

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



Archie Lavell Sherrer
Ancestry.com

Marblehead Biography Archie Lavell Sherrer

Archie Lavell Sherrer was born on 16 AUG 1917 in Nelson, Choctaw County, in southeastern Oklahoma about 25 miles north of the Texas border. He was the 4th of eleven children born to Delanie Isabella Robison (1892–1980) of Hardin County, Tennessee, and Robert Lavelle Sherrer (1889–1963), a farmer from Garretts Bluff, Lamar County, Texas. Archie's siblings were Leonard Franklin (1911–1986), Robert Lloyd (1912–1965), Audrey Mae (1915–1997), Thomas Leon (1920–2014), Bennett Lee (1922–2011), Wilma Delanie (1925–2008), Osborn Lowell (1927–1927), William Lois (1928–), Murray Laverne (1932–2006), and Loretta (1936–).

The winter following Archie's birth, the family moved about 30 miles to the northeast to the isolated town of Snow in Kiamichi Mountains of Pushmataha County, which had been founded only a decade earlier when formerly Choctaw Indian lands in Indian Territory became part of the new U.S. state of Oklahoma in late 1907. In the 1910 census, Archie's father, still single at the time, was working on his father's farm in Indian territory in the northeastern corner of what would become Oklahoma, however as part of the move following Archie's birth, the family would come to own the farm in Snow. Though isolated, Snow was well-watered, but it never developed commercially. Archie and most of his siblings attended Antlers High School, in the county seat of Antlers, eighteen miles to the southwest.



USS San Francisco
visitpearlharbor.org/

Archie enlisted on 10 JAN 1940 at Dallas, TX and was assigned Service # 3561859. He completed boot camp at the Naval Training Station in San Diego, CA. His first ship was heavy cruiser *USS San Francisco (CA 38)*, which he joined on 18 MAR 1940 as an



USS Houston
Ancestry.com

Apprentice Seaman (AS) in San Diego. The *San Francisco* was only a means of transportation to Hawaii, however. There he joined heavy cruiser *USS Houston (CA 30)* on 24 MAR 1940 at Pearl Harbor. Effective 10 MAY 1940, Archie was advanced to Seaman 2nd Class (S2c), and in SEP 1940, *Houston* sailed for Manila, Philippines where she became the flagship of Admiral Thomas C. Hart, Commander Asiatic Fleet. At the end of NOV 1940, Archie was promoted to S1c.

On 29 MAR 1941, unbeknownst to him, luck fell Archie's way¹ when he was received aboard light cruiser *USS Marblehead (CL 12)* at Cavite Navy Yard, Philippines. The Pan Am China Clipper landed there two days later. Archie, who had been one of the barbers aboard *Houston*, would continue in that role for the next 4 ½ years aboard *Marby*, as the cruiser was affectionately referred to by her crew. This period included the 4 FEB 1942 bombing of the ship and her subsequent 20,589-mile, 90-day escape to New York which are more fully described [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#) and in [Marby's own biography](#).

Archie's time aboard *Marby* also included her multiple rescues of downed Allied airmen and enemy sailors from sunken vessels in the Atlantic, her participation in the 15-17 AUG 1944 Invasion of Southern France (not Normandy as erroneously reported in earlier biographies), and her final cruise JUL-SEP 1945 prior to decommissioning in Philadelphia on 1 NOV 1945. On that day, he was transferred from the ship to the

¹ Though *Marby's* bombing and its aftermath would be trying experiences, Archie would have suffered far worse a fate had he remained aboard *Houston*. On the early hours of 1 MAR 1942, while *Marby* and her crew were in Trincomalee, Ceylon (today's Sri Lanka) and safely beyond the reach of the Japanese war machine, *Houston* went down fighting along with Australian cruiser HMAS Perth in the Battle of Sunda Strait (in today's Indonesia). Her demise effectively ended the Asiatic Fleet. Of her complement of 1,061 aboard, 368 survived, including 24 of the 74-man Marine Detachment, only to be captured by the Japanese and interned in prison camps. Of 368 Navy and Marine Corps personnel taken prisoner, 77 (21%) died in captivity. (*Wikipedia*)

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

Naval Receiving Ship in Philly, and he was honorably discharged on 23 JAN 1946 in Oklahoma City after which he returned to his parent's home in Snow, taking time to re-register with the draft board in Antlers.

Eventually he moved to Oregon. What drew him there is unclear as is how, when and where he first met Ethelyn Della 'Pennie' Wright (1927–1997) who he married on 12 Jul 1948 in Douglas, Oregon, USA. Pennie was the daughter of Iowa-born Minerva Elizabeth Huntsinger (1900–1971) and North Dakota-born William Lyle Wright (1903–1976), a lumber grader for a sawmill in Lane County, OR (county seat – Eugene). Pennie was the eldest of six children. Her siblings were: Edgar Eugene (1928–1985), George Louis (1932–2008), Vernon Ray (1933–1993), Margaret Elizabeth "Betty" (1935–2006) and Donald Lloyd (1936–2004).



USS Maurice J. Manuel
Wikipedia

Pennie and Archie's first son, Robert Lawrence "Larry", was born in 1949. The following year, the Korean War began, and Archie was reactivated on 10 MAR 1951. During this period, he served aboard destroyer escort *USS Maurice J. Manuel (DE 351)* which operated in a training capacity in the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea. He was honorably discharged for a second time on 6 MAR 1952.

In 1953, Pennie and Archie welcomed their second son, Jerry Lee. At the time, the family was living in Swiss Home, OR, about 25 miles from the Pacific coast west of Eugene where Archie had a barbershop and a partnership in a fishing lodge in the area. In 1956, they moved to Prineville, 233 miles to the east in central Oregon where Archie opened the City Barber Shop in the Veterans Building. The Sherrers stayed there for 37 years until Archie semi-retired and began spending winters in northern Mexico and Arizona before cancer claimed Pennie's life on 13 JAN 1997 in Prineville.

Archie spent the year following Pennie's death in Prineville with friends, and his son Jerry and family. He also became close to companion, Wanda Mays, a long-time family friend and eventually they alternated between winters in their home in Yuma, Arizona, and summers at their home in Prineville will Archie continued as a part-time barber.

Archie was a member of the Prineville Elks Lodge No. 1814, where he was the past Exalted Ruler and Treasurer. He was also a member of the Prineville Masonic Lodge No. 76 A.F. & A.M. for 52 plus years, the Knights Templar #18, the Cryptic Masons No. 4, the Al Kader Shrine, the Royal Arch Masons No. 33, the Scottish Rite 32ø and the Order of the Amaranth. He was also a member of the Prineville American Legion Post No. 29.

Archie was also very family oriented and loved to camp and fish. He was active in the First Baptist Church and in club activities for many years. He was an avid pinochle player, master vegetable gardener, enjoyed playing pool and poker, traveling, dancing, and spending time with his many friends.

Archie died in Yuma, AZ on 8 SEP 2007 at the age of 90. He had given his last haircut only two weeks earlier. At the time of his death, Archie had four grandchildren and one great granddaughter.

Archie Lavell Sherrer is listed on page 246 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 [pamplinmedia.com](#) and from [Ancestry.com](#), [Newspapers.com](#), and other Internet records.

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