

U.S.S. Marblehead (CL-12)



Send photos of Hugh and his family members
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Marblehead Biography Hugh Burlon Beavers

Hugh Burlon Beavers was born on 15 NOV 1917 to James Monroe Beavers and Anna Laurie “Annie” Wagner, both native Texans. At the time, the couple already had a son, James Baucom (1914–1993). According to Hugh’s dad’s WWII draft card, the family had moved to Kenna, NM as early as 1917, but it appears that Annie preferred to have her kids near her parents’ home, so Hugh was born in Weatherford, Parker County, TX and by 1921, after the Wagners moved to El Reno, Canadian County, OK, James and Hugh’s his sister Lavenia Marilyn was born there.

Their dad, James, died of tuberculosis two weeks before Christmas Day 1923 in Happy, TX where he was either working or visiting relatives. Their mom, Annie, took a job with the post office in Kenna, NM, and the kids began grade school there. In 1923, Annie married widower John A. Kimmons (1868-1943) who was 23 years her senior. This union brought Hugh two stepbrothers, Curtis Bernard (1910-1974) and Mack (1914–1984), a stepsister Byrd (1918–1991), and later two half-sisters, Charlotte Rebecca (1928–2008) and Johanna Flogene (1935–1999). Annie would eventually become Kenna’s Post Mistress.

After graduating from nearby Elida High School in about 1935, Hugh spent several years working a cowboy and rancher, but on 11 Oct 1940 he enlisted in the Navy in Denver, CO. He underwent basic training the Naval Training School in San Diego, CA, and on 11 Dec 1940, he reported aboard his first ship, light cruiser *USS Nashville (CL 43)*. He was an Apprentice Seaman (AS). *Nashville* appears to have been primarily a means of transporting him to the Asiatic Fleet. Enroute to the Far East, aboard *Nashville* on 28 FEB 1941, Hugh was promoted to Seaman 2nd Class (Sea2c).



USS Nashville (CL 43)
Wikipedia.com

On 23 APR 1941, he transferred to veteran transport *USS Henderson* at Wake Island, where *Nashville* and three other cruisers deposited a large contingent of U.S. Marines. *Henderson* transported Hugh to Manila, but instead of transferring directly to the *USS Marblehead* there on 15 MAY, but an unknown ailment caused him to be diverted to the US Naval Hospital at Canacao, and he did not join *Marby*, as the ship was affectionately referred to by her crew, until 3 JUN 1941.

Marby was the third vessel to be named after the Massachusetts town which claims to be the birthplace of the American Navy. Hugh would spend nearly all of WWII on *Marby*, just over 40 months, but because war was just around the corner, he would not see many of the exotic ports in China, Indochina, or the rest of Southeast Asia that the ship had frequented over the years. Still, there would be no shortage of excitement during his time aboard the soon-to-be-famous ship.

In 24-NOV 1941, anticipating Japanese hostilities, Admiral Thomas Hart, commander of the Asiatic Fleet ordered his ships to disperse from the Manila. *Marby* sailed southward through the Philippine archipelago and by the 29th, she was anchored off Tarakan Island, eastern Borneo, Netherlands East Indies (NEI, today’s Indonesia). There, at 3:28 A.M. on 8 DEC 1941, word of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor arrived in the ship’s radio room. Sirens soon General Quarters, and in the next eight minutes, the entire crew went from deep sleep to standing at attention at their battle stations in a mere eight minutes, an early signal of the training, discipline and spirit that would soon save the ship.

Marby was soon underway to Balikpapan, an oil port on the south coast of Borneo. On Christmas Eve, she reached the East Java port of Surabaya, which was also a heavily fortified Dutch Naval Base. Despite to risk of Japanese air attack, Captain A.G. Robinson granted limited shore liberty on Christmas Day. On the last day of 1941, *Marby* was in the Flores Sea escorting the captured Vichy French mail ship, *MS Marechal Joffre* from Surabaya to Darwin, Australia.

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The events of that period including the bombing of the ship on 4 FEB 1942 and her subsequent 20,589-mile, 90-day escape to New York, are more fully described in [Marby's own biography](#) and in the 1944 book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#). Hugh lived through it all and he remained aboard when Marby, her six-month overhaul complete, left Brooklyn Navy Yard to rejoin WWII, this time in the central Atlantic operating from Recife, Brazil.

As with all the parents of the sailors aboard *Marby* throughout that perilous voyage, Hugh's family thought he was dead or in enemy captivity until he called them with the good news the day after the ship made New York. For many aboard the ship, her lengthy stay in New York changed their lives. It wasn't the sights and sounds of the city that changed them, it was the people, and most often it was a woman. Such seems to have been the case for Hugh.

Gloria Paige Hunt was born in Danbury, Connecticut on 7 JUN 1924, the daughter of the Arthur Lee Paige Hunt, an automobile salesman, and Dora Lazarus. She was orphaned at the age of five (causes unknown), and thereafter she was raised first by her grandmother, Helene Lazarus, and then by her sisters Geraldine and Dorothy. Gloria graduated from Danbury High School and moved to NYC with her sisters. During WWII, she worked as a "riveter" on the warplanes in Connecticut. No records suggest that Hugh had previously visited New York and his five-and-a-half-month stay there during Marby's overhaul offered ample time for him to encounter Gloria. Many other sailors met their wives there.



Gloria Paige Hunt
Danbury H. S., 1942
Source: Ancestry.com

Between 25 MAR and 8 MAY 1944, Marby was in New York area having her torpedo tubes removed and being degaussed in preparation for Operation Dragoon, the Invasion of Southern France. Gloria and Hugh took this opportunity to marry in New York on 23 APR 1944. The union would last 56 years until Hugh's death.

On 11 OCT 1944 while *Marby* was again operation off Brazil, Hugh was transferred ashore in Recife for further transfer for Rotation Duty to the Naval Receiving Station nearest his port of entry to the U.S. His final duty station remains unclear, but he was honorably discharged as a Carpenter's Mate First Class (CM1) on 13 DEC 1946.

After the war, Hugh and Gloria moved to Elmira, New York, a transportation hub near the Pennsylvania border south of New York's Finger Lakes region. They show up in the city's residential directory as early as 1953. Hugh is working as a carpenter. Eventually they moved to Ridge Road in the Horseheads community just north of Elmira and remained there for the rest of their lives. The name Horseheads derives from the bleached skulls of the pack animals used by General John Sullivan during the massive and ultimately successful 1779 Sullivan Expedition against the British and their Indian allies, primarily the Iroquois, in Western New York. So many horses had to be put down that their skulls lined the trails around the village for years afterwards.



Military Horse statue,
Horseheads, NY
[Horsenation.com](#)

Hugh and Gloria started Beavers Petroleum Company (petroleum tank and equipment services) with just a few tools in the trunk of their Buick. Gloria supported Hugh for many years answering calls and taking care of the billing. As the business grew, they moved to 88 A Ridge Road in Horseheads, and built a warehouse and trucking facility behind the house. The business appears to still be in operation.

The couple had two sons, Bruce M. (wife Carol) of Cocoa, FL, and John D. (wife Angela) of Elmira, NY.

Hugh died at the age of 82 on 26 OCT 2000, six months after he and Gloria celebrated the 56th wedding anniversary. He was a member of the Clarence R. Oliver American Legion Post #154 in Elmira Heights, NY.



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Gloria died at age 83 on 14 JAN 2008 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira, NY. Gloria was well known for her sense of humor and jovial personality. She worked for 14 years at nearby Ridge Road School where was known as "The Straw Lady". Later in life, she also spent time with Bruce and Carol in Cocoa, FL where she built many friendships over the years. At the time of her passing, she and Hugh had four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Hugh Burlon Beavers is listed on page 234 of the 1944 book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).

Don't forget to read [Marby's own biography](#).

Biography by Steve Wade, son of Frank V. Wade, BM2c, USS Marblehead 1939-1945, with from Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and other Internet sources.

Corrections, additions and photos are welcomed by email to spwade@gmail.com.