

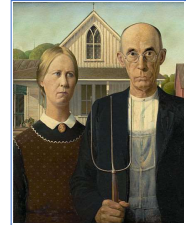
# U.S.S. Marblehead (CL-12)



James Durgin Jr.  
Source: Daughter Sherry

## Marblehead Biography James Kindstrom Durgin Jr.

“Jim” Durgin was born 31 OCT 1919 on his parent’s farm near Anamosa, IA, a farming community on the Wapsipinicon River 26 miles northeast of Cedar Rapids and 60 miles west of the Mississippi River. Founded in 1838 as Buffalo Forks and incorporated as Lexington in 1856, it got its present name in 1877 to avoid mail delivery confusion with other Lexington’s. Some say Anamosa means “white fawn” and was the name of a Native American girl who had endeared herself to the townspeople. Others say it means “You walk with me”. No one disputes its Native American roots,



American Gothic

however. Anamosa’s best-known native son was American artist Grant Wood whose paintings include the iconic *American Gothic*. Anamosa’s population stood around 2900 when Jim was born, today it is about 5500. In 1993 the Iowa State Legislature anointed Anamosa as the Pumpkin Capital of Iowa and it hosts *Pumpkinfest*, a pumpkin festival and weigh-off, each October. Its Boot Hill Cemetery, northwest of town, remains operational today.

Jim’s dad, James Sr. (1892–1957), was Iowa-born but raised in New Hampshire. His parents, James Freeman Durgin (1843-1921) and Louisa Florence Kindstrom (1851-1929), were from Madison, NH, and Sweden, respectively. James Freeman served in the 4th Regiment Massachusetts Heavy Artillery during the American Civil War. In 1917, James Sr. married Agnes E. Stanaway (1890–1933) whose parents, Henry Stanaway (?-1909) and Mary Jane Babb (1855-1931), were from Staffordshire, England and immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1880s.



Jim's parents,  
Agnes and James Sr.  
Source: Bob at FindAGrave.com



MSgt. Hank Durgin  
Source: Ancestry.com

Jim was the 2<sup>nd</sup>-born of four children. His siblings were John Henry “Hank” (1918-1976), Nelda M. (1928-2016) and Robert “Bob” Lawrence (1930-1993). Hank served as an Army Master Sargent during WWII and Bob was a Korean War veteran who served in the Army from 24 SEP 1947 to 18 OCT 1951.

Jim enlisted in the Navy on 8 JAN 1937 in Des Moines, IA and was issued service #3211250. He underwent basic training in San Diego, CA. His mom had died in a house fire when he was thirteen, and he joined the Navy partly to generate additional income to help his dad in the rearing of his younger siblings.



Sgt. Bob Durgin  
Source: Ancestry.com

Jim’s first ship as *USS Cuyama (AO-3)*, a 20-year old tanker named for California’s Cuyama river. In 1921, long before Jim joined her, *Cuyama* conducted the first ever underway refueling operation. It became the test ship for developing the alongside refueling techniques which would be a major factor in the coming war with Japan. *Cuyama* operated mainly off the West Coast and Hawaii, cruising between the two thirteen times from 1936 to 1938. Jim was probably aboard for some of these voyages.

Jim first encountered *USS Marblehead (CL-12)*, affectionately referred to as *Marby* by her crew, on 15 JAN 1939 while the ship was in Manila. However, at this point, the veteran light cruiser was only a means of transportation to his next station, *USS Finch (AM-9)*, a Lapwing-class minesweeper which before WWII wintered in the Philippines and summered in China, operating from Chefoo. Jim was a Seaman First Class (Sea1c) when he joined *Finch*. In the 1939-40 period, Jim would serve twice aboard *Marby* and *Finch* and for a short time on a third ship, the U.S. Asiatic Fleet oiler *USS Pecos (AO-6)*.

Jim’s first stint aboard *Finch* lasted six months and on 27 JUL 1939, he transferred to the oiler *USS Pecos (AO-6)*. From *Pecos*, he transferred back to *Finch* on 10 AUG 1939 in Tsingtao, China. Apparently, Jim had requested ‘a more combative ship’ and soon rejoined *Marby* in Manila on 1 OCT 1940. Two weeks later, aboard *Marby* at Olongapo, Philippines he was promoted from Signalman 3rd Class (SM3c) to SM2c. He was aboard *Marby* when she departed the Philippines for the final time on 25 NOV 1941.

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Jim's second stay aboard the light cruiser would last just over two and a half years. The events of that period, which included the bombing of the ship on 4 FEB 1942 and her subsequent escape to New York, are more fully described in [Marby's own biography](#). Other than having to witness the deaths or severe burns and other injuries of his shipmates, Jim seems to have survived the bombing unscathed. He was aboard *Marby* at Tjilatjap when the ship began her 20,589-mile, 90-day voyage home.

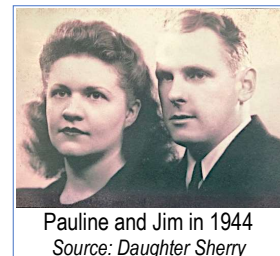
Jim's transfers off both *Finch* and *Pecos* were fortuitous. Unlike *Marby*, *Finch* was in the Philippines when the Japanese struck on 8 DEC 1941, hours after they hit Pearl Harbor. For four months, she helped resist the Japanese invasion, but 9 APR 1942, at Corregidor, *Finch* was damaged by a Japanese bomb. She sank the next day. Her crew then served in the last stand at Corregidor. Some were subjected to the Bataan Death March and were among the first prisoners at Cabanatuan prison camp (a daring rescue raid at Cabanatuan on 30 JAN 1945 liberated 522 prisoners, including 492 Americans. How many were *Finch* crew is unclear.)

*Finch* was later salvaged by the Japanese and designated *IJN Patrol Boat 103*. She served as a convoy escort in the Philippines and Indochina. On 12 JAN 1945, she was sunk a second and final time off Cape Padaran in the South China Sea by aircraft from ships in U.S. Task Force 38 commanded by Vice Admiral John S. McCain, Sr., father of Vietnam vet and later U.S. Senator, the late John McCain of Arizona.

*Pecos* had left the Philippines along with *Marby* and for the next two months operated with her and other ships to slow the Japanese advance across the Netherlands East Indies (NEI), today's Indonesia. *Marby's* bombing on 4 FEB 1942 forced her long, improbable voyage home, and Jim and his shipmates were beyond Japanese reach in Trincomalee, Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka) on 1 MAR 1942, the final day of the proud U.S. Asiatic Fleet. That day, *Pecos* went down fighting as best an under-armed oiler could. Her Executive Officer Lt. Commander Lawrence J. McPeake, posthumously awarded the Silver Star for his valor that day, was last seen manning a machine gun and "engaging Japanese Aichi D3A1 'Val' dive bombers which were strafing his shipmates in the water." Of *Pecos's* complement of 317 men, 85 were lost at sea.

As with all the loved ones of the sailors aboard *Marby* on her long voyage home, Jim's family thought he was dead or in enemy hands until he called them with the good news the day after *Marby* made New York. On 30 JUN 1942 at Brooklyn Navy Yard, he was promoted to Signalman 1st Class (SM1c). On 13 OCT, he reenlisted for another four years and two days later, he was aboard when *Marby*, her six-month overhaul complete, left Brooklyn to rejoin WWII, this time in the central Atlantic operating from Recife, Brazil.

On 14 MAY 1943, Jim was transferred Fox Base, the code name for Recife, for further forwarding to Sub Chaser Training School in Miami, Florida. At the end of that training, Jim took the opportunity to marry Ms. Pauline Cecilia Wolfe.



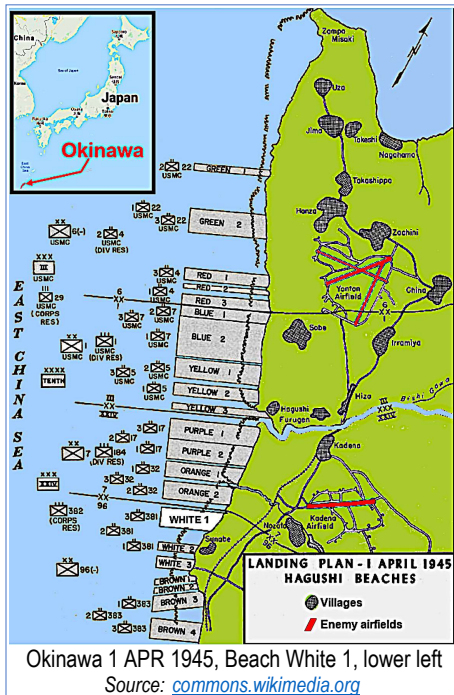
As kids, Pauline and Jim had shared a one room schoolhouse in Anamosa but were several grades apart at that time. They reconnected years later when Jim was visiting his folks in Alamosa. Pauline was born in Iowa on 2 JAN 1922 to Lena Northrup (1881-1982), whose Northrup ancestors had come from England in 1641. The 1930 census listed Pauline with her siblings and her widowed mother, Lena (nee Northrup), as head of household. Pauline's dad, John Wolfe, had died of complications related to diabetes at age 47 at the family home near Alamosa on 24 APR 1923. Pauline was just a year old when John died. Her siblings were: Hazel Marie (1903-1995), Josephine Leona (1904-1998), Mary Althea (1906-2004), William Joseph (1908-2003), Henry John (1912-1983), Helen Virginia (1914-1989), Mildred A (1916-2009), Loraine Ellen (1917-1979), and Howard J (1919-2002).

The 1940 census listed Pauline as a machine operator in a shirt factory in Anamosa and sharing a residence with a fellow female machine operator. Said shirt factory apparently employed labor from the local prison and was at one point caught up in a congressional investigation of such practices around the country. However, neither Pauline nor her roommate were part of the prison labor force. She may have still been working there when she and Jim decided to marry.

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By the end of his training in Miami, Jim had become aware that his next duty station would be *USS Pennewill (DE 175)*, a brand-new Cannon-class destroyer escort named in honor of William Ellison Pennewill, a Distinguished Flying Cross awardee. The ship had been launched from a shipyard in New Jersey on 8 AUG 1943. A month later, on 9 SEP 1943, Jim and Pauline were married in nearby New York City. The honeymoon was short because by 15 SEP 1943, Jim was standing on *Pennewill's* deck for her commissioning. Pauline returned to Iowa as *Pennewill* sailed southward for Recife, Brazil from which she would operate providing escort protection against submarine and air attacks.

Aboard *Pennewill* on 1 DEC 1943 Jim was promoted to Chief Quartermaster, CQM (AA), in an acting capacity. As quartermaster he was responsible for watch-to-watch navigation, the maintenance, correction, and preparation of nautical charts and navigation publications, shipboard navigational instruments and clocks, and the training of ship's lookouts and helmsmen. He remained aboard the ship until 1 AUG 1944.



On 31 OCT 1944, Jim joined *USS Mendocino (APA 100)*, a Bayfield-class attack transport named for the Northern California county. In early 1945, *Mendocino* participated in the invasion of Okinawa, just 400 miles south of mainland Japan. As flagship of the Southern Attack Force's Transport Squadron 14, *Mendocino* led the squadron's assault on the Hagushi beaches and deposited troops of the 96th Infantry Division on White 1, a beach opposite Kadena airfield. She then began off-loading support equipment. On 6 APR 1945, she carried Army wounded to Saipan before steaming to Pearl Harbor. The fight for Okinawa raged for another two months. On 1 JUL 1945, aboard *Mendocino*, Jim's Chief Quartermaster (CQM) rank was made permanent.

On 14 MAR 1946, Jim joined *USS Munsee (ATF-107)*, an Abnaki-class fleet ocean tug named for a subtribe of the Delaware Indians. The following July, he transferred to *USS Enoree (AO-69)*, a Chiwawa-class oiler named for South Carolina's Enoree River.

*Enoree* was Jim's last ship. Aboard her he visited Bikini Atoll, Marshall Island, to



support Operation Crossroads, a pair of U.S. nuclear tests. On 25 JUL 1946, in company of destroyer tender *USS Dixie (AD-14)*, *Enoree* observed Test Baker, a shallow underwater detonation, from a distance of twenty miles. On 29 AUG 1946, declared radiologically safe and cleared to sail, *Enoree* detached from Operation Crossroads.

Jim transferred from *Enoree* to the Naval Receiving Station in San Francisco on 4 OCT 1946. He was honorably discharged on 9 DEC 1946 with the rank of Chief Quartermaster. He returned to Clinton, Iowa.

Jim's Navy experiences laid a good foundation for the positions he took in different industrial enterprises in the Midwest. However, his final experience with corporate America was unpleasant – he was laid off without notice despite eighteen years of service. In 1974, a smaller family-owned company based in Connecticut hired Jim to run its new operation in Clinton, Iowa. (Between the layoff and this new job, Pauline and Jim also opened an antique store which they ran for several years).

Jim's expertise was manufacturing, but he knew another 'Jim', last name Byrns, whose expertise was sales, and he invited Byrns to join the company. They soon reorganized the business, renamed it Custom-Pak and built it into the "go-to" source in the 500-mile radius around Clinton for molded plastic products



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including custom toolboxes for Dremmel, Metalware Corporation, J.I. Case, 3 M Corporation and others. When offered the chance to buy the firm, they did, and it continued to flourish. Today, the company, still family-owned, has more than 240 employees, sales exceeding \$200 million a year, and plants in Clinton, Dewitt, Iowa, Arkansas and Mexicali, Mexico - a legacy of entrepreneurship, innovation, and employment in Clinton.



'Cast off' execs who built success sans red tape  
Source: Quad City Times

The fortune that flowed from Custom-Pak had other enriching impacts too. Pauline and Jim donated a million dollars to Mount St Clair College in Clinton in 1996. The Durgin Educational Center was the result. There is also a Durgin Pavilion at Camp Courageous, a center for individuals with special needs 74 miles northwest of Clinton. The Clinton High School baseball complex also was another of their big donations, and they provided many scholarships and supported a wide variety of other charities.



Sherry Lynne Crowned Miss Clinton County 1965  
Source: Quad City Times

Jim and Pauline had two children, Sherry Lynne in 1947 and Richard James in 1951. In 1965, Sherry won the Miss Clinton County contest, playing Spanish guitar in her talent segment and expressing interest in becoming a Peace Corps volunteer. The win qualified her to participate in the Miss Iowa contest, a prelude to the Miss American pageant. Sherry did not join the Peace Corps but went on to become a well-respected foreign language teacher in Urbandale, IA where she ran international exchange programs for many years and expanded the horizons of Urbandale High School students far beyond the U.S. borders. Richard James went to work for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. He died at 62 in 2013.



Richard James  
Vietnam veteran  
Source: Sister Sherry

Jim and Pauline spent most of their 68-year marriage in Clinton. There Pauline had enjoyed housekeeping, genealogy, jigsaw and crossword puzzles, reading, singing, her family, and watching the Chicago Cubs play ball. Jim was a member of the Blue Lodge of Emulation Lodge #255, Clinton Scottish Rite and the Kaaba Shrine of Davenport. He also was a member of the Clinton Izaak Walton League and was past president of the Clinton Kiwanis Club. In 1968, he was named the Clinton Boss of the Year. Jim enjoyed hunting, fishing, golfing and was an avid bowler where he was inducted in the Clinton Bowling Association Hall of Fame. Most of all, they enjoyed time with their four grandchildren and one great-grandson.



Jim in Retirement  
Source: Ancestry member kingbabb

They both lived to the ripe old age of 92. Jim died on 3 FEB 2012 and Pauline followed on 28 SEP 2014. Both died in Clinton and they are buried in Clinton Lawn Cemetery



Pauline in her later years.  
Source: Ancestry.com

James Kindstrom Durgin is listed on page 238 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 invaluable personal insights from Jim and Pauline's daughter Sherry, and input from Ancestry.com and other Internet sources.*

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