

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



Edward Latchford Beggs, late 1930s

## Marblehead Biography Edward Latchford Beggs

Edward (“Eddy”) Latchford Beggs (right) was born in Valliant, McCurtain County, OK, on 9 NOV 1909 to John Henry “J.H.” Lee Beggs (1884), a farmer, and Ethel Emaline Farris (1888-1972), a homemaker, both from Arkansas. Eddy had a sister, Alice (photo below), and seven brothers - Archie, Arlie, Farris, Eugene, Jack, Lindbergh and Conrad.

Eddy enlisted in the Navy when he was about 17 years old by getting the signatures of his father J.H. and his Muleshoe, TX neighbor James Virgil Young (his future father-in-law) and bypassing his mother’s disapproval. One could assume that his mother, “as the one who bore him 9 months in her body, had perhaps a deeper maternal investment in his long-term safety when it came to military service even though it was peacetime when he enlisted.” His mother was deeply involved in evangelical Christianity and perhaps Eddy “needed to get away from that strong maternal oversight.” It is unclear where Eddy enlisted or on what ships he served on prior to 1938.

Eddy and Lois first met around 1930 (then about 15) when he was home on leave in Muleshoe. At the time, he was “hunting rabbits in a cotton field where she was dragging a huge bag between her legs and plucking cotton balls with her bare hands to fill it. Her dad, James, had a couple of hundred acres of cotton adjacent to Eddy's parents’ farm.



Sister Alice appreciating Eddie's ever-ready sense of humor

Eddy’s dad, J.H., had once left farming for a job in the Oklahoma oil fields, and always in search of better ways to support his family, he moved them to Deport, TX sometime before 1918 when he registered there for the WWI draft. He was a letter carrier at the time. By 1925, they were in Muleshoe, Bailey County, TX, 500 miles farther west, near the border with New Mexico. Eddy’s brother Jack was born there that year and J. H. was farming again. The family stayed there until at least the 1940 census. Muleshoe was then, and remains, the Bailey County seat.

Eddy’s future wife, Lois Lee Young, pictured on the next page at the left with Eddy and their son Larry in the 1930s, was born in Alabama on 18 JAN 1915 to James Virgil Young (1881-1947 in San Bernardino County, CA), and Minnie Bell Perry (1891–1966). She was the second oldest of the couple’s six children, three of which were born in Alabama and the rest in Texas. Prior to Lois’ birth, in the 1910 Census, newly married James and Minnie, 11 years his junior, appeared as owners of a farm in Gibson, Morgan Co., AL. En route to California, the family lived for a time in Tollerburg, CO (1920 US Census - Lois was 5). A ghost town today, it was then a minor coal mining center and James was a fireman for Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, a coal operation there. The family had been there as early as 12 SEP 1918 when then 37-year-old James filed his WWI draft registration.

By 1930, the Young family was running a farm in rural Bailey County, TX neighboring that of the Beggs family. Eddy’s dad, John Henry and his father-in-law, James, were both Scotch-Irish. Both had inherited a tradition of utilizing domestic animals like cows and chickens (and gardens by the women) to make it less grueling to survive. Both also sought every opportunity to do something in addition simply tilling the soil.

James sold the Muleshoe cotton farm before the bottom dropped out during the Great Depression, moved to Yucaipa, California, and used the proceeds to buy a small country fruit orchard with a modest home on it, a ten-acre plot of adjoining farm land, a gasoline service station and car repair garage. He never learned to drive but he did accumulate a few more inexpensive rentals and the family always ate well because James kept a Guernsey milk cow and Minnie Belle always had a garden.

In California, Lois attended Long Beach Poly High School before getting bored and accepting Eddy’s proposal of marriage. They married on 30 DEC 1931 in Los Angeles county. The couple’s son, Larry, was born on 9 APR 1933 in Los Angeles, CA. On 13 MAY 1933, Lois and six-week-old Larry boarded the SS Ma Lolo and sailed for Honolulu, Hawaiian Territory, no doubt to meet up with Eddy who may have been



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

serving aboard a ship stationed there or performing shore-based duties at the time. It is unclear how long they remained in Hawaii.

Eddy was received aboard the [USS Honolulu \(CL-48\)](#), a Brooklyn-class light cruiser, on 15 JUN 1938, the day of her commissioning in New York. After a shakedown cruise to England, the *Honolulu* left New York on 24 MAY 1939 to join the U.S. Pacific Fleet, arriving at San Pedro, CA on 14 JUN. She engaged in exercises along the West Coast for the remainder of that year and continued operating out of Long Beach, CA during the first half of 1940. After an overhaul at the Puget Sound shipyard, she steamed for Pearl Harbor on 5 NOV 1940 from which she operated through 1941. She was moored at the Pearl Harbor Naval Station when the Japanese attacked on 7 DEC 1941.

The Honolulu suffered minor hull damage from a near miss at Pearl Harbor, but Eddy was already off the ship by that time. The [USS Henderson \(AP-1\)](#), a veteran Asiatic Fleet transport vessel had carried him from Hawaii to the Philippines via Guam. At Cavite, Philippines on 14 SEP 1941 Eddy joined the [USS Marblehead \(CL-12\)](#), affectionately referred to by her crew as “Marby”. At the time he joined the ship, Eddy was a Chief Water Tender (CWT), a petty officer leadership position in charge of a ship’s fireroom when under way and responsible for efficient boiler operations and maintenance of all related equipment.

He would serve less than five months aboard Marby. Unfortunately, that time including the 4 FEB 1942 bombing of the ship during which Eddy was killed. Read [Marby’s own biography](#) and the book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#) to relive the bombing, the ship’s incredible 20,589-mile escape to New York, and its subsequent wartime exploits in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea.



Larry, Lois and Eddy in California

Like many wives of the era, Lois had experienced some difficulty with Eddy's long absence serving in the Pacific. Still, the shock of his death was profound. She and their young son, Larry, were living in Yucaipa, CA with Lois’ parents when news arrived later in FEB 1942 that Eddy had been killed in the bombing off Java. At this writing, Larry, then eight years old, still recalls the troubling image of his mother entering the front door of his grandparent’s home in Yucaipa “in tears and grief holding the yellow Western Union telegram that bore that dreadful news and being touched, hugged and comforted by her parents.”

Eddy was originally buried at Tjilatjap (now Cilacap), Java on 6 FEB 1942. His remains were later reinterred in the Manila American Cemetery, Philippines where a white marble cross still stands tall above him.

Lois, still a young and attractive woman, “did her grieving and then was open to finding a new partner. She met a Marine named Charles Morgan Danny and married him with me glad to have another father and observing the ceremony. Charles very soon shipped out to Guadalcanal to repair fighter planes. That marriage had a good run for several years but for various reasons terminated in Newport Beach, CA.”

Lois died in Novato, Marin County, CA on 20 APR 1983, however son Larry made sure that his children “had many fun-filled visits to frolic in the waves at my mother's home in Newport Beach and were with her in the hospital room years later when she died. She loved them with her great Southern cooking, her hugs and her liberal democratic political awareness.”

Many of the sailors whose biographies fill these pages led productive lives after WWII, their accomplishments often recorded in family stories and obituaries. For those like Eddy, who died during WWII, such records of post-war achievement cannot exist. Occasionally, however, we get glimpses of them in the actions of their children.

As a war victim, deprived not only of his life but also of time with his family, Eddy would no doubt have been proud of what his son Larry accomplished in the years following WWII. Like his dad, little Larry, was not one to sit back and simply take life as it comes. As a teen, he became an accomplished Eagle Scout with badges



Eagle Scout Larry

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

galore(right). Larry and his youngest paternal uncle, Conrad, became the first graduate from a four-year college, on the same night at Fresno State College where Larry earned a BA in clinical psychology. Later, he obtained a theology degree from the Pacific School of Religion, and an MA from Boston University in psychology and pastoral counseling. He returned to California to become a minister for youth at the First Congregational Church in the San Francisco Bay area.

In 1967, Larry founded Huckleberry House, the first shelter for runaway kids in the United States. Named after Mark Twain's fictional runaway, Huck Finn, it was a practical response to the huge influx of American youth into the Haight Ashbury area during the "Summer of Love". That first summer, Huckleberry served 211 kids, far exceeding expectations, and by the end of its first year, its team had helped 664 kids, many from well beyond the Bay Area.

That year, a San Francisco juvenile court judge, whose son had chosen Huckleberry over home, took justice personally and ordered a midnight raid on the shelter because it had not called one teenage runaway's parents. Larry and some of his staff were jailed for a few hours as were a few runaways staying there with their parent's permission. All charges were eventually dismissed when Huckleberry's agreed to obtain a license from the California Department of Social Services, but the episode remains a bona fide example of how threatened one institution can become when its ineffective policies and wasted tax dollars are exposed.

Larry not only personally counselled hundreds of teenage runaways and their concerned parents, he also wrote a popular paperback, Huckleberry's for Runaways, and garnered the attention of major media outlets to reach millions of Americans who eventually got through to the U.S. Congress. Through fund raising proposals and hard work that kept Huckleberry's open long enough for Congress to see that it as a reasonable alternative to punishing runaways by wasteful, expensive and harmful incarceration. Congress held hearings and eventually decriminalized runaway behavior nationally in 1974. Equally important, it also decided to reallocate millions of Federal dollars for community agencies like Huckleberry's instead of ineffective, expensive incarceration. "It was essential to see teenage runaways and their parents in person, one family and one runaway at a time and to share the interior drama of families working things out, but a huge, unexpected outcome was the freeing thousands of runaways across the country through national decriminalization of teenage runaway behavior."



Larry (center) at Runaway Rally

Larry "learned a lot by working in the hippie community of the Haight Ashbury, most of it helpful," he said for this biography. "The hippies at their worst were naive regarding the darker side of human nature, but they questioned a lifestyle that was preoccupied with the acquisition of material glut that we never really needed and didn't even have room for in our suburban double garages."

Huckleberry's lives on today, but now kids are brought to Huckleberry's by police, communities, and most often, their own parents and the network of professional support extends far beyond Huckleberry itself to "whatever the family needs."

At this writing, Eddy and Lois' son, Edward Larry, the renegade minister (with glasses and youthful comrades in 60's photo at the left), is retired in Seal Beach, CA. He is certain that his dad would have been equally proud of the accomplishments of the four grandchildren that he never had the pleasure of meeting.

Eddy Beggs is listed on page 234 of the book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).

Don't forget to read the biography of the ship at [Marby's Biography](#).

*Biography by Steve Wade, son of Frank V. Wade, BM2c, USS Marblehead 1939-1945, with quotes from Eddy's son Edward Larry Beggs and cousin Ron D. Beggs, and data from records on Ancestry.com.*

*Comments, corrections, and additions are welcomed by email to [spwade@gmail.com](mailto:spwade@gmail.com).*