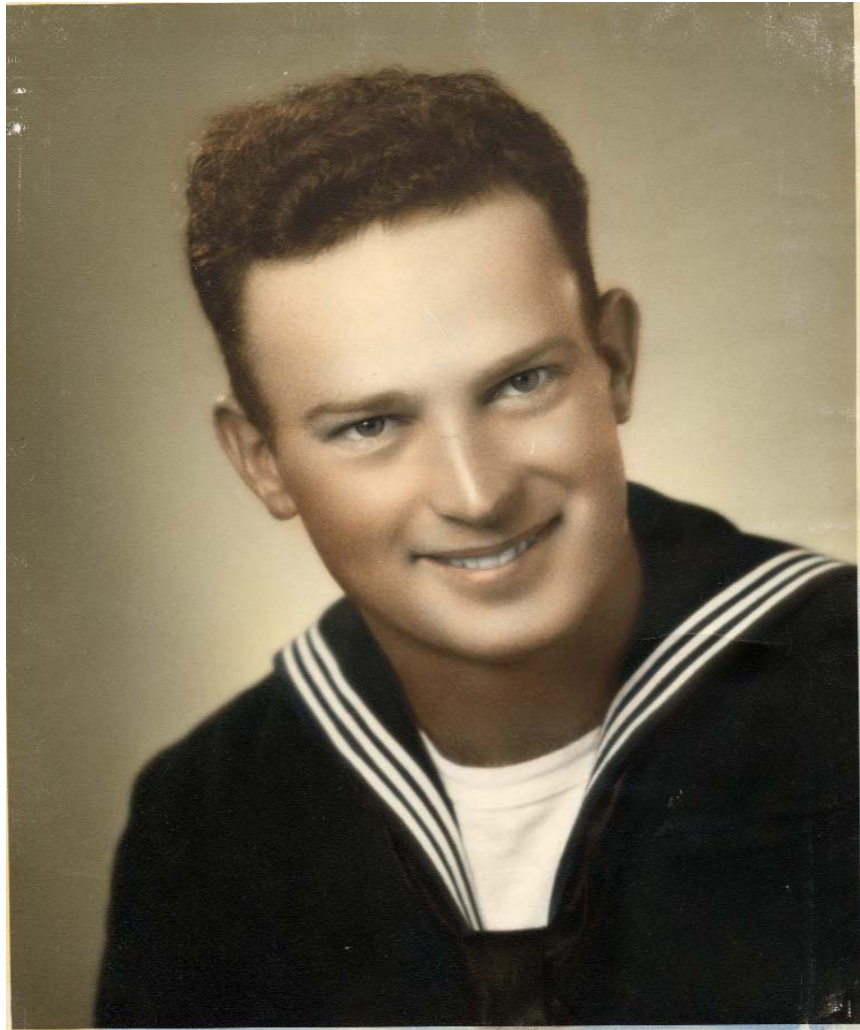


LAVERN MEEMKEN



Lavern (Vern) Herman Meemken (3352273) entered the US Navy on 19 July 1950. Of the six Meemken boys all served in the military. Four served in the Army, 1 in the Marines, and Vern in the Navy. Vern was sent to Great Lakes Illinois for basic training for 13 weeks. He then served in Great Lakes for about a month and a half as a mess cook in Galley 5. Meemken was then transferred to the Pacific Fleet and sent overseas to Japan on a troop ship. Here he caught up with and joined the crew of the USS Juneau (CLAA-119) in early 1951. The Juneau was the first Naval vessel to fire a shot in the Korean War and earned the nickname "The Galloping Ghost of the Korean Coast". Vern was promoted to Seaman on 12 April 1951. In May 1951 the ship returned to the US. In July & August the Juneau operated out of Pearl Harbor ready to return to Korea if needed. Following a brief stay at it's home port of Long Beach, the ship set sail for the Marc Island Naval Shipyard in Vallejo, California. It stayed in Vallejo for a much needed overhaul and rearmament modification. Its stay lasted from November 1951 to February 1952, when it went back to Long Beach for refresher training. On 27 March 1952 Vern and the crew left to make it's second tour in the Korean waters. They arrived in Pearl Harbor on 2 April 1952, where they stayed until 10 April.



**Vern at Great
Lakes, Ill.**



Vern crossed the International Dateline on 14 April 1952 and arrived at Yokosuka, Japan on the 19th. The Juneau stayed in Yokosuka until the 25th when it left for Okinawa. After a short stay at Okinawa on the 28th & 29th they arrived on the bomblines on the 30th. Vern and the crew participated in a gunstrike on Kojo on 1 May 1952, and went back to the bomblines on the 2nd. From the third to the twenty-second of May, they served as part of Task Force 77. During that time they participated in four gunstrikes, Songjin on the 5th, Tanch'on on the 6th, Songjin again on the 13th, and the 16th. The Juneau then went to Sasebo for six days from the 23rd to the 29th when it again joined Task Force 77. Vern and the Juneau again struck Songjin in a gunstrike on 6 June 1952. They joined Task Force 77 and again went to the bomblines until 11 June. On the twelfth they left for Sasebo for eleven days. Then, back to Task Force 77 and the bomblines with a gunstrike on Kojo on 1 July. On 12 July 1952 the Juneau was in a gunstrike on Sinp'o when they received counterfire, but the ship wasn't damaged. On 15 July the crew sailed back to Sasebo until the 22nd. On 26 July they once again served in a gunstrike at Sinp'o. Other gunstrikes followed, Kojo on 3 August, and Songjin-Tanch'on on 10 August 1952. On 14 August the Juneau went back to Yokosuka for twelve days. They arrived on the bomblines on 27 August. They performed salvage operations at Hungnam on 1 September and 6 September 1952. Gunstrikes being their job, the Juneau again struck Songjin-Sinp'o on 9 September.

NAVY TRAINING COURSE CERTIFICATE	
BUREAU OF NAVAL PERSONNEL & NAVY DEPARTMENT	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
MEERKEN, L. H., 335 22 73, SA, USN.	
Having completed the Navy Training Course	
for _____	Seaman _____ with a
mark of <u>2.92</u> , and all required practical factors for Petty Officer _____ class	
and for the rating of _____ Seaman _____ in accordance	
with articles 18068 and 18069 <u>NavPers 18068</u> Regulations of Naval Personnel Manual	
is awarded this certificate this <u>12</u> th day of <u>April</u> , 19 <u>51</u>	
Notation to this effect has been made in his service record.	
 T. A. CURTIN, <i>SS</i>	 W. T. KENNY, <i>SS</i>
Ensign, _____	Captain, _____ U.S. NAVY
U.S. NAVY Division Officer.	Commanding U. S. S. JUNEAU (CLAA-119)
NAVPERS-472 (REV. 8-42)	16-57000-1

Vern's Promotion to Seaman certificate.



USS Juneau (CLAA-119)

On the deck of the Juneau





Japanese mini sub on display in Japan. Like the one destroyed in Pearl Harbor before the attack on 7 December 1941.




Vern Inside a gun turret on the Juneau



Vern became a Gunner's Mate Third Class on 16 October 1952

Vern's job kept him in charge of three gun mounts (Turrets)



To all who shall see these presents, greeting:

Know Ye, that reposing special trust and confidence in the fidelity and abilities of
Laverne Norman MCKEITHEN, I do appoint him in the

United States Navy

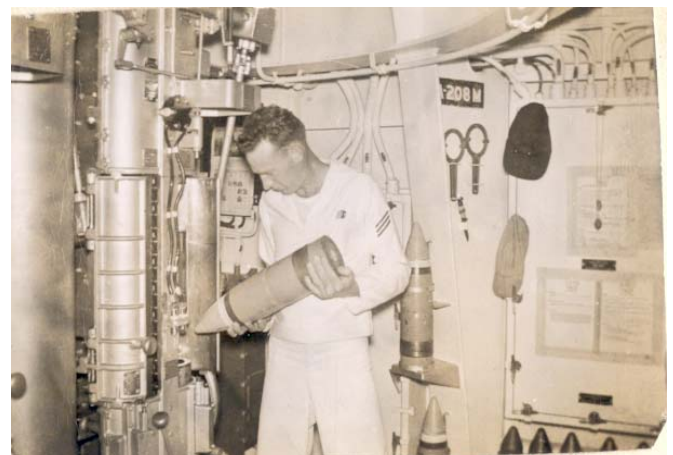
to rank as such from the sixteenth *day of* October *nineteen*
hundred and fifty-two

This appointee will therefore carefully and diligently discharge the duties of the grade to which appointed by doing and performing all manner of things thereunto pertaining. And I do strictly charge and require all personnel of lesser grade to render obedience to appropriate orders. And this appointee is to observe and follow such orders and directions as may be given from time to time by Superiors acting according to the rules and articles governing the discipline of the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

Given under my hand at Sea of Japan *this* sixteenth *day of* October *in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and* fifty-two

G. W. WILSON, CAPT, USN
 Commanding
 U.S.S. JUNEAU (CLAA-119)

DD FORM 218



Vern loading a projectile on the USS Juneau

Arriving back to the bomblines on 10 September, the Juneau stayed there until the 13th. They arrived at Osaka, Japan on 15 September. Vern stayed there until the 23rd when the Juneau went back to Task Force 77 and performed a Gunstrike on Tanch'on on 26 September. They stayed on the bomblines until 5 October 1952 participating in yet another gunstrike at Kojo. On 16 October 1952 Vern was promoted to the rank of Gunner's Mate Third Class. The crew worked with Task Force 77 until 18 October when they went underway for Yokosuka Japan. On the 21st they went underway for Pearl Harbor crossing the International Date Line on the 25th. After a two day stay at Pearl Harbor on the 28th & 29th The Juneau went back to the United States mainland arriving at Long Beach on 5 November 1952.



Vern's company on deck of the Juneau.



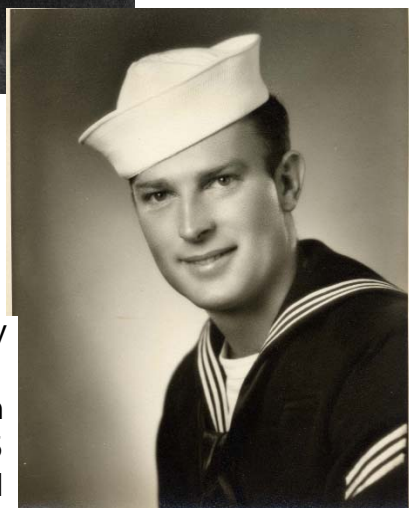
Vern and the Crew Stayed in Long Beach, California until 23 March 1953. The time allowed them to resupply, do some maintenance and get some rest.



**The Galloping Ghost of the Korean Coast
Logo Patch donated by Vern Meemken
14 June 2003**



Upon returning to Long Beach California after their Korean tour, the crew of the Juneau was visited by Doris Day. She came on board and spent three hours with the men. Vern had leave coming to him so he took that instead of staying around for Ms. Day.



Vern and the crew stayed in Long Beach until 23 March 1953 when they left for their Mediterranean Cruise. The Juneau passed through the Panama canal from 31 March through 2 April 1953. After a short stay in Norfolk Virginia They left for Cannes France where they stayed from 25 May until 2 June. The Juneau then set sail for Tripoli, Libya from 8 April through 16 June. Vern worked shore patrol so he was able to leave ship everywhere they stopped and sightsee for free while others paid.



Vern's company while in Rome.

After being in Tripoli, the Juneau went to Algiers Algeria (24-30 June) and then back to Cannes. They stayed in Cannes from 2 July through 7 July. From 8 July the Crew was in Genoa, Italy until 15 July. They then went to Salonika Greece (22 July-27 July), then to Rhodes Greece (28 July-4 August), Palermo, Sicily (1-11 August), Naples Italy (20-24 August) and LaSpezia Italy (25-31 August). Vern and company went on to Barcelona Spain (5-14 September) where Vern watched a bull fight. He said that it was one of the most brutal things that he had ever seen. After Spain they went back to Cannes(21-25 Sept) and then on to Marseille France (21-25 Sept) and Cagliari Sardinia (10-12 October). Having completed their tour the set sail back to the United States arriving in Norfolk, Virginia on 23 October 1953. Vern was promoted to Gunner's Mate 2nd Class on 16 November 1953 and finished out his time in the Navy in the US. He was discharged on 14 May 1954. He earned the National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal with 4 Stars, United Nations Service Medal, Navy Good Conduct, Navy of Occupation, and the Asian Service Medal.



Vern's Pea Coat and Dress Uniform, Donated by himself 2003.

