

In Memory of our Shipmate Alton Meckes who Died at Sea

by Al Vernon & Julious (Windy) Windham

compiled & edited by Frank Olderr, USS Collett Assn Historian in Dec 2011

From Al Vernon:

I will remember that incident forever.

We had lost everything topside that was not welded down in that storm. Half of our depth charges went over the side. There were several times I thought we would roll over and not make it back upright.

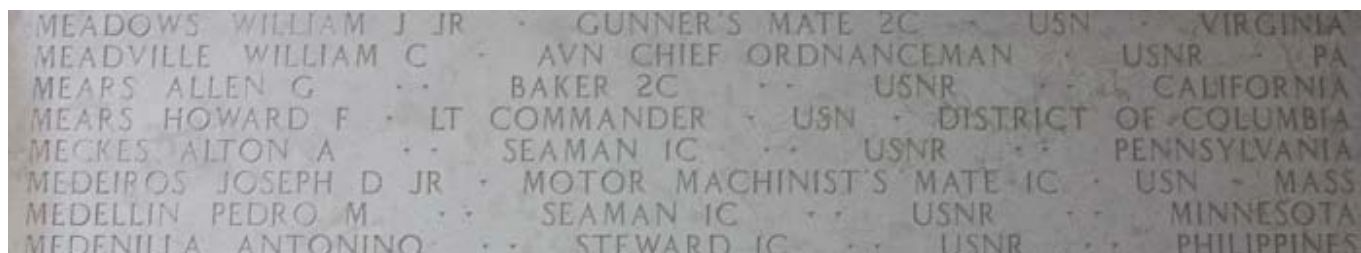
I was standing just outside the Radio Shack hatch on the O1 deck. Meckes and BM3 Brown were checking the security of our motor whaleboat on the starboard side. They both climbed into the boat. It then flipped over because it had broken loose from its keel holding straps. They both went over the side. I think Meckes hit the side of the hull when they fell. We retrieved Brown but never found Meckes. I believe the LYMON K SWENSEN (DD-729) was in on the search.

If my memory is right the lost shipmate was from either NJ or PA. I called Brown a few years back, before he passed away, and asked if he could still swim as well as he could that day. He answered, "you old SOB, I didn't know you saw us fall" and a few other well-chosen words.

Brown had been up the ladder in ratings, but could not stay out of trouble. Captain Savage busted him a couple of times.

From Julious (Windy) Windham:

In 1946 we were off the coast on Japan. BM3 Robert M Brown and a SN [Meckes] were working on the whale boat, the ship made a turn to starboard and the boat tipped over dumping both of them into the sea. The ship turned as soon as possible and recovered Brown, but the SN was never recovered. The SN's nickname was Moose. Brown said he held on to the SN as long as possible but realized they were both drowning and he had to let go to save himself. Brown retired from the Navy and moved to SC. He has since passed away.



Editors Note:

My thanks to Bert Caloud, USMC retired, of the American Battle Monuments Commission at Manila, Philippines for asking for the circumstances of how Alton Meckes died while stationed on the COLLETT, and to our COLLETT shipmates Al Vernon & Julious (Windy) Windham for recounting the details; and to Hermie Lelix of the American Battle Monuments Commission at Manila, Philippines for the photo of Alton's inscription on the Tablets of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery. The website <http://www.abmc.gov> includes the following entry:

Alton A. Meckes
Seaman, First Class, U.S. Navy
Service # 9809309
United States Naval Reserve
Entered the Service from: Pennsylvania

Died: 6-Jun-46
Missing in Action or Buried at Sea
Tablets of the Missing at Manila American Cemetery
Manila, Philippines