

Buddies serve country

After graduating from Latexo High School in May 1956, James Roy Randall climbed from the old farm tractor in June, went to Houston with friend Buddy Jones to join the military and by July 3 he was in Cape May, N.J. in the U.S. Coast Guard.

Randall and Jones signed up on the "buddy plan" and spent 13 weeks together in basic training. Randall had nine fillings but Jones' teeth were "worse than mine" said Randall, so the two buddies parted paths.

After basic training, Randall was stationed for three months in New Orleans, La., then in Staten Island, N.Y. for only 10 days. His transfer in February to New York coincided with the air crash, which killed members of the Winter Olympic team.

He was sent to Greece and served for 18 months as Boson's Mate on the USS Courier, the ship that broadcast Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America. Besides deckhand duties, Randall ran boats or "parties" for Navy personnel coming into port on R&R or rest and relaxation.

Randall toured Europe visiting Athens and Paris, and the countries of Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The morning he awoke to return to the states, an armada was anchored all around the harbor. That was when 3,000 Marines entered Lebanon.

He returned to the 8th District, New Orleans, and was given a choice where he would be stationed. He chose Galveston and remained at that base for the remainder of his military career, about 2 1/2 years.

He ran boats in Search and



James Randall

Rescue, Harbor Patrol, and Hot Ship watches. He was discharged as a 3rd Class Boson's Mate on July 3, 1960. At the beginning he drew about \$72 a month and by the end of his time he was drawing a little over \$100, "Just enough to make my motorcycle payment and buy my cigarettes," he said. He also bought monthly Government Bonds for \$18.75.

By the time Randall was discharged, his family had left rural life and moved to the city. His younger siblings graduated from Smiley High School in Houston.

Even though Randall served his country during peaceful times, there was still some tense times, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis when he and his mates were issued machine guns and side arms to check out ships and vessels that came into Galveston and the ship channel.

Serving in the Coast Guard provided Randall a vision of life outside the realm of rural Texas. He raised his family, contributed to a retirement fund, worked for the same company for over 30 years and then retired to his 100 acres where one can still find him today.

Now, when he climbs from his tractor at the end of a day, it's not to escape a life he detests. Instead, he embraces his life with vigor and thankfulness. After a bout with cancer, this veteran is grateful for wife, sons, grandsons, family and friends.

