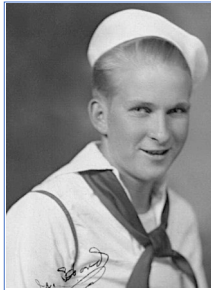




Marblehead Biography of Allen Linwood Hord, Jr.



Allen Linwood Hord, Jr. on completing basic training.
Courtesy Ancestry.com

Allen Linwood Hord, Jr. was born 24 Oct 1916 in Remington, Fauquier Co., VA, the last of six children born to West Virginia-born homemaker Donna Iris Carpenter (1879-1919) in Mason County, WV and Virginia-born Allen Linwood Hord Sr. (1882-1972) at Fox Mill, Fauquier County, VA. Allen's parents had married on 20 Jan 1905. The 1910 U.S. Census indicated that his father was a Coal Mine boss in West Virginia, which is where he probably met Donna, but Allen Sr. was a miller in Fauquier County, VA by the time of Allen Jr's birth. In addition to his parents, Allen Jr. was greeted by five siblings at the time of his birth: Errol Leroy (1905-1970); Elizabeth Virginia (1907-2006); Hellen Pauline (1910-1967); Kenneth Aline (1910-1980); and Bernice Louise (1914-1987).

Allen enlisted in the Navy on 12 Mar 1936 at Richmond, Virginia and was assigned Service Number 2657272. His surviving Reports of Change (RoCs) and Muster Rolls (MRs)

reviewed for this history do not begin until early 1939. So, initially, it appeared that we would have no record of his basic training post or his earliest duty station between 1936 and 1939. But then, by chance, we came across an old article published on Sunday, 22 August 1937 which provided a list from the Navy Department of 17 U.S. sailors who had been injured in the 1937 bombing by the Japanese of the heavy cruiser *USS Augusta (CA-31)* on the Wangpoo River, a tributary of the Yangtse River in Shanghai, China. The 8th man listed was Allen Linwood Hord, Jr. of Ruckersville, VA who had received shrapnel wounds to the chest. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that *Augusta* was Allen's first ship.



USS Augusta (CA-31)
off Portland, ME in 1945
Courtesy: U.S. Navy, Utility Squadron 15 (VJ-15) aircraft.



USS Trinity (AO-13) at anchor.
Courtesy: Alan Bingham whose dad served aboard her during WWII

By 28 Jan 1939 he was aboard *USS Trinity (AO-13)* sailing from Manila, Philippines, to Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, as a Seaman First Class at that time. *USS Trinity (AO-13)* may have been Allen's first ship.

On 14 Apr 1939, Allen reported for duty aboard the destroyer *USS Shaw (DD-373)*. Muster rolls confirm him present at quarters on 30 Sep 1939. On 2 Mar

1940 he reenlisted at San Diego, California, and remained assigned to *Shaw*, where he was mustered present at San Diego on 31 Mar 1940 and again on 31 Dec 1940.

On 20 Aug 1941, while *Shaw* was operating out of San Diego, Hord was detached for transfer to the Asiatic Station. A Report of Change from *USS Henderson (AP-1)* dated 23 Aug 1941 on the ship's sailing from Pearl Harbor to Guam, shows that he had been first received aboard from *Shaw*. Upon reaching the Asiatic Station in Manila, Allen was assigned to the light cruiser *USS Marblehead (CL-12)* on 14 Sep 1941.



USS Shaw (DD-373) at Pearl Harbor.
Courtesy: The Second World War.org

Allen joined *Marby* late in the ship's history with Asia, which had begun when she joined the Asiatic Fleet in 1938. Normally, she wintered in the Philippines working from Manila and she summered in China operating from Shanghai. Shanghai was then one of the globe's most cosmopolitan cities, a trading, financial and artistic powerhouse with a potent mix of opium smuggling, gambling, and prostitution. Unfortunately, China, and Shanghai in particular, were the focus of Japan's strategy to control Asia. Its annexation of



The Marby

China's industrial heartland, Manchuria, in 1932, and its commencement of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, had escalated tension with the United States. By the time Allen arrived aboard *Marby*, Japan controlled all the ports of China except for Hong Kong, and while *Marby* did spend the summer of 1940 in China, when she sailed from Tsingtao in early September that year, it was a final farewell. Except for a cruise to Guam, she spent the remainder of 1940 and most of 1941 in Philippine waters focusing on battle training as war grew increasingly likely in the minds of *Marby*'s skipper, Captain A.G. Robinson, and the rest of the ship's leadership and crew.

On 25 Nov 41, sensing that hostilities were imminent, Admiral Thomas Hart, Commander of the Asiatic Fleet, ordered most of his ships to disperse without fanfare to the southwest and into the Netherlands East Indies (NEI; today's Indonesia). On the night of the 29th, *Marby* anchored off Tarakan Island, East Borneo, NEI to await further orders. The ship was darkened for additional security.

Nine days later, at 0328 hours on 8 Dec 41, *Marby*'s radio receiver crackled with news of the attack on Pearl Harbor and conveyed the order: "The Japanese have commenced hostilities. Act accordingly." *Marby*'s General Quarters alarm blared moments later, and the crew's response foretold the training, discipline and spirit that would later save the ship, i.e., from their deep sleep, the entire 700+ crew was standing at attention at their battle stations within eight minutes.

At dawn, *Marby* weighed anchor and headed for Balikpapan, an oil port on the south coast of Borneo, where she refueled. She then cut across the strait to Makassar, South Celebes Island to reprovision. By Christmas, she was at the Dutch Naval Base at Surabaya, Java, where Capt. Robinson granted his men limited shore leave despite the risk of Japanese air attack.

In the days that followed, details poured in on the Pearl Harbor disaster, particularly on the eight battleships sunk or damaged there. Then, on 10 Dec 41 came news of the loss of British battleships *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* in the South China Sea east of the Malay Peninsula. Previously, battleships had been considered invincible, but Japanese naval air superiority had just made quick victims of those British behemoths. These events sharpened *Marby*'s crew's focus on the ship's vulnerabilities. "*For if those great British and American battlewagons, with their vast belts of bulges designed to serve as torpedo shock absorbers, couldn't take it from the Japanese fliers, what chance had an old bucket like the Marblehead whose A.A. battery was but a tiny fraction of any of those capital ships and whose slender sides had no such protection? Any torpedo that struck her would strike below her fragile armor belt which was only three inches thick at its heaviest. Her main battery could not be used against planes, and the seven 3-inch A.A.'s plus four .50 calibre machine guns atop the foremast and four more aft amounted to something considerably less than impressive.*"¹

On the last days of 1941, *Marby* was cutting across the Flores Sea escorting the French mail ship *MS Marechal Joffre* from Surabaya to Darwin, Australia. Formerly owned by the pro-Nazi Vichy French government, *Marechal Joffre* had been brazenly captured by American naval aviators and ground crews in Manila Bay and used to escape the Japanese invasion of the Philippines. Once in Darwin, *Marechal Joffre* sailed on to San Francisco to be inducted into the U.S. Navy (see the [Marechal Joffre Story](#)), and for a few days, *Marby* temporarily became Radio Darwin, a beacon that facilitated the regrouping of remaining Allied warships to slow the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia. In that effort, *Marby* soon headed north, and on 20 Jan 42, she covered Destroyer Division 59 (*USS John D. Ford*, *USS Parrott*, *USS Paul Jones*, and *USS Pope*) in its retirement from a raid on a Japanese convoy at Balikpapan in which five enemy ships were sunk and another four were damaged.

Lunch-with-Ray¶

When word reached the *Marby* at 03:28 on 8 Dec 41 of the disaster at Pearl Harbor, Raymond (Ray) Delos Kester, RM2c, then a 21-year-old off-watch radioman, was catching a few winks on the floor of the *Marby*'s transmitter room. Over lunch¹ in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC on 11 Sep 2016, still ambulatory and cracking jokes at 96, Ray recalled the call to general quarters that followed receipt of the historic message 75 years earlier. He said that the entire complement of the Marblehead, 725 officers and enlisted men, went from deep sleep to general quarters in a mere eight minutes, an early indication of the discipline and instinct for survival that would soon save the ship.¶

¹Lunch with this biography's author¶

¹ *Where Away: A Modern Odyssey*, p.42



Marby spent the last week of January 1942 in Surabaya, and by 1 February, she was cruising off Madura Strait. On February 3rd, a flight of about 40 Japanese planes passed overhead en route to bomb Surabaya. One plane lingered behind to get reconnaissance on the ships below which also included heavy cruiser *USS Houston*, the smaller Dutch cruisers, *De Ruyter* and *Tromp*, and seven Dutch and American destroyers.

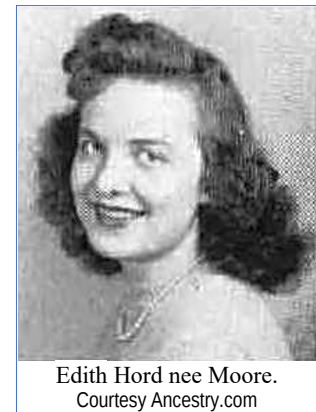
The following morning “broke red, burnishing the bottoms of clouds that floated across the sky before a mild westerly breeze. The lookouts could see the high mountains of Bali looming in the distance.”² A little after 0900, Admiral Doorman on *De Ruyter* received a dispatch which he then flashed to all ships: “37 bombers to Surabaya, course SSW”. By the time the message reached *Marby*’s Capt. Robinson, the ship’s lookouts had spotted the planes approaching from the east at 17,000 feet. Each had the red sun of Japan painted on its tail and wings. All hell soon broke loose.

Despite successful evasive action on the first three bombing runs, *Marby* eventually suffered two direct hits and a third near-miss close to her port bow. The damage was severe - one bomb jammed *Marby*’s rudder causing her to steam in a predictable circle. Another strike knocked out her gyroscope, all electricity and internal communication. Multiple fires soon swept the ship. The near miss ripped a large gash in *Marby*’s bow, flooding compartments and causing the ship to begin to sink. Fortunately, the enemy assumed the sea would finish off what their bombs had begun, so they flew off after bigger prey - heavy cruiser *USS Houston*.

The Japanese knew nothing of the character of the men to whom she was home. Eleven sailors were killed that day and another eighty-four were injured, four of whom later died of their wounds, but the remaining able-bodied crew defied the odds, the Japanese, and the Java Sea. After bailing by hand non-stop for more than seventy hours, over the next ninety days, they would coax the crippled cruiser 20,589 miles across the Indian and Atlantic oceans to enter New York harbor on 4 May 42. *Marby*’s bombing in the Battle of Makassar Strait and her escape to New York are described in detail in *Marby*’s [own biography](#) and in the 1944 book *Where Away: A Modern Odyssey*.

Japan claimed several times in the international press that it had sunk *Marby*. The Navy never contradicted those claims but kept the improbable voyage home secret for security reasons until the ship arrived in New York on 4 May. The secrecy meant that loved ones back home thought their sailors were either dead or in enemy captivity. On 5 May, phone calls began flooding across the nation, bringing the truth, and considerable joy, to hundreds of families who believed their loved ones lost. In one of his fireside chats, President Roosevelt singled out *Marby*’s crew as an inspiration to the nation.

Allen remained attached to *Marby* through her overhaul in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, but he did not remain with the ship on her departure from New York. By the spring of 1943, Allen’s Navy career had wound down administratively, ending with his transfer to the Receiving Station, Philadelphia, and his subsequent discharge after surviving two bombings, one aboard *USS Augusta (CA-31)* in 1937 and the other aboard *USS Marblehead (CL-12)* in 1942. It is unclear what occupations he pursued after WWII, but it is known that he married Edith Moore with whom he raised two daughters, Amber and Mary Lin, and a son whose name could not be corroborated.



Edith Hord nee Moore.
Courtesy Ancestry.com

Edith Allen died on 26 Mar 1963 in Parker, Arizona predeceasing Allen by 49 years. He appears to have remarried at least once to a Naomi Sisk. Whether this marriage produced children is unclear. Allen passed away on 20 Dec 2012 in Sun City, Maricopa, Arizona, USA.

² *Where Away: A Modern Odyssey*, pp. 108–109.



Allen (right) later in life with his extended family.

Courtesy Ancestry.com

Allen is listed on page 240 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 Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, Anthropic's Claude AI, and other Internet records.

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