

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



Dolphus Cleve King,  
*The Shreveport Journal*  
article in 1941  
Source: Newspapers.com

## Marblehead Biography Dolphus Cleve King

Dolphus Cleve King was born 14 MAY 1916 in Vivian, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, a dozen miles south of the Arkansas-Louisiana-Texas border junction. Family, friends, and co-workers called him by his middle name.

Cleve's father, Augustus Garland King (b.1887-1939), was a life-long oil field worker from rural Lafayette County, AR near Lewisville fifty miles northeast of Vivian. Both of Garland's parents were from Arkansas. At the time of Cleve's birth, Garland worked for Interstate Oil Company near Vivian.

Cleve's mother, Ada May Seward (1887-1926) hailed from rural Columbia County, Arkansas. Her dad, John R. Seward (1858-1937), was a farmer from Arkansas, and her mother, Mary Ann Kea (1861-1933), was from North Carolina.

Cleve was the 5<sup>th</sup>-born of six children from this union. His siblings were William Henry (1908-1910), Lillian Mae (1910-1990), Ollie Z. (1912-2004), Henry Allen (1914-1989), and Elmer Garland (1919-1980). All were born in Louisiana.

Ada May died on 20 FEB 1926 at the age of 39 in Plain Dealing, Bossier Parish, Louisiana, their home at the time. Cleve was just ten years old. With kids still to raise, Augustus remarried quickly, to Nora Lee Boyd, twenty-five years his junior. Nora was also from Arkansas.

According to his granddaughter Kelly, few were enamored by Cleve's first name. *"The reason my grandfather, also nicknamed "Red" because of his red hair, went by his middle name was because no one liked his first name. He was named by a German neighbor of my great grandparents who helped my grandmother extensively during her pregnancy with Cleve. The neighbor had wanted to give him the German name of Adolphus, but my great grandmother dropped the "A" to make is sound more "American". They ended up never using it anyway. As a small child I always thought it was 'dolphin' and found it tremendously funny."*

Cleve attended C.E. Byrd High School in Shreveport, LA, 33 miles southeast of his hometown. He enlisted in the Navy on 17 JUL 1934 in New Orleans. Ostensibly he was 18 but could not prove it because the local records of his birth had burned. Family oral history says he was just 16. Regardless, the Navy accepted the birthdate in the first paragraph above and assigned him service # 2741989. Since his military records were not available for this biography, his earliest duty posts are unclear,<sup>1</sup> however, he likely completed basic training on the West Coast, probably in San Diego, and his first ships likely home-ported there too.



Margie, front /center, with family in Hood River, OR; her brother Robert is the toddler at the left.  
Source: Ancestry members C. Vickery and TalesofYore

It is also likely that one of his early ships visited Portland, Oregon or was based there. That is the most plausible explanation for how rural Louisiana-born Cleve would have met Margaret Viola "Margie" Zweigart, her Oregon hometown being 2100 miles northwest of his at a time when young women were not very mobile. But meet they did! Margie and a girlfriend were at the annual Portland Rose Festival when they spotted two "cute sailors" and soon caught up with Cleve and his friend.

If one assumes that they courted for a year, then they probably met during the 1937 event.<sup>2</sup> At some point in mid-1938, Cleve was

<sup>1</sup>Because his full military record was not available for this biography, publicly available ship muster rolls from 1 JAN 1939 to 31 DEC 1946 were used to piece part of it together.

<sup>2</sup>Portland's Rose Festival tradition began in June 1907. Navy ships had participated in Portland civic celebrations since 1892, but 1936 was the first year that Fleet Week was part of Rose Festival. Nineteen vessels participated that year and 22 came in 1937, including the *USS Marblehead*, though Cleve had not yet joined the ship.

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

ordered to a new vessel being prepared for commissioning in Norfolk, Virginia and this may have prompted the couple's decision to tie the knot.

Margie was born on 29 OCT 1917 Hood River, Hood River County, OR on the west bank of the river by the same name where it empties into the Columbia River. She had one sibling, Robert P. "Bobby", born in 1922, but he lived only a year. Hood River is just 65 miles east of Portland, to which Margie and her family had moved by 1920.

At that time, Margie's multi-talented, Missouri-born dad, Dewey, was an engineer in a flour mill. The 1930 census listed him as an electrician for a Portland ice cream company. Ten years on, Dewey was a repairman for a refrigerator manufacturer and Margie's Prussian-born mom, Natalie "Nettie" Jesse (1899-1996), was an operator in Portland's telephone exchange. Dewey possibly owned the Harley he's driving in the photo at the right. Given that the tire surrounding one of the riders is larger than those on the bike and sidecar, Dewey is probably earning extra income helping those well-to-do gents fix a flat somewhere nearby.



Dewey on Harley and clients

Source: Ancestry.com

Margie probably traveled by train to Norfolk where she and Cleve married on 4 AUG 1938. At the time, Cleve was attached to light cruiser *USS Boise (CL-47)*, a Brooklyn class light cruiser that had been built in nearby Newport News, VA. The honeymoon was short because *Boise* was commissioned on 12 AUG 1938 and she departed for her shakedown cruise shortly thereafter. Margie returned to Portland.

In FEB 1939, following a shakedown cruise to Liberia and South Africa, *Boise* joined Cruiser Division 9, at San Pedro, California, thus bringing Cleve back to the West Coast. He appears to have left the ship soon after. Margie and Cleve's first son, Dennis Cleve King was born in Portland on 9 MAY 1939, and Cleve may have been posted nearby at the time because on 8 Aug 1940, he re-enlisted at the Naval Recruiting Station in Portland. The following day, he reported for duty at the Naval Receiving Station, Puget Sound Navy Yard, Bremerton, WA. He was a MM2c by the time.

On 9 SEP 1940, Cleve transferred to *USS Vega (AK 17)*, a Sirius-class cargo ship that was carrying passengers to new duty stations. She deposited Cleve at the Navy Yard, Mare Island, in San Francisco CA for duty.<sup>3</sup> Cleve was then transferred to *USS Chaumont AP-1* FFT 1 OCT 1940 for assignment to Asiatic Station. This usually meant Manila, Philippines, but as *Chaumont* was one of two veteran transports (*USS Henderson AP-1* was the other) which constantly crisscrossed the Pacific taking sailors to and from the Asiatic Fleet, Cleve could be expected to join his new duty assignment anywhere in the Far East. Via a string of transfers that involved *Chaumont* and included duty on submarine tender *USS Canopus (AS-9)*<sup>4</sup>, Cleve joined light cruiser *USS Marblehead* in Manila on 17 APR 1941.

Cleve would serve aboard *Marblehead*, affectionately referred to by her crew as *Marby*, for slightly more than a year and a half. By the end of JUN 1941 he had been promoted to Machinist Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class (MM1c). He would miss the exotic ports of China and Indochina that the ship visited prior to 1941, but he would still see much of the world and plenty of action.

On 24 NOV 1941, along with the rest of the Asiatic Fleet, *Marby* was ordered out of the Philippines in anticipation of hostilities with Japan. She sailed southward from Manila in convoy with eight destroyers and a destroyer tender. The tale of *Marby's* long journey home told in the 1944 book [Where Away – A](#)

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<sup>3</sup> *Vega*, sans Cleve, was discharging ammunition at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked. She returned anti-aircraft fire as stevedores continued offloading her cargo. She ended WWII with four Battle Stars. [Wikipedia.com](#)

<sup>4</sup> *Canopus*, sans Cleve, was hit by Japanese bombers on 29 DEC 1941 and lost six crew with another six wounded. Scuttled off Manila Bay to avoid capture, her crew fought in defense of Bataan and Corregidor. Many died in the Philippines, or during transport to POW camps in Japan, or later in those brutal camps. [Oneternalpatrol.com](#)

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

[Modern Odyssey](#) begins a few days later off Tarakan Island, Eastern Borneo, NEI (Netherlands East Indies, today's Indonesia) around the time she received word of the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

Until NOV 1941, Cleve's former ship, *Boise*, had alternated operations between West Coast and Hawaiian waters, but whereas *Marby* had just "jumped out of the frying pan", *Boise* now seemingly "sailed into the fire", arriving in Manila on 4 DEC 1941, four days ahead of the Japanese attack there on 8 DEC. They did not catch *Boise* in Manila, however. By then, she was anchored off Cebu Island in the central Philippines, just beyond the reach of their bombers, and she moved quickly into NEI and then to Darwin, Australia. There she caught up with *Marby*. Perhaps Cleve and his former shipmates had time for a beer or two in a Darwin bar, but their stay did not last long. Soon they and other ships were headed north again to resupply Allied forces in Surabaya, Java and slow the Japanese onslaught as it continued deeper into Southeast Asia.

*Boise* was to join *Marby* and Destroyer Division 59<sup>5</sup> in the 24 JAN 1942 raid on Balikpapan, an oil port in southern Borneo, but enroute on 21 JAN 1942 she struck an uncharted shoal and had to retire first to Ceylon; then to Bombay, and finally to San Francisco. This saved her from the damage and possible destruction dealt many Allied ships in the various battles off Java in FEB and MAR 1942. *Marby* was not so lucky. Cleve was aboard her when she was bombed on 4 FEB 1942, and he played his part in saving the ship enabling her 20,589-mile, 90-day escape to New York as described in [Marby's own biography](#).

As with all the loved ones of the sailors aboard *Marby* throughout that perilous voyage home, Margie and the rest of Cleve'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. Margie surely wept at the news, and soon she was on another train crossing the country, this time with their son Dennis who had just turned three.



Dolphus Cleve King,  
Seabees Command Master  
Chief Petty Officer (CMC) in  
Coronado, CA in 1952, three  
years before retirement  
Source: Navy Support Book

Cleve remained aboard *Marby* when, her 6-month overhaul complete, she sailed out of New York on 15 OCT 1942 to rejoin the war effort, this time in the mid-Atlantic Ocean operating out of Recife, Brazil in search of blockade runners and Nazi submarines. However, on 28 DEC 1942, Cleve transferred to Fox Base (code for Recife) for further transfer to the Diesel Engine School at Norfolk, VA for training.

On 1 JUL 1943, his training complete, Cleve joined YMS 159, an Auxiliary Motor Minesweeper on the date of her commissioning in New Orleans, LA. By this time, he was a Chief Motor Machinist Mate (AA).

On 27 MAR 1944 he transferred to Norfolk again, this time for training at the Diesel Classification Center, RS, Norfolk, VA. Following that training, he joined the Auxiliary Motor Minesweeper YMS 455 on the date of her commissioning in New York. His status as Chief Motor Machinist Mate CMoMM was made permanent on 1 JUL 1944.

On 13 OCT 1944 Cleve was transferred to the Naval Receiving Ship at Lido Beach, Long Island, NY and it is unclear what his duty stations were for the remainder of WWII. However, after the war ended, Cleve was posted for a time to Saipan, where Margie and Dennis joined him. Steven, their second son, was born there.

On 4 AUG 1948 Cleve was aboard *USS General AE Anderson (AP 111)*, a WWII troop transport departing the U.S. Western Pacific territory of Guam for the West Coast. He may have already been in the Seabees



Cleve, Dennis, 3, and Margie  
in NYC in JUN 1942  
Source: Brooklyn Daily Eagle

<sup>5</sup> *USS Paul Jones, Parrott, Pope and John D. Ford*, with *Marby* covering their retreat, attacked 12 Japanese transports and three patrol boats. Four transports and one patrol boat were sunk. Two other transports were damaged. Shells from another transport hit *John D. Ford* whose return fire inflicted 50 casualties. [Wikipedia.com](#)

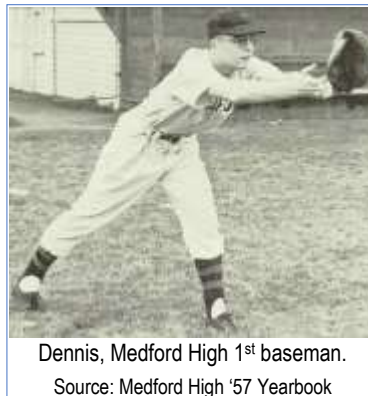
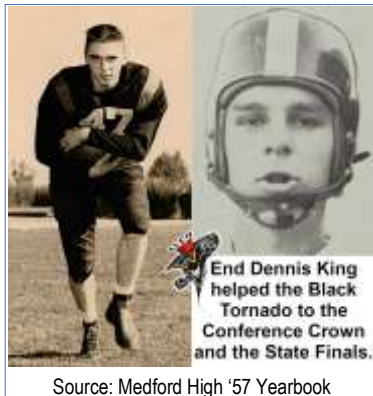


# U.S.S. Marblehead (CL-12)

at that time, but the 1952 Navy Support Book confirms that he was eventually assigned to US Naval Amphibious Construction Battalion No. 1, in Coronado, CA, one of two Seabee battalions.

On 15 AUG 1955, Cleve retired from the Navy after 21 years of service. At the time, he and Margie were listed as residents of Medford, OR, an inland town 29 miles north of the California border. At some point after retiring, Cleve worked for a time as a salesman. Of course, the highlight of Cleve and Margie's stay in Medford were the successes their kids had in school. Some of Dennis' accomplishments, recorded in his 1957 high school yearbook, appear below.

Cleve and Margie lived a portion of their lives in the 1960s in San Diego, CA. A 1964 residential directory listed them there and indicated that Cleve is working as a safety engineer. Their son Dennis married Gail M. Murray there on 3 SEP 1961. That union eventually gave Cleve and Marge three granddaughters:



Sheryl, Linda and Kelly. Dennis became a chemical engineer and a 30-year employee of Proctor and Gamble. He passed away at the age of 55 on 17 FEB 1995.

Cleve died on 16 JUN 2005, a month and a half beyond his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday. At the time, he and Margie were resident in Camino, California on the edge of the El Dorado National Forest just west of Lake Tahoe. They had built their retirement home there in the "Apple Hill" area of Camino, and over the years raised thriving fruit and vegetable gardens, became avid campers and frequently traveled to Hawaii and New Zealand.

Margie passed away on 17 JAN 2017, nine months shy of her 100th birthday, in Gillette, Campbell County, Wyoming where she had been living at a senior center near her surviving son Steven, a U.S. Army Vietnam vet. According to granddaughter Kelly, Margie left behind "six grandchildren (five of them redheads) and eleven great grandchildren (eight of them redheads) and three great-great grandchildren (two of them redheads)."

Margie's infant brother, Bobby, and her parents, Nettie and Dewey, are buried in Idlewilde Cemetery in Hood River. Cleve's parents, Garland and Ada, were buried in Louisiana. Cleve and Margie chose to be cremated. Cleve's ashes were spread across the Pacific Ocean upon which he had spent so much of his life. Dennis was memorialized at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden via a waterfall feature near the wildflower meadow in 1995.

Dolphus Cleve King is listed on page 241 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 contributions from Cleve and Margie's granddaughters, Kelly and Sheryl; from Ancestry.com members Carol Lee Vickery and TalesofYore; and from Newspapers.com, and other Internet sources.*

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