

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



Harry - early 1940s

Marblehead Biography Harry Clifford Clephane

Harry Clifford Clephane was born 8 JUL 1920 in his parent's home in Bean Blossom, a small town in Jackson Township, Brown County, IN, in the lower middle part of the state about 8 miles south of Morgantown, 18 miles southeast of Martinsville, and 24 miles northeast of Bloomington, IN. His parents were Clarence W. Clephane (1892–1967), a laborer from Anderson, IN who would eventually become a carpenter, and homemaker Minnie Kathryn Crabb (1895–1958), of the Nashville, IN area, just south of Bean Blossom. Minnie's dad, William Crabb, was a firebrand preacher in the Church of the First Born from Barren County, KY. Her mom was Mary Ann Petro. Minnie had one brother and eleven sisters.¹

Harry was the 6th-born of seven children. His siblings were: Charlotte 'Gladys' Josephine (1910–2008), Ralph Vernon (1911–1969), Vendora (1913–1914), Charles William (1915–1966), Francis Marion (1919–2011), and Robert Glenn (1923–1987). Minnie and Clarence divorced in 1930. She would remarry to Elmer Pentecost in JUN 1934.

Harry attended Helmsburg High School. He enlisted in the Navy on 27 FEB 1940 at Indianapolis, and trained at Great Lakes Naval Training Station, Shields Township, Lake County, IL (per the 1940 census). On 7 JUN 1940, Harry, an Apprentice Seaman (AS) with service #2916194, came aboard his first ship, the [USS Vega \(AK-17\)](#), a Navy cargo vessel. He advanced to Seaman 2nd Class (Sea2c) the same day.

Harry spent three months aboard *Vega* before transferring to the Navy Receiving Station in Bremerton, WA for forwarding to ComBaseFor (Command Base Forward). On 25 OCT 1940, he joined the battleship [USS Pennsylvania \(BB-38\)](#) in Bremerton. He remained aboard *Pennsylvania*² until 21 JAN 1941 when he transferred to the Navy Receiving Station at Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii and then to the [USS Chaumont \(AP-5\)](#) for further transfer to the Asiatic Station.

Along with the [USS Henderson \(AP-1\)](#), the *Chaumont* was one of two veteran transport ships that supplied the Asiatic Fleet with personnel. In Guam on 5 FEB 1941, Harry joined the [USS Marblehead \(CL-12\)](#), a light cruiser affectionately to her crew as *Marby*. On 1 AUG 1941, Harry advanced in rank to Sea1c while *Marby* was on patrol between Tu Tu Bay, Jolo Island, southern Philippines and the Manila Bay area of the northern Philippine island of Luzon.

Harry would serve 2 ¼ years on *Marby*. The events of that period included the bombing of the ship on 4 FEB 1942 and her subsequent escape to New York which are more fully described in [Marby's own biography](#). Harry had been burned on his face and hands as he and others pulled men from the burning areas of the ship. He was treated by Dr. Corydon Wassell when *Marby* put into Tjilatjap on Java's south coast,³ but he was not in the group of wounded who were left there in Dr. Wassell's care when the ship began its 20,589-mile, 90-day voyage home.

As with all the parents of the sailors aboard *Marby* throughout that perilous voyage, Harry'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

¹ Countryfolk Blog by Rhonda, volunteer archivist at Brown County Historical Society and President of the Brown County Genealogical Society.

² The *Pennsylvania* and the *Vega* were sitting in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on 7 Dec 41, but Harry had transferred off both by then. Despite having a full load of ammunition aboard and in the process of being offloaded when the Japanese attacked, *Vega* opening fire with her anti-aircraft guns, survived the attack unscathed, primarily because the Japanese were interested in bigger prey, such as *Pennsylvania*, then a 'sitting duck' moored in Dry Dock No. 1. Fifteen of her crew were killed, 14 went missing, and 38 were wounded that day, but though damaged by fire and other means, she was not sunk, and returned to war in the Aleutian Islands Campaign in Apr 42. Well before then, Harry would see action of his own aboard the *Marby*.

³ Thomas B. Clephane

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York. After arrival, Harry was promoted from Sea1c to Signalman 3c (SM3c), retroactive to 16 MAR 1942. Harry remained aboard *Marby* when, following her overhaul in Brooklyn, she rejoined the war effort, redeploying to the Atlantic Ocean on 15 OCT 1942.

- On 17 MAY 1943 Harry transferred to Fox Base (code for Recife, Brazil) and then to SubChasTrainingCenter, Miami, FL for three months of training after which he joined the USS PC-1232, a submarine chaser. He was aboard that ship for its first muster roll on the day of its commissioning, 18 AUG 1943. The ship would soon be assigned to the European theater and participate in the Normandy invasion on 6 JUN 1944. Harry was aboard PC-1232 for that momentous event and the ship and crew received a battle star for her role in the action.
- On 26 OCT 1944 Harry transferred to USNAAB Plymouth, England after which he no longer appears in ship muster rolls. Perhaps he had shore-based assignments for the remainder of the war.



No PC-1232 photo could be located, but it resembled PC-1129 above. Both were of the same of patrol vessel. Source: <https://uboat.net/allies/warships/class/463.html>

Harry met his future wife, Helen Rita Horan, at a skating rink in New York⁴, probably during *Marby*'s five and a half-month overhaul in Brooklyn. Indeed, the Horans were living in Brooklyn at the time of the 1940 U.S. census. Helen was born there on 26 NOV 1923 in New York City to Philip Peter Patrick Horan (1896-1954), a mechanic in the road construction industry, and homemaker Mary Agnes 'Molly' Walsh (1907-1941), who were married in 1923. Helen was the first-born of this union. She would have three siblings: Kathleen (1925-?), Dorothy (1927-1977) and Thomas Joseph (1928-1990).

Helen and Harry married on 26 JUL 1943 in New York City. They would have eight children: Linda Joyce (1944-1944); Stephan (1946-1946); June Clair (1947-2010) formerly of Martinsville, IN; Michael Keith (1948-), also of Martinsville and a U.S. Army veteran; Marcia Rose (1952-) of Washington state; Thomas Bryant (1955-) of North Carolina, a Master Sargent (Retired), US Air Force; Phillip Patrick (1956-) of Brooklyn, IN, also a U.S. Army veteran; and Daniel D. (1957-) of Michigan, a veteran of the U.S. Navy.

One military record indicates that Harry was honorably discharged on 30 JUN 1945. Family records suggest that he was discharged at Fort Wadsworth, NY on 5 JUL 1945, three days before his 25th birthday.⁵ After the war, Harry worked for the Indianapolis Power and Light Company for 30 years, retiring in 1982.

In his spare time, he loved to take his numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren for rides on his lawn tractor and he would play the guitar and sing to them like he had to his children years before.⁶

Helen passed away in Martinsville on 19 OCT 1969 after a prolonged illness. In 1987, Harry remarried, this time to Eva Jane Hillman, widow of John Richardson. Harry died of an aneurism on 20 JAN 1990 in Indianapolis following quadruple bypass surgery.⁷ Eva died in DEC 1992. Helen, Eva and Harry are buried in Nebo Memorial Park Cemetery in Martinsville.

Harry Clifford Clephane is listed on page 237 of the 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 contributions from Harry and Helen's son, Thomas B. Clephane and from Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and other Internet records.

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

⁴ *Thomas B. Clephane.*

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid