

Destined to be a Sailor  
by Michele Starkey

Richard (Red) Pavlik was just four years old in 1937 when he dressed in a sailor suit and took his tricycle for a spin on the streets of Newburgh. Red and his family lived at 173 Lander Street in Newburgh.

While attending Newburgh Free Academy in the 1950's, Pavlik decided to sign up for the NROTC Program and complete two years in the program prior to graduating from NFA in 1953. He enlisted in the Navy after graduation and left for boot camp at the United States Naval Training Center in Bainbridge, Maryland in January of 1954.

While at boot camp, Pavlik expressed an interest in learning a trade, something he could use when he finished his time in service, and the Navy sent him to school to become a Class A welder, electrician and plumber in Norfolk. He would be assigned to the USS Monrovia (APA-31) when he completed his training.

At the time of his assignment, the USS Monrovia was in dock for repairs and Pavlik actually got to put his newly acquired trade skills into action. Shortly thereafter, the USS Monrovia, a troop transport vessel, was in route to Moorehead City, North Carolina to pick up a battalion of marines. On the USS Monrovia's journey to the Mediterranean, the ship experienced some rough waters and many of the marines got seasick. Pavlik told us, "The marines weren't used to being on the transport ship and when you added the rough water in the mix, many of them became so seasick that they were constantly going dockside to get sick. They were on KP duty cleaning up after themselves."

His tour of duty would take him to North Africa, Italy, the Mediterranean and for six months as the ship docked in many of the remote places, the sailors would go ashore. Pavlik rarely went ashore and instead opted to pull duty for the others to save his time for a special date with a certain someone that had caught his eye back in high school. When the ship returned to American shores, Pavlik cashed in on all of that coverage that the other sailors owed him and he hitchhiked back to Newburgh to marry his high school sweetheart, Fran McDavid. The couple would honeymoon in Atlantic City. Mrs. Pavlik shared with us, "I got a week in Atlantic City and Red went back on the USS Monrovia and headed off to Bermuda!"

Pavlik shared, "Joining the Navy right out of high school was a wonderful experience for me and I would strongly urge other young people to consider a time in service if they haven't decided what to do after graduation. I learned a trade that carried me through my entire life. In fact, I was honorably discharged from the Navy on December 20, 1955 and literally got a job the following day. I was hired by Favino Mechanical in Newburgh and worked there for the next forty years. The Navy offered me the best training and experience that I could have received and sent me to the best trade schools. At the time I enlisted in the Navy, I have to be honest. I wasn't thinking about learning a trade – I just knew I didn't want to spend time in a foxhole!"

The Korean War was just ending while Pavlik served in the Navy. He admits that he never saw any real action but he did receive a service-related medal for serving during the Korean War period.

"Red" and his high school sweetheart have been happily married for fifty-six years and are residing in New Windsor.