

Robert Edward Burnette, T-41

19 November 1921 – 2 March 1996

(aged 74)



Robert Burnette, 2-c Gunner's Mate, son of Mr. and Mrs. Burning, 3686 Kearney, and his cousin, Ernest Burnette, now a prisoner of the Japanese, played hooky from Tech one day back in 1939 and enlisted in the Navy. "I've always been crazy about ships," says Robert. Used to go down behind the post office to the waterfront and watch everything that happened on "Ol' Man River." Robert was at Casablanca where his ship fired on the French ship Jeanne D'Arc. Later he was sent back to the states to advanced gunnery school in Washington, where he met and married the former Mary Krause, Patterson NJ. "Then I was assigned to a destroyer and sent to the Pacific," said Burnette, "Duty on a "tin can" is the only kind I want. "I was at Wake in the Gilbert Marianas, Marshalls Philippines - - -but the toughest engagement I was ever in was a sneak raid on Rabaul. It was our own private little war. We were escorting aircraft carriers for a bomb attack on Rabaul, November 11, 1943, when we picked up enemy aircraft. Our fighters went up and met the 165 Jap planes 30 miles away. Only 65 of the Japs got thru to us and we knocked down 64 of them. Only one torpedo plane got away, but not before he gave us plenty of trouble. "During battle, one of our planes went down near our ship. One of the crew, a Gunner's Mate, went over the side to hold up the wounded pilot and every time we'd try to pick them up, this

Jap plane would make a torpedo run on us. He made three runs before he finally gave up and got away."

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