



Inspired by Shirley's wish to keep the family connected, this newsletter and corresponding website has ben developed as a platform to learn about our relatives, near and far, past and present, and to share our stories.

TREASURED HEIRLOOMS AVAILABLE

Everyone's favorite cousin, Debbie White, is offering up some family heirlooms to any family member who could use them or would like to have a special family keepsake! If any of the items below interest you, or perhaps one of your children or grandchildren, contact Deb to claim and she will make arrangements to get it to you.

- The heavy vice that Grandpa Voyle used to crack hickory nuts and walnuts.
- Grandma Lingers' (Amy's mother) rocking chair
- A very special chair with short legs that were cut specifically for Grandma Amy to ride in the wagon during wildflower tours
- Assorted glassware from WV Glass-the factory where Voyle worked
- A basket used by Grandma Amy

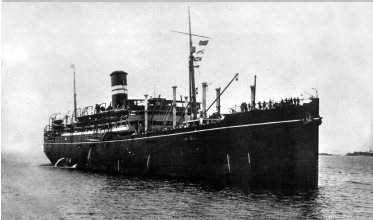
UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays for Generation 1 (the nine siblings of Voyle and Amy) and their offspring (Generation 2) have been gathered (per Grandma Amy's little notebook!). Apologies in advance for any errors or omissions! Birthdays of Generation 3 and beyond will be gathered on the website.

Sept 29.....	Doris
Qtr 4	
Oct 2.....	Todd
Oct 7.....	Rick
Oct 8.....	Amy B.
Oct 14.....	Kelli B.
Oct 21...	John (Jim's)
Oct 27..	John (Gene's)
	Terri
Nov 2.....	Nancy
Dec 6.....	Christie K.
Dec 20.....	Lisa W

TRAGEDY AT SEA

Many of us recall distant stories about an uncle who was missing in action during WWII. Interestingly, the reason those stories were distant is because details of the 1943 attack were heavily guarded as survivors were ordered to keep silent while the entire event was deemed classified information for 50 years! In 1993, a reporter announced **"It's not that we forgot. It's that we never knew"**.



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WEBSITE UPDATE

The website is taking shape! Members can now view generation lists, submit announcements, add to the birthday calendar, and leave comments. To become a member, simply click the Family Member Registration button on the welcome page at

mitchellfamilyfacts.com,

then fill out a quick form. The site continues to evolve, so please send in any needed updates, corrections, or changes to Vicky.

TRAGEDY AT SEA (continued from page 1)

Cpl. Charles John Mitchell, born September 3, 1914, to parents Harry Howard Mitchell (1882-1957) and Emma Dehle Simpson Mitchell (1885-1935) was a younger brother to Voyle Melwood Mitchell (1905-1985), making him **an uncle to all of us**. Records indicate that Charles was married in Weston, WV to Evalena Belle "Eve" Jackson in 1936, who passed on September 17, 1997 and is buried at Freemansburg United Methodist Church Cemetery in Lewis County, WV.

Charles enlisted into the US Army Air Corps on November 3, 1942 at Fort Hayes, Columbus, Ohio. He had completed 4 years of high school and is described as being 70 inches tall and 216 pounds. He was assigned to the **853rd Engineer Battalion, Aviation**.

During the week of Thanksgiving in November, 1943, Charles boarded the **HMT Rohna**, an older, coal-fired passenger and cargo liner in Oran, Algeria, along with 1,980 US Army soldiers. (Due to international time zones, slight discrepancies of exact dates exist among various accounts.) The *Rohna* departed the port and joined a convoy of military ships in the Mediterranean to embark on a long and vulnerable Gibraltar-to-Suez supply line route to India.

Four hours later, the convoy was attacked by German twin-engine bombers. Seeming to have prevailed over two waves of attacks with anti-aircraft defenses, the men of the *Rohna* were celebrating, when, about an hour later, a surprise radio-controlled missile/rocket-boosted glide bomb fired a fatal blow to the ship and to 300 men near the port side—mostly from the **853rd**, and likely, Charles (which may explain the fact that his body was never recovered). The ship broke apart and went down about 90 minutes after the hit. Rescue ships gallantly fought continued incoming German fire in the dark to save 780 men from the frigid, rugged, oil-soaked waters. Sadly, many who survived the blast, perished of hypothermia or drowning before they could be reached. US casualties totaled 1,050, of which 495 were of the 853rd Engineer Battalion.

Uncle Charles was awarded a Purple Heart and was memorialized in the North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial, Carthage, Tunis, Tunisia.

Despite this tragedy being **the greatest loss of US soldiers at sea due to enemy action** to date, it was shrouded in secrecy for at least a couple of speculated purposes. 1) The US Government chose to withhold the high number of casualties from the German military as counter measures to the technology used were limited; and 2) safety standards and crew training aboard the *HMT Rohna* were questionable given that only two of the ships' lifeboats could be successfully deployed. Survivors honored the classified status even though it meant their bravery, their injuries, their sacrifices, and their service went unrecognized officially until the passage of **House Concurrent Resolution No. 408 in October of 2000**, thanks solely to efforts by [The Rohna Survivors Memorial Association \(TRSMA\)](#).

This fascinating story has been the topic of several media projects. Check them out for more info!

- YouTube videos—<https://youtu.be/V4vH1ei-QEg?si=k67nFEcGVuiZ2xGK>
<https://youtu.be/hJV4QpoePYU?si=KySzYnxMVA7Lv3IN>
https://youtu.be/g6urO3iuLoE?si=CTIOey_VQ8IBHUEI
- Fold 3 project— <https://www.fold3.com/memorial/529883820/charles-j-mitchell/stories>
- The National WWII Museum—<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/sinking-hmt-rohna>
- [Amazon books](#)

