of that alive.

"It turns out when the Army representatives went to the hospital when my dad was finishing up his rehab, they gave him that letter that said he got a Silver Star, but they actually never gave him the Silver Star. That was always a burr in his side. So Nate did some research and found out, if you wrote Washington, D.C., you can get the medal. So Nate wrote them and they sent the Silver Star with a letter to Nate saying they regretted the passing of his grandfather. Dad died in 2001, before the government sent Nate that note.

Ed said his parents were like "Mutt and Jeff."

"As I mentioned, Dad was 6 ft. 3 but Mom was not even 5 ft. tall. But they were fantastic together and they really agreed on how to raise their children. They were great parents.

"My dad worked on every kind of auto. When he started his own business in Lubbock, Jack's Garage, it was out of a two-bay garage that was owned by this guy Cecil Brady of Brady Plumbing in town. Up until then, Dad was working for someone else but Cecil told him, 'If you quit where you work, I'll build you a shop and you can get all the customers you want. The deal is you have to repair all my plumbing trucks.' My dad said, 'You got a deal.' My dad was given a Quonset hut with two bays. They were in it forever it seemed, and it was cold as heck. Dad asked Cecil, four or five times, 'I need a new shop. You've got the property next to this place. Why don't you build me a shop?' But Cecil never would. So then Cecil's brother-in-law, who worked for Cecil, quit and went out on his own plumbing business, Shipley Plumbing. He came in one day to the restaurant next door to Dad's shop and said to my Dad, 'Hey, I've got an offer for you. How would you like a new shop?' And my dad said, 'You're going to get your

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brother-in-law to build me a new shop? Yeah, I'd like it." And the brother-in-law said, 'I'll build you a shop. I bought the lot next door, what do you want?' Dad said, '1. I want it to be built out of this type of stone blocks. I don't want a Quonset hut. 2. I want three bays.' And the brother-in-law said, 'It's a done deal. My plumbing trucks will be your first customer.' My dad said, 'Done. It's your shop. You own the building.' And they did that. And it was right next door to where my dad had been so none of his customers had to search for him."



**Ed's dad Jack with his three-bay garage in Lubbock, TX.**

"My dad understood a good deal and Mom did the books for the business. Between the two of them, they ran it. When Dad was older he used to say, 'I don't understand why people don't understand if you make 5 percent profit, after all your expenses are covered, you're having a great year.' He said, 'People want more than that, but they don't need more than that.' My dad had two guys that worked for him all the time. One was this guy named Willie. Willie was a good mechanic. He was also an alcoholic and he and Dad had an agreement. My dad told him, 'You show up for work and I smell it on your breath, you go home. I don't need a drunk mechanic here doing anything, and you don't get paid for that day.' Willie followed that rule and it helped him a lot. He never came in drunk and he always had a job."

The family owned their home in Lubbock, 611 31st Street. They had a big garden out back and Ed's mom was always doing farming, which included taking care of the cherry trees.

"My dad had a side hustle with all these farmers around Lubbock. All their water wells had engines running them, so Dad worked a deal with them. He said, 'I'll maintain your engine and keep your water well running and when your crops come in, you call me, and I'll come out and get x-amount of black-eyed peas or corn, or whatever you are growing.' That worked out great but we used to hate it when the crops came in because dad would get all those bushels, and while we were watching television, or before we had TV and were listening to the radio, you had to shell peas!"



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Ed went to George R. Bean Elementary School.



"The schools were right in a row," Ed explained. "From our house, you walked eight blocks to George R. Bean Elementary School. After the sixth grade, you walked two more blocks till OL Slaton Junior High School, now Middle School, and that was seventh, eighth and ninth. High school was about two mile hike from OL Slaton and that was Lubbock High School.

←School-age Ed, circa 1960.

"When I was a kid, I rode my bike everywhere. In the summer you got up, had your breakfast, made your bed, then you left and rode your bike and played until it was time for lunch. Then we'd hear Mom on the back porch, 'Ed, Glenn, Jackie and Cyndy, come eat!' Then you went out again. If you needed a drink of water, you drank it out of the hose and you didn't come back until dinner. You had chores you did, every day, and that was it.

"Did I play any instruments? Well, my sister Jackie did. She played the violin and she was really good at it. But the only way Dad would let Jackie play the violin was if she followed this rule. He said, 'You learn all that fancy music, young lady, but you will learn how to fiddle, or you will not get to play it.' She could play blue grass and she was good. I said, 'I want to learn to play the guitar.' I

get a guitar and I'm tone deaf. I couldn't sing a note to save my life but I thought I could. In church my mom would say, 'Now Ed, you don't have to sing the words out loud. You know the words, just mouth them and everybody will think you're singing.' 'But I like to sing.' 'Ed, have you heard yourself sing? It's not good at all.' So, I don't get to sing.

"Jackie could do anything you wanted to do on roller skates. The only thing I could do on roller skates was fall on my rear. If I had a nickel for every time we'd put on skates and we'd get out on the sidewalk and Jackie would hold my hands while she skated backwards – when she let go of my hands, in no more than 15 feet I was pfft – I'd be rich. I couldn't do that to save my life. But my bike, I rode that everywhere. Even though Lubbock is a big city, it's easy to get around because it's divided in quarters. Avenues A through Z go from east to west, and the number streets are north to south. So if you can do your alphabet and count, you could find any place in town."

Church was on Sundays and everyone got dressed up and went, except Ed's dad.

"Dad never went. The only time I saw Dad in church was when my sister Jacqueline got married. He'd go to funerals. But before any of the kids could drive, Dad would always take us to church. Mom didn't drive. She had no peripheral vision which is why she couldn't drive. I don't know what caused it. She tried taking the driver's test several times but they told her, 'You shouldn't be moving your entire head around to see,' so she never got a driver's license.

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"After Dad dropped us off, he'd go home and start preparing our mid-day meal, what we called dinner. Then he would come and pick us up and we'd come home and dinner would be ready. Dad liked to talk about church. He'd say, 'I bet old Sam just talked about the same old bible stories.' And Mom would say, 'Oh, Sam is a good preacher.' And Dad would say, 'Well, I saw this guy on TV,' and then he'd tell us a little bit about that.

"Dad watched a different preacher every Sunday. 'I give them all a chance,' he'd say. My dad's mom was very religious. She was Church of Christ and Mom was Cumberland Presbyterian. Mom and Grandma did not talk about church a lot. His mom would say to him, 'Jack, did you go to church today?' 'Yeah, Mom I was on Channel 4 today.' 'That's not going to church.' And he'd say, 'Mom, I read somewhere in some bible that says the Lord does not think I have to go to church to talk to Him. I talk to Him at the shop. I talk to him at home. I talk to Him wherever I want to. I don't need to go to church and throw money in an offering plate for some preacher to think I'm a good guy. The Lord knows I'm a good guy and if I've got money, I'll give it to my wife and she'll put it in the offering plate. If I didn't make any money that week, He doesn't make any money that week. That's the way it works. He doesn't mind.

"My dad was very adamant that we all got baptized. I was the last one to get baptized and I caught heck from my dad. We all came home from church one Sunday and Dad said, 'I thought everyone was going to get baptized. Jackie got baptized. Cyndy got baptized. Glenn got baptized. What happened to you, were you stuck to the chair?' I said, 'Dad, Sam said those that want to come and be baptized, now's the time to come to the front and I didn't want to go.' 'Are you ever going to go?' 'I don't know, I'm thinking about it, and every Sunday, Sam offers it so I always have a chance. It's not like I lost my opportunity.' Then Glenn said, 'You're going to go to hell, that's for sure.' And I said, 'Well, I'll see you there. That's also for sure!' My dad respected my decision. When I did decide to be baptized my dad said, 'Wow. Well, who else got baptized today? Did your girlfriend get baptized?' And I said, 'My girlfriend doesn't even go to that church.' 'Okay. I just wanted to make sure you're doing it for the right reason.'

"Mom didn't mind my not getting baptized when everyone else did. My brother Glenn was bugging her about it and she said, 'What Sam said was, 'Anyone who is ready to give themselves to the Lord and be baptized today, can be baptized today, or they can do it another day.' When you are ready you are ready.' A year or so later, I felt like I wanted to commit to it and I did. My parents did not give me any guff on it. They wanted me to make the decision.

"Dad was always in love with Mom and Mom was always in love with Dad. Dad told my brother and me, when we were young, 'You never, ever touch a woman.' When we were kids, Glenn would get mad at Jackie and slap her on the back. My dad would say to him, 'You know what that feels like, Mister?' And then my dad would slap Glenn on the back. I'd swear he was going to break something. But my dad would say, 'Well, he shouldn't touch his sister.' He was adamant. He told Glenn and me, 'When you boys grow up, you'll get married. You may argue with your wife from time to time, and that's fine. But if you get so mad, you think you are going to hit her, you leave the house. You go figure it out and then you talk it out when you come back.

"How would I describe my dad's personality? He was very easygoing until you did something wrong. Like if me and Glenn got to fighting and caused Mom trouble, if she called his shop, you were going to get a whipping when he came home. My brother Glenn was great at getting in the worst trouble. It drove me crazy. Glenn and I would be fighting and my mother would come out, 'You boys quit fighting.' Well my mother was littler than both of us, so she would take her house shoe and hit us over the back of the shoulders. 'Quit it! Quit it!' Glenn would grab the house shoe. And I would say to Glenn, 'Don't grab the house shoe. She is going to call Dad.' And then she'd call Dad. She'd never call him unless she had a problem. 'The boys are fighting, Glenn grabbed my shoe away.' Okay. The phone call is done.



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"Well, my dad comes home. Dinner is at 6 p.m. The table is set. Dad walks in and goes to the bathroom and washes up. He comes in and sits down, looks at me and Glenn and says, 'You two go to your room. I'm not eating with you.' So he'd sit and have his dinner. They'd visit and then he'd come into the bedroom. 'Mom told me what you did.' We'd start talking. He'd say, 'Your mother told me what you did. I don't need to hear your side of anything. So, I figure this gets each of you three swats on the rear. Which one of you is going first?' I always said I'm going first because I wanted to get it done with. Then you'd bend over the bed and not move. Dad said, 'If you move, or jump you are going to get an extra swat because I want to hit you, square on your bottom. That's not going to hurt you and you are going to learn something. But if you move.' Then he'd take his leather belt off and that's the reason why he wanted to hit you straight across the bottom.

"Three is the most I ever got and usually it was just one or two. But Glenn – who grew up to be the president of a good-sized company so it worked out for him – would say, 'Hey Dad, you know, I didn't really start it.' And then Dad would go, 'I don't care who started it. It takes two to fight. Your brother got his licks and now it's your turn.' Well, by then I was gone from the room. You got your licks and you didn't stay to watch anyone else. But Glenn would negotiate and he did not win the negotiation. But as soon as you got your licks, you got your dinner. It wouldn't be hot. It was what was left on the table."

Right behind the family's home, right across the alley, there was a cotton field.

"That was the first job my older sister and I had. We picked cotton. I did that one year and I'll never do it again, I don't care how much somebody wants to pay me. Your cuticles are all bloody because you have to pick the cotton out of the boll. You don't want the boll, you just want the cotton."

What's a boll? It's the part of the cotton plant that contains the cotton fiber and seeds. While the cotton fibers inside are soft, the dried boll casing has these sharp bracts that enclose the cotton and if you don't pick carefully, your fingers are going to be loaded with abrasions.

"You don't wear gloves, because they block you from picking the cotton. You want all the cotton out of that boll that you can get. You soon learn if a boll is just starting to open, you walk by it. If it opens up, you stick your hand in and get it. When it opens up, the crust of the boll is sharp and that is what makes your cuticles bleed. It's about a three-month season. My sister and I did it that one summer. We never did it again. You get paid by the pound. The cotton bag was about six-feet long. You filled it up, put it over your shoulder and you drug it. Well, cotton doesn't weigh anything. I'll never forget the first week we were there, we were watching this older gentlemen and he was just booking up and down the row, back and forth. We thought, how can he do this? He said, 'You see this?' And he picked up a dirt plug, about yay big. He said, 'You lay this in that cotton bag and that's got weight, and when the man picks the cotton bag up, he turns it upside down so he can hang it and weigh it. He then pulls the string and that opens it up and lets everything out. When that dirt clod hits the ground, it dissipates, it's not there. You get paid. He doesn't know you put a dirt clod in there. You can't put a bunch in there. You put one or two in there and that helps your load for the weight.'

"I tell you, everyone talks about the migrant farmers picking strawberries and I say, 'Nobody wants to do that. It's such hard work. And you don't make much.' What did I make picking cotton? It was about a quarter a bag for six pounds. My sister and I were lucky if together we filled two bags a day. When I did it, I was 13 and Jackie was 14.

"The next job I got was at the movie theater. Jackie had gotten a job there selling candy and I was an usher. We were at the Lindsey Theatre which was one of the popular theaters in town and a movie might stay there, two or three weeks. They had a section in the back of the theater, standing room only. You pulled the curtains back and people watched from there. If it wasn't sold out, the curtains stayed closed. If

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someone came in late to the movie, you led them in with a flashlight. Well, I would start learning the lines in the movie, if it was there for two weeks, and I would be back there saying the lines of the movie. And then someone in the back row would shout, 'Hey, do you mind. We haven't seen it!' Then the head usher would come over and say, 'Ed, shhh.'

"After I quit working at the theater, a girl I was starting to date, her mom worked at a drugstore and they had a soda fountain and she got me a job there working as a soda jerk. That was a fun job. It was right across the street from Texas Tech University on what was then College Avenue, now University Avenue, so you had all the college kids coming over."

When Ed was 14, his little sister Julie was born.

"Uncle Jasper and Aunt Babe had five children and for a while there, every time Aunt Babe would have a baby, Mom would have a baby. Then Aunt Babe's eldest daughter had a baby when she was 16, which was no surprise given that Aunt Babe had a baby early. So one day we came home from school and Mom was all happy. 'Why are you so happy, Mom?' 'Oh, I'll tell you at dinner.' 'Come on, Mom, you gotta tell us. We don't want to wait until dinner.' So Mom said, 'There is going to be another baby in the family.' My sister Jackie said, 'Is our cousin pregnant?' Mom said, 'No. She's not the only one in this family who can get pregnant. I'm having a baby.' And Jackie goes, 'Mom, what are my girlfriends going to think? What is everyone going to think? You can't have a baby!' Mom just replied calmly and full of common sense which was always her way, 'Maybe they'll think I am married to your father and it's okay.'

"Dad came home, 'Did you tell them? I bet Jackie is not happy about it. Well, she don't have to be happy about it but she is going to learn how to change diapers.' When Julie was born, Jackie just looked at her and loved her like we all did."



**The Clements family, 1965, top row, left to right: Glenn, Cyndy, Jackie and Ed. Bottom row, left to right: Jack, Julie and Fern.**

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When Ed was growing up, the family home was two bedrooms and one bathroom.

"I never knew I was poor until I went into the Navy and found out I got my own bed. We always had what we needed to eat and we always had a new set of clothes and shoes to start school every fall. I always slept in a bed with my brother, a double bed, until I left to go to the Navy. My two sisters, Jackie and Cyndy, slept together, and all four of us were in the same bedroom. Mom and Dad were in the other bedroom. A few years after Julie was born, they added another bedroom and a bathroom. But the size of our house was never anything that bothered me. I had a great childhood, though sometimes I did feel sorry for my mom – but not because of the size of our house but because I was such a terrible student.

"Mom was a teacher. She taught her kids and nobody knew, including me, that I had dyslexia really bad. So when we were going to have a spelling test, I would be sent home with all the words, like everyone else. My mom would work and work with me, and I would study those words so hard until I had them all right. I took that spelling test from my mom a jillion times before I went to bed and I got every one of them right. The first thing I would hear from Mom in the morning, before I went to school was, 'Okay Ed, give me the spelling list. How do you spell this?' I'd say, 'I don't know.' 'What do you mean you don't know? You knew it before you went to bed last night.'



"My mom said to me when I first started school, 'If you just go to school and pay attention, you get good grades.' My first report card, the first year I was in school, was the best report card I ever had. I did the first grade twice and it was only because they said my grades were good enough to advance, but I was too immature. I would get bored in school and I would leave and come home. Mom would ask, 'How come you are home from school?' 'Oh, they let us out early.' Then she would see our next door neighbor, Ruby Caddell, bringing the kids home from school and she would say, 'Ed said school was let out early.' And Ruby said, 'Well, you better talk to Ed about that.' Throughout elementary school, I got certificates for perfect attendance, and that's as good as it got!

"But Mom was always there and she was a very sweet person. When I was in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, Mom was a Scout Commander because none of the fathers had time to do it. I just barely got into the Boy Scouts when my mom told the dads, 'I've been doing this for six years. One of you dads is going to have to step up or we are going to have to disband because I can't do it anymore. My two boys aren't my only kids.' Mom did everything at school that we needed. She got our next

door neighbor, Ruby, whose kids were the same age as us, to drive us to school every day because she couldn't drive. When there were parent/teacher conferences, my mom would schedule her conferences right around Mrs. Caddell's conferences. The teachers would ask, 'How are you and Ruby Caddell related?' 'Well, we're not related. She's my neighbor. But I don't drive and she does.' My mom always found a way. I dropped out of sports in junior high school because no one saw me play. Mom couldn't drive so she wasn't there and my dad was at work. I was playing football, and I ran track. I played some baseball but not a lot. I played baseball more at the Boys Club than at school. But because no one watched me play I quit. Actually, I made a promise to myself that if I got married and had kids, I would be there for them for their games. And I did have kids and I was there for them."

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When Ed's little sister Julie was 5, Ed headed off to Navy Boot Camp in San Diego.

"I chose the Navy because I had two older cousins in the Navy. One was a Sonar Tech and the other was a Seabee, which is construction. That's what I wanted and that's what I applied for when I went into the Navy. I qualified for it but they weren't putting a construction battalion together when I got out of Boot Camp. So they said the next highest rating was on electrical and on AC&R (Air Conditioning and Refrigeration). So I got into the engine room as a machinist.

"Like my dad, knowing how to fix stuff comes naturally to me. My dad definitely taught me how to work on cars. We would go out after school and work for him, but we never got paid. He didn't really want us to become mechanics. Glenn was a lot smarter than I was. Dad used to say, 'When you work in the shop, you have to work together.' If I couldn't figure something out, I'd say to Glenn, 'Go get grab the book.' And he'd get the Chilton Manual (a comprehensive auto repair guide). I was more naturally inclined with fixing autos but Glenn could read the book and figure it out, no problem at all.



"How was Navy Boot Camp? It made me mad because my two older cousins who were in told me, 'Don't sweat Boot Camp. You just got out of high school. You're in great shape. You'll be fine.' They didn't tell me that Boot Camp is all psychological. Sure, you do have all the physical stuff. But they break you down, where if they say, 'Jump,' you don't look at the person next to you, you just jump. And they build you back up and that to me was pretty devastating. Also, you get your Bluejacket Manual. I still have mine. It's a comprehensive guide to naval procedures and traditions, as well as daily life. There are 10 general orders you have to memorize. Anytime, anyone that is a higher rank than you asks, for instance, 'What is your 3rd General Order,' you'd better know it. I had to think back in my head. 'You're supposed to know this Clements.' I really had to work on memorizing those and I got them down. But I hated that stuff. However, I learned a lot in Boot Camp and when I tested and found out what I qualified for was something I liked to do, it worked out great. My dyslexia was not a problem because all the questions were multiple choice and to me those answers were just common sense.

←Navy Apprentice Edgar Ross Clements, 1966.

Did he leave a girl behind?

"The short answer is no. But there's a story! My first girlfriend was Sylvia Haught. I met her in junior high school. We dated a little bit in the eighth grade and freshman year. After freshman year, we went off to high school and she was looking for an older guy. But we remained friends. When I came home on leave to celebrate my 21st birthday, Mom and Dad let me celebrate at the house, while they went up to the VFW Club. I had some couples over and Sylvia came over with me. She told me, 'I'll marry you, if we go to Mexico right now and get married.' And I said, 'I am leaving to go back to Hawaii to be in the Navy tomorrow; I'm not out of the Navy. I can't go to Mexico and be AWOL.' Besides not wanting to leave the Navy, I was not ready to be married to anybody."



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After Ed completed his initial Navy training, he was assigned to the USS Ponchatoula (T-AO-148). He had 15 days of leave, which he spent in Lubbock. Then he headed out to meet his ship in Australia.

"I flew from Lubbock to San Francisco, San Francisco to Hawaii, and I was off to get my sea bag to catch a plane to Australia, when I saw my name, and a couple other guys' names, on a sign. That's when we learned the Ponchatoula got in early. It was in Pearl Harbor."



**USS Ponchatoula (T-AO-148) underway in the Pacific late 1960s.**

Public domain photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy.

"So we went out to the fuel piers – those are specialized docks designed for the transfer of fuel to and from ships – and got on the ship. The Ponchatoula's homeport was Hawaii."

The USS Ponchatoula was a fleet oiler. Its purpose was to refuel other ships at sea. It carried: avgas, or aviation gasoline, a gasoline-based fuel used in piston-engine aircraft; JP-5, a military-grade, high flash point kerosene-based fuel – the primary jet fuel used by U.S. Navy aircraft carriers due to its safety characteristics; Navy standard fuel oil; and diesel fuel.

"I went to Vietnam, three times, three nine-month tours. During the Vietnam War, they called a nine-month tour, a one-year tour of duty. When we were in Hawaii, mostly we were just in port. But, occasionally we would be alerted that astronauts and their capsule were returning to Earth and landing in neighboring waters in the Pacific. We would go out because we were part of the recovery team. Our job was to fuel the ships that were waiting on the capsule. We actually never recovered anyone." (But they did break many fueling records, including the following. In April of 1966, the USS Ponchatoula returned to Hawaii after bringing 503 ships alongside, 464 of which she refueled. In November of 1967, she pumped 74 million gallons of fuel through her hoses before returning to her homeport in June of 1968.)



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"Essentially we were a big floating gas station. When we went to Vietnam, we went from Hawaii to the Philippines and that's where we got our fuel to give all the other ships. Once we arrived in Vietnam, we went up and down the Gulf of Tonkin and ships would come alongside of us and we'd pump fuel into them. They'd go on their way and we'd get another ship. We stood four hours on and four hours off of watch. My watch, when we were underway, was working in the engine room as a throttleman. When I wasn't on watch, my job was to take care of the AC units, me and the three guys who worked for me. When we were refueling, my watch was in the after pump room." (Located towards the rear of the ship, the after pump room contains pumps and associated equipment for handling and transferring jet fuel, diesel or lubricating oils.)

"I was in the charge of the guys pumping. I had headphones on, and I'd tell them, 'Okay, we need you to light up the JP-5 pump or light up the Avgas pump. So you were up all the time. If I came off a refueling detail – like an aircraft carrier took four hours to fuel up, it and its escort, and so you were down in the pump room for four hours – when I came out, if it was time for my watch in the engine room then I'd go down into the engine room and you had four hours there. If a ship came alongside of us while you were on watch, you'd leave your watch and go to the pumping station and someone else would take your place. It was just constant motion all the time.

"You got used to crappy sleep. It took 15 days to pump all of our fuel to the other ships. Then we'd turn right around for Subic Bay in the Philippines. Then we would be in the Philippines for three days, because that's how long it took to fill us up. Then we'd go right back and fill up ships for 15 days.

"We had the same escort that an aircraft carrier had. We always had jets flying over us to make sure no aircraft hit us because if they did, it was one big boom. I asked the Chief once, 'Well, what if we get hit?' And he said, 'We'll never know if we get hit. We'll all be over, gone.'

"We didn't really get scared. We were a bunch of kids and you don't think that way. There were 325 people on my ship and the average age, including all the officers, was 21. You're just doing your job. When I learned how to run the evaporators to make salt water into fresh water, I thought that was the coolest thing in the world. When you went into port, you shut the evaporators off because the one thing you cannot get in an evaporator is oil or any contaminants. In a harbor, the water is dirty so you can't make fresh water there. You have to do it at sea. The best I ever did was 600 gallons in an hour. But you learn you've got a limited amount of water on a ship. You don't take long showers. You get in, turn the water on, turn it off, lather all up, turn it on, rinse off and turn it off. I fell asleep many a time sitting in a 30-gallon garbage can. You are sitting there watching somebody play cards or something, because you're sitting there waiting for another ship to come alongside for fuel and you don't want to lie down in your bunk because you are going to get jerked out of it in 30 seconds – but you want to eat so you need to be awake when they call, 'Chow Time!'

After Ed returned from his first cruise into Vietnam serving as a machinist in the engine room, he came home with a rash that ran from his waist all the way up to and including the bottom half of his face.

"They didn't know why or what about my rash, but one of the things that aggravated it a lot was the heat in the engine room. It could run as high as 140 degrees in hot climates. They sent me to Tripler Army Navy Hospital in Honolulu and I saw a dermatologist who was a full-blown colonel, and he said, 'You know what, I don't know what it is. We've tested you for everything under the sun. But it's Uncle Sam's problem for the rest of your life, that's a good thing.' I got a little piece of paper that says, 'Edgar R. Clements will not shave as long as he's in this man's Navy.' Shaving aggravates the rash and it hurts.

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"Here's the deal, machinist mates (MMs) work in the engine room and in the electrical flats assisting the electricians with the generators, or work on the evaporators, making salt water into fresh water. Then you had the MMs A-Gang. These are also machinist mates and they work in air conditioning/refrigeration and work on winches on deck. After my first tour of Vietnam when I was in the engine room for the whole nine months we were over there, my rash landed me in A-Gang. The doctor said to me, 'We may not be able to figure out the whys and wherefores of your rash, but you're not getting out of the Navy because of it. We're going to help you. We'll put you in A-Gang.' And it did help me and it also laid out the path for my career."

The Navy Seaman saw the world on Uncle Sam's dime. Following a stint in Vietnam, the ship headed to Hong Kong for a five-day R&R.

"After Hong Kong, we went to Sasebo, Japan, where we had a two-week upkeep of the ship. I got to take a tour of Nagasaki. That really blew me away because in school I'd learned that no one would ever live in Nagasaki again after the atomic bomb was dropped in August of 1945, and yet here was Nagasaki more than 20 years later very much in recovery. A lot of it was rebuilt, though there was a lot of area that was preserved for memorials. At that time, and not surprisingly, they had one of the highest cancer rates in the world. But we went on a tour and the people we met, many of whom were survivors, were so nice. That was really something to experience history. I also went to Singapore, courtesy of Uncle Sam, which is very beautiful and very clean. When we were in Singapore, I found out that over half the crew on our ship was on our ship when it went to Australia, so they were all Shellbacks, which are sailors who have crossed the equator and completed the Navy's initiation program. The rest of us, were Pollywogs because we had never crossed the equator."

Not everyone in the Navy becomes a Shellback, but everyone in the Navy hopes to – it's a rite of passage. Crossing the Line ceremonies go back to the days of wooden ships. Ed became a Shellback.

"When we were in Singapore and we were getting ready to go back to Hawaii, because we had finished our tour in Vietnam, the Captain said, 'We're leaving Singapore and we're going to head 85 miles south to cross the equator because I'm a Pollywog, guys, and I want to be a Shellback.'

"Whether you are the Captain of the ship or a Seaman Apprentice who just got on the ship, becoming a Shellback is the exact same drill for everyone. When you are getting initiated going from Pollywog to Shellback, you strip down to your underwear and you are on your hands and knees crawling all over the ship. You have to crawl through a garbage chute basically loaded with food from over the last week. The Shellbacks have their belts out and they are whipping you on your bottom.

"Now, two weeks before you do this, the Shellbacks walk up to you randomly, and they shout, 'What are you, Clements?' 'What?' 'WHAT ARE YOU, CLEMENTS?' 'Oh, I'm a Pollywog.' That is drilled into your head for two weeks. 'WHAT ARE YOU?' 'I'm a Pollywog.'

"At the end of the garbage chute, and all the stuff they've had you do, there is this guy, a Shellback, and usually it's a really big guy, and he's King Neptune. So there's King Neptune and you are coming out of the chute trying not to throw up and he goes, 'WHAT ARE YOU?' 'I'm a Pollywog,' you groan and he hits you on the butt. 'WHAT ARE YOU?' It took me three times. The third time King Neptune hit me on the butt – and King Neptune was one of my buddies – a light went on. 'I'M A SHELLBACK,' I shouted. Then you stand up, go down and take a shower, and then you come out with your belt and you get to hit anybody else that hasn't yet become a Shellback. But I never felt so stupid in my life, after he hit me the third time. I saw the Captain do it. The only officer on the ship that was a Shellback was an engineering officer. I have to thank that Captain!

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"I've talked to a lot of guys who never made Shellback. I asked my cousin Dana, she's in the Navy right now, 'Are you a shellback?' And she said, proudly, I might add, 'Yeah, both ways. I crossed the equator in the Atlantic Ocean and in the Pacific Ocean.' I got her a U.S. Navy Shellback shirt and sent it to her."

While their ship was in port, Ed, his buddy Mike and two other guys rented an apartment locally.

"When you were in Pearl Harbor, it was like an 8 to 5 job. You went out to the ship every morning and worked on the ship. But, we stayed at our apartment all the time because if you weren't on the ship, you were on liberty to do what you wanted to do."

There was one time when Ed went on land in Vietnam.

"It was this little place call An Hoa. It was a P.O.W. camp where we kept the VC that we had captured. They had a problem with their AC unit and we were the closest ship in the area, so me and the guys that worked for me went there for one day and worked on their AC stuff, and then we went back to the ship. It's way down south and I've looked all over old maps to find it, but I can't find it anywhere."

Ed had one serious incident that nearly took his knees out on the Ponchatoula.

"We were replacing some pumps for the AC units. The pump was right between my legs and it weighs about 70 pounds. I get it all unhooked and we had straps on it, and one of the guys working with me was above me. So I told him, 'Okay, we're free, pull it up.' He started pulling it up and one of the straps slipped off the end of the pump and it fell. I caught it, but it hit my knees. So there I am shouting, 'Get this thing off of me.' He was a nice guy but he was really young. He said, 'Are you mad at me, Clem?' I said, 'Get it off, me!' And he said, 'You have to tell me you're not mad at me.' He was a new recruit, he wasn't even 18 years old, and he was so worried I would be mad at him and I am just hurting. They took me to Sick Bay where I learned my kneecaps were semi-crushed but not enough to require surgery.

"The Chief Corpsman said, 'You can recover from all of this. It's mostly tendons, soft-tissue damage. But you are going to have trouble with them later in life. When we get back to Subic Bay, we'll transfer you off the ship and they'll take care of you there. You'll have to go to the hospital. But you'll never see the Ponchatoula again.' I said, 'What else can we do, Chief?' He said, 'Well, we'll bandage it all up and you stay out of the engine room, you've got plenty to do with all your AC stuff on the decks. If you can get around good before we get back to Subic, I won't make any requests that you have to go to the hospital.' And that's the way I handled it. I definitely didn't want to leave the Ponchatoula."

At the time, Ed had risen in the ranks to Third Class.

"I had just made Third Class and the guy ahead of me was moving up. So even though I didn't move up to Second Class at that time, because I hadn't finished all my testing, they gave me Petty Officer Second Class duty. Just before I got out of the Regular Navy, I signed up to ship over because I was working as an E-5 (Petty Officer Second Class) at that time, and I was going to stay in. Well, we got a new Lieutenant JG, just out of Annapolis, and he met with me and the Chief and he said, 'Well, Chief, Clements is only an E-5.' And the Chief said, 'Well, yeah. He's been running A-gang for me for almost a year and a half now.' And the Lieutenant said, 'Yeah, but it's an E-6 billet.' And the Chief said, 'But he's taken all this stuff. He just tested. He passed the test, but he can't go to E-6 because he doesn't have enough time. So I convinced him he should ship over. He is going to extend and go back to Vietnam.'

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"If I extended, and went back to Vietnam, I could ship over and get a \$10,000 tax-free bonus because I was in a war zone. I wanted to do that. The Lieutenant said, 'No. He has to go to school.' And I said, 'Why? I've learned all this on the ship.' 'Because the billet says you'll be an E-6 and you will go to A School or you can't do the job you are doing.' I said, 'Well, when can I get back to the Ponch?' And he said, 'You probably never will. When you graduate from A School, they'll send you to whatever ship needs an E-6 out of A School.' I looked at the Chief and I said, 'You got the paperwork here?' He said, yes, and handed it to me. I tore it up. The Lieutenant JG said 'What's that about?' And the Chief said, 'He told you earlier, he's not leaving the Ponchatoula. If you are going to force him to leave, he is not going to ship over to Vietnam.' The Lieutenant said, 'He can't do that!' I believe he just did that.' But I got out. I look back and it was the right thing to do. I wouldn't have had the family that I have now if I had stayed in. Back then, I drank too much. I partied all the time. I was not ready to settle down, though I could have stayed in and had a career in the Navy. But I wouldn't trade my life, and all the people in it, for that life."

Ed received a Commendation: *"The Commander of the United States 7th Fleet commends Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Edgar Ross Clements for outstanding performance of duty while attached to and serving on USS Ponchatoula as the Leading Petty Officer in Charge of Air Conditioning and Refrigeration from December 1, 1968 to July 6, 1969 during combat operations, demonstrating excellent judgement and diligence."*

He received his discharge in January of 1970. But he didn't leave the Navy just yet.

"When I started the Navy, I was an Apprentice straight out of Boot Camp. When I got out of the Navy, I was an E-5. My discharge came a month early because they were winding down in Vietnam and Nixon gave everyone an early out. I was discharged in San Francisco on Treasure Island.

"When I got out, I stayed here in the Bay Area because it was winter and I didn't want to go back to Lubbock in the winter. This guy told me, 'Well you know, if you go into Active Reserve, you get paid for the weekend. You go one weekend a month.' And as an E-5, I didn't have to be there the whole weekend. Friday night, I showed up at Treasure Island and looked at the Duty Roster. If I didn't have duty that night, I went home and I got paid. I showed back up Saturday morning at 8 a.m. and was there for 8 hours and got paid. Then I showed up Sunday at 8 a.m., stayed for 8 hours and got paid. Two weeks a year, you went on active duty and we sailed from Treasure Island to Hawaii. Then you would spend a week going island hopping in Hawaii. So, I signed on for two more years and my ship was the USS James C. Owens (DD-776). My dad figured out before I did that I was never going to move back to Lubbock."



**USS James C. Owens (DD-776) off the coast of Oahu.** Public domain photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy.

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Ed made his hometown newspaper when he served on the USS James C. Owens.

*From the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, Thursday, July 27, 1972*

Edgar R. Clements, Navy petty officer second class, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.A. Clements of 611 31st St., Lubbock, is a Navy reservist who sailed on summer active duty aboard the destroyer USS James C. Owens for the largest reserve training operation in the Pacific in 10 years. His ship, which is homeported at San Francisco, operated with Destroyer Squadron 37 for the week-long exercise in Hawaiian waters.

"When I got out of the Navy but still had my two years in the Reserves, I went to work for Joy Manufacturing in South San Francisco, which became Joy Mining Machinery, and I stayed with them for 17 years. I started out with them in their parts department as a warehouseman, and then transferred once I was out of the Reserves into field service. My first address in the Bay Area was with my buddy Al, and his wife and son. I knew Al from the Navy. Al and his family lived up by Skyline College. I didn't have a car then, so I hitchhiked everywhere, which was normal in those days. On the weekends I would get up early and walk down Sharp Park Road into Pacifica, which is how I got to know Pacifica. If I didn't go to Pacifica on the weekends, I hitchhiked into San Francisco. I had a great time exploring both places.

"I met Sandy Pelly when she came to work for Joy in 1971. She grew up in Pacifica and she was just out of high school, Terra Nova High School, and she got a job as a clerk in the parts department. I liked her immediately but she was going with someone else."

When Ed transferred into field service, he was sent to the East Coast for both training and repair work in the winter. Training included courses on mining equipment, drills and air compressors, the latter which he already knew plenty about from his Navy days. First he was sent to Claremont, New Hampshire, where he got an apartment. From there he was sent on a several-day job in Spartan, New Jersey, which ended up being a wild ride, in his Chevy Vega (remembered as one of General Motors worst "lemons" of all time), through a blizzard.

"Turns out I was the last car that got on the freeway before the Highway Patrol shut it down."

Ed ended up meeting the Highway Patrol when he stopped for gas and they directed him off the highway to a nearby Holiday Inn, where their lobby offered stranded travelers the only sleeping space in town. His return to Claremont remained wild. He couldn't pull into his carport because one of the tenants had shot a buck, gutted it, and left it hanging in Ed's car space because the temperature was perfect.

"That guy wasn't happy that he had to move his deer, but we worked it out. He even gave me some! But all of this, in case I needed it, was a 'weather' reminder to me of just why I love the Bay Area. Then off I went to training in Michigan City, Indiana, and then I drove back to California and arrived on April 1st. When I came back to Joy in South City, I learned that Sandy had broken up with her boyfriend. So she and I started dating and to cut right to the chase, Sandy and I married on March 16, 1974."

Meanwhile, how were things going in Lubbock with Ed's family?

"Well, first off, it was like I had two moms. When Julie was maybe 10, Mom had a stroke. Not a real hard one, but enough to change a certain part of her personality. Before then, my mom had the first dime she ever made. She was Scotch-Irish and she was tight. After she had the stroke, she bought some new furniture.



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"We've had this furniture for a long time,' she told my sister Julie. And Julie said, 'Mom, it's the only furniture I've ever known.' And Mom said, 'Well, we've got some savings.' And Julie said, 'I'd like to have a new couch.' So off they went and Mom bought a new couch and a new easy chair. Dad comes home from work, comes in through the side door, comes into the living room and says, 'Where's my chair?' Julie told him, 'Well, it's in your bedroom.' And Dad goes, 'Well, there is nothing wrong with that chair. Why is it in the bedroom? I don't know if I want a new chair.' But Mom changed her ways after that stroke, and they kept that new furniture and she bought a few more things for the house while she was at it.



"Julie had another adventure after all the rest of us had moved out. She was in her teens when there was a knock on the front door. It was this young woman who said, 'I am looking for Jack Clements.' And Julie said, 'Well, I am his daughter, what's this about?' And this young lady said, 'Well, I would just like to let him know about my mother. She's sick.' So Julie says to my mom, 'Mom, so-and-so is here.' And Mom said, 'Oh, did you invite her in?'

"My mom knew this woman's mom. Her mom's name was Virginia Pearl and it turns out she was Dad's first wife. She and Dad were married for a short time, then they got divorced, and Dad met Mom and they got married. But of course, it was never mentioned in the family. Well actually, Uncle John mentioned it to me when he mentioned that Dad's dad committed suicide. 'Did you know your father was married before?' 'No.' 'Well he was.' And that was the end of that subject."

←"My parents always loved each other,' Ed noted. This photo was taken on their 50th wedding anniversary in 1993.

"My folks did not come out for our wedding, which was small, because, I learned, Dad had a fear of flying. He also had a fear of swimming. They drove out three times over the years and we went back to see them a lot. If he couldn't drive out to where you were located, he didn't go. When he was in the Army, he went to Europe on a ship and I asked him, how he did that work with his fear of swimming. But he said they loaded everybody on like cattle and nobody worried about falling overboard because it was so crowded, you couldn't get up on deck. You just stayed below deck until you got where you were going. I don't think he was too fond of landing in that 8-foot hole in Normandy but there was so much going on, it was probably hard to pick what was the most fearful. The only time I know for sure he flew on a plane, was after he was wounded at the Battle of the Bulge and I think he was too out of it to really be aware. But in our neighborhood in Texas, especially after all the kids moved out but Julie, Dad was like the main

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character in Clint Eastwood's movie, 'Gran Torino' – a guy who didn't mind telling a kid that was doing something wrong, that they were doing something wrong. If he thought any of the neighborhood kids needed a talking to, because they didn't have a dad living at home, he was that guy. All the neighbors I knew growing up, except the Caddells, had moved out by then. Most of the people that moved in were nice but the neighborhood got a little run-down and some of the kids were rough.

"So the Caddells were where they had always been but new to the other side of my parents' home was a single mom and her boys. The mom and dad had gotten divorced and she was raising those boys on her own, and they were not tiny kids and they would do stuff. My dad would then go to the 4-foot high cyclone fence that ran between my family's home and theirs, and he would call those boys over. 'Your dad whipped your butt when you did stuff that was wrong when you were little, and I'll still whip your butt if I hear you cuss your mother or do this or that.' And my mom would call out the door, 'Jack, you get in here. One day those boys are going to shoot you.' And he'd go, 'If they do, they'd better kill me because I have a gun and to this day, I've never showed that gun to anybody for any reason. But they know that I have it because I've told them. So they need to be nice.' Cindy's husband was a policeman in town and Dad would add, 'Besides that, my son-in-law is a cop and I've told them that too.' One time my sister Julie told Dad, 'I think those guys have stolen stuff.' And my dad told Julie, 'They don't have any stolen stuff at their house because the last thing a thief wants is the cops coming to their house. So if they steal stuff, they don't bring it home. If they do, I'm going to turn them in.' But everybody loved my dad because he was straight forward and you knew where you stood."

Ed and Sandy moved to Pacifica after they married. They first rented the house that Ed still lives in. They bought it in 1976.

"Sandy was born and raised about a mile from here in Pacifica, so her parents lived nearby which was important to us because I was traveling at that time a lot with Joy Manufacturing and our first two children, Chris and Scott, who are just a year and a few months apart, were both here by then. I was glad to have that job with Joy. I researched them initially and they had been around since the late 1800s and they weren't going anywhere. Plus you got paid every week and both those things were what I wanted. But I almost didn't get the job because of the rash on my face. Other than I shaved to get married, I don't shave ever. My kids have not seen me without a beard.

"When I went in for my initial interview with Joy for the warehouseman job, the guy I interviewed with said, 'It's 1970. I hate hippies.' I said, 'I'm not a hippie. I just got out of the Navy.' And he said, 'If you want this job, come in Monday clean shaven and you've got it.' I told him why I had a beard. And he repeated, 'You want this job, come in clean shaven.' So I came in Monday, clean shaven and he said, 'Okay.' Two weeks later he was looking at the rash on my face and he said, 'That looks like it hurts.' And I said, 'It does.' He told me I didn't have to shave anymore. That job really worked out."

As to Ed and Sandy's children, that worked out just fine too. Their third son, Nate, came along a little more than 10 years after Scott, and their daughter Gwen came along ten years after Nate. All three sons played some kind of sports through their schools in Pacifica, and Ed kept his childhood promise and was there for his kids' games. (For those Pacificans who are wondering – yes, Ed and Sandy's eldest, Chris, is the same fellow who began his career with the Pacifica Police Department as a Reserve Officer in 1996, advanced through the ranks to Police Officer, Corporal and Sergeant, and then, in 2015, to Police Captain. Recently, Pacifica Police Captain Chris Clements retired after 28 years of service.)

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**In Pacifica with the Clements family, circa 1998, clockwise from bottom left: Nate, Scott, Chris, Ed, Gwen and Sandy.**

In 2000, Ed and Sandy divorced. It was amicable and they're still friends. Gwen moved in with her mom in South San Francisco. Every weekend she spent at Dad's.



"With my boys, I went to all their Terra Nova High School games. Gwen went to El Camino High School and she was much more about academics, so no attending sports games there. But if she wanted to go to a high school football game, for instance, I took her and then kept myself in the background. Like their eldest brothers, Chris and Scott, who each got a pet to raise and take care of (Chris and Scott each got a German Shepherd/Lab mix puppy from the same litter) – Gwen and Nate had pets at my house. They had white ducks, like I had when I was growing up. Oh,

my family had dogs too but Fluffy was our big white duck and she thought she was a dog. Nate's duck's name was Hoss and Gwen's duck was Quackers. We had a big pen in the backyard where they stayed at night and then the backyard was theirs during the day. Hoss and Quackers were pals and they had lots of



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love and attention from us, really everything they needed, until they were sadly taken out by some jerk raccoons. But we think their lives, up until what hopefully was a quick end, were quite happy."

Ed continued to work with compressors. He worked for several other companies, after Joy Manufacturing including Clementina Equipment Company and finally with Sunbelt Rentals.

"The Navy really set me up. I had a great career. I could have been a car mechanic but I got the career that was best for me. As to autos, I did teach every one of my children, how to drive, how to change a flat and how to put a new bulb in their headlights or taillights. "



**The Clements in Pacifica, 2019, left to right: Scott, Gwen, Nate, Sandy, Chris and Ed.**

\* \* \*

Ed joined the American Legion in Pacifica, ten years ago and the Pacifica VFW at about the same time. But he's been a member of both organizations for decades.

"My dad was in the American Legion and the VFW in Lubbock. I was home on leave in 1968 and my dad gave me a life membership in the VFW. He was the Commander then and he was so proud of my service. He and a few buddies built the Lubbock VFW and back in the 1970s when I was doing some work for Joy in Southern California, I was looking for a place to have a drink. I saw a VFW sign and went in. 'Can I get a drink here?' 'Are you a veteran?' I pulled out my metal VFW card, because they used to be metal. It had the Post number on it, Post 2466. He looked at it and he went, '2466, that's Lubbock, Texas! What's your name?' 'Clements.' 'Is your dad, Jack?' The guy tending bar goes in the back and brings out all these photos of when they built that VFW in Lubbock. He was one of those guys. It just blew me away.

"I first joined the American Legion at Post 3, Subic Bay, Philippines. I went on liberty from my ship and the first bar we came to had an American Legion sign in the window. We walked in and the American

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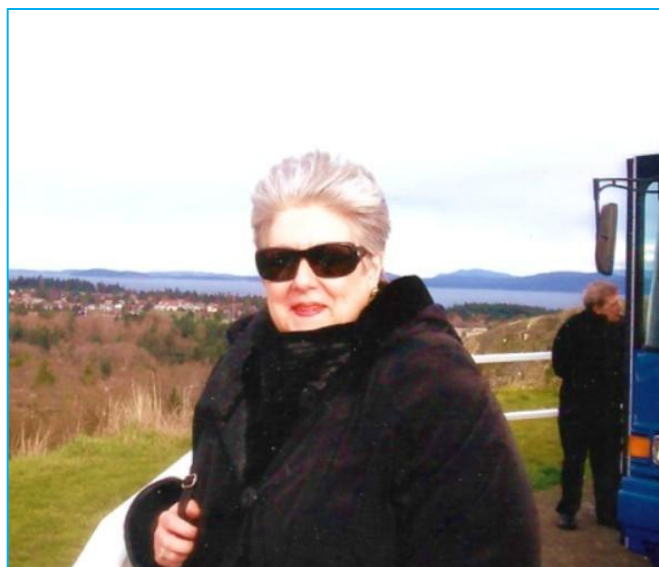
Legion was having a blood drive. 'Have you sailors had a drink tonight?' 'No. It's our first bar.' 'You give us some blood and we'll give you your first beer after you're done. Are you members of the American Legion?' 'No.' 'Do you want to be?' 'Well, yes.' I still have my Post 3 card. When I got out of the Navy, my dad and my Uncle John had a deal. Dad paid Uncle John's VFW dues in Lubbock, TX, and Uncle John paid Dad's dues in Prunedale, California, in the Legion post he was in. When I got out of the Navy and stayed here in the Bay Area, Uncle John said, 'You need to transfer that Philippines card into an American Post.' So I joined the Prunedale Post in 1970, and I was in that post until I joined the American Legion Post here in Pacifica."

Ed is currently serving his second term as Pacifica's American Legion Second Vice Commander.

"I am glad to be a part of the Legion and the VFW. I think they both show people that veterans are people too. They are not just guys who went into the service and came home. They are regular guys that believe in their cities and what's going on in their cities, and they want to keep good things going for their city. I'm glad to be a part of and behind all the programs that we support through the American Legion and the VFW, including Relay For Life, which is our community-participating walk-a-thon to support people who have had cancer, or have cancer, or were lost to cancer, and to raise money and awareness to combat cancer. I am a cancer survivor. I was diagnosed with Stage 4 lymphoma in June of 2021 and ended my treatment in December of 2021. When I went through the chemotherapy, I had no side effects, other than my rash cleared up. I don't itch anymore. I've itched from 1968 to 2021. I also got a clean bill of health."

On November 1, 2023, at age 77, Ed married for the second time.

"Lynnette and I go way back. I met her back in 1968 when I was in the Navy. She and several of her friends were vacationing in Hawaii and my buddy Mike and I were renting an apartment in Makiki because Pearl Harbor was our ship's homeport. Lynnette and her friends were also renting a place in the same building. Lynnette is from Bass Lake, which is nestled in the Sierra foothills in Madera County, California. Anyway, she and Mike really hit it off, and they eventually got married. My wife Sandy and I were friends with Mike and Lynnette and we stayed with them when we honeymooned in Hawaii. While Lynnette and Mike were living in Hawaii, Lynnette graduated from the University of Hawaii as a Special Ed teacher. In fact, she was the first person to talk to me about, 'Do you know what dyslexia is?' 'No. Does it hurt you?' 'Well, you've got it dude.' And then I learned."



"Life happens to everyone. Lynnette and Mike split up, but we always kept in touch. She had another longtime relationship and lived in Oregon. But our friendship remained. One day, we were both available and we started dating. My kids certainly knew her and they all get along great. And then after a few years of dating, I just asked her one day if she'd marry me and she said, yes. We've been friends forever. We knew each other 50 years before we got married. No secrets there! And, we're really happy."

←Lynnette Balsamo, February 2013.

"On a light note, here I am tone deaf and Lynnette, prior to becoming a Special Ed teacher, was a music major in college and went



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to Hawaii on a concert tour. She's a gifted singer and a pianist, and she never much listened to country music but she likes to listen to lyrics. So because of my interest in country music, she is really listening to the lyrics and enjoying it. We're not too old to introduce each other to new things!"



**"There's a lot of Clements in this photo," said Ed (sitting center with Lynnette). Ed is now the grandfather of seven. And that's Ed's sisters Cyndy – standing center behind Ed and Lynnette – and Julie standing behind Cyndy.**



**The Clements siblings in 2022: Glenn, Cyndy, Julie and Ed.**

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Ed officially retired in 2016 but he's got a side gig going. He's Santa!

"Eleven years ago I was walking through Pacifica's Fog Fest, and this woman stopped me and asked me if I had ever been Santa Claus and would I like to be? She's got a business and she hires Santas for private events, not shopping malls, and it pays well. I've been Santa in San Francisco, on the Peninsula, in Pacifica, Marin and San Jose. The last two years, I've done the Half Moon Bay library. I've been Santa at the Sharp Park Golf Course and at a special event in Foster City for kids with disabilities.

"I love doing it. It's a real joy. I'll keep doing it as long as I can. I have VA knees now, so it's no problem for kids to sit on my lap. I played Santa at a big-themed party where, Dr. Elmo, the guy that sang the original 'Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer,' was one of the entertainers. Lynnette came to that party with me as Mrs. Claus. During COVID, I talked to kids online, including kids in Singapore and Hong Kong.

"When it gets close to Christmas and I'm out shopping, maybe at Target or Grocery Outlet, I look like Santa out of costume so I bring my Santa card and candy canes, in case anyone stops me. And kids and their parents do stop me, even though the parents might say, 'No, he's just a guy in a plaid shirt out shopping.' But then I surprise them with my Santa card and everyone is happy. And this is what I tell all kids I meet, including my grandchildren, 'As long as you believe there is a Santa, there is a Santa. If you don't believe, that's fine, but don't expect anything at Christmas except maybe some coal.'"



**Santa Ed catches a ride, December, 2014. Photo by Gwendolyn Clements.**



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**Lynnette and Ed, on their wedding day, November 1, 2023**

"Something that my parents taught me that is really integral to who I am is that you don't have to agree all the time, but you've got to listen. I've lived my life by this. And you've got to be straight forward with people. I have been a registered Republican all my life because my dad was. My mom was a Democrat. I also knew way back when that I was too liberal for Lubbock. And I have never ever voted the 'straight ticket.' I've voted for Republicans. I've voted for Democrats. With my children, we have all the different political stuff: liberal, conservative, Libertarian. We all read everything and we talk about it. But I listen.

"Back in the day, politicians listened to each other. They didn't often agree, but they could find common ground. Nowadays politicians won't vote for something because the other side did. People have to sit at the same table. Our forefathers had strong opinions, they really disagreed, but they found a way. Most people have friends and families in different political parties, are you really going to dump them for that?"

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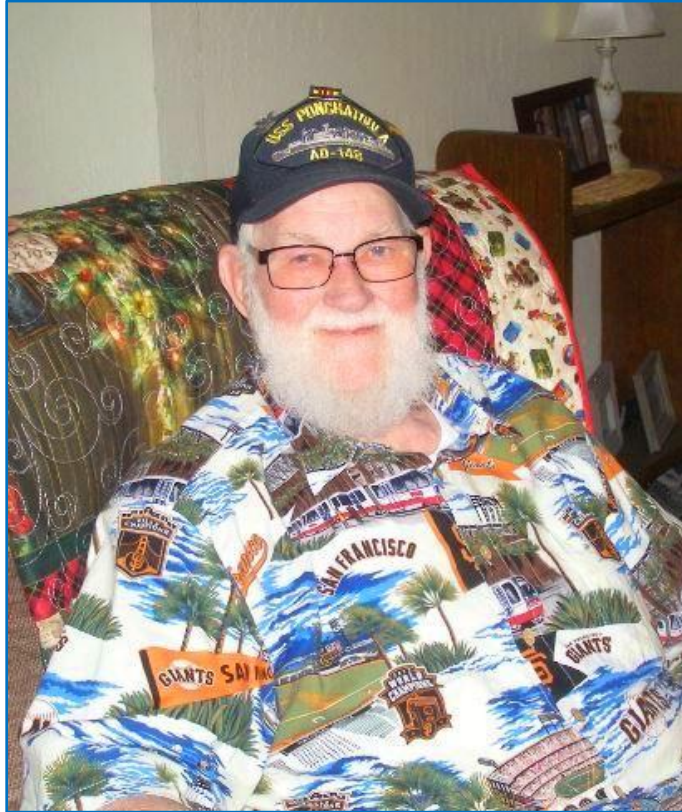
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"I'm the guy that if you ask me a question, I am going to give you an answer. It may not be the answer you want, but if I believe it, that's my answer. I will listen to what you have to say. I might even look into what you have to say. I hope you'll do the same for me. We can both learn something. That's what life is, constant learning, including finding out you are dead wrong. It's never too late to come to the table."



**Ed at home, July 2025.** (Jean Bartlett photo.)



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author. Jean's writing has been recognized by the Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo, for "connecting community and preserving local history."

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