

The following named individuals received the **Letter of Commendation and the Navy & Marine Corps Ribbon** for their personal actions during the 26 May 1954 Port Catapult Explosion that took place 75 miles off the coast of Newport, Rhode Island:

Edward W. Kornegay,	PFC	USMC
Raymond A. Chernosky,	DC2	USN
Irvin Charlesworth, Jr.,	FN	USN

KORNEGAY, Edgar W. PFC USMC

USS BENNINGTON (CVA-20)

Rhode Island

RECOMMENDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION (RIBBON) on CO, USS BENNINGTON ltr ser 5025 of 8/26/54. Rec'd Bd D&M 14 Dec 1954.

AWARDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION (RIBBON) by Sp Bd D&M Mtg, Ser 2 dtd 4 Jan '55. App SecNav 8 Jan 1955.

“For heroism, courageous action and performance beyond the call of duty in connection with the disastrous explosions and fires which occurred on the Bennington while he was serving in the Marine Detachment. On 26 May '54, the Bennington was conducting air operations 75 miles south of Newport, RI, when the ship experienced a series of violent explosions. These explosions spread flame, flash fires, intense heat and dense smoke throughout the forward section of the ship, caused severe damage to the ship, and resulted in the death or injury to 220 officers and men. Without hesitation, KORNEGAY fought his way into the devastated officer country on the second deck and began removing injured shipmates to safety. Rescue operations were extremely hazardous, twisted and ripped bulkheads blocked passageways with jagged metal, water from ruptured mains made footing uncertain, and thick asphyxiating smoke filled the compartments, rendering battle lanterns almost useless. In spite of these dangers and with complete disregard for his own safety, Kornegay repeatedly entered blasted state rooms and other spaces to effect the rescue of many badly burned men. By his wholehearted devotion and untiring efforts, Kornegay upheld the highest traditions of the United States Navy.”

CHERNOSKY, Raymond A.

DC2 USN

USS BENNINGTON (CVA-20)
Island

Rhode

RECOMMENDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION (Ribbon) on CO,
USS BENNINGTON ltr Ser 5025 dtd 26 Aug 1954. Rec'd Bd D&M
14 Dec 1954.

AWARDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION (Ribbon) by Sp Bd
Mtg, Ser 2 dtd 4 Jan 1955. App SecNav 8 Jan 1955.

“ For heroism, courageous action and performance beyond the call of duty in connection with disastrous explosions and fires which occurred on the BENNINGTON while he was serving in the Engineering Dept. On 26 May 1954, the BENNINGTON was conducting air operations 75 miles south of Newport, RI, when the ship experienced a series of violent explosions that spread flame, flash fires, intense heat and dense smoke throughout the forward section of the ship causing death or injury to two hundred & twenty officers and men. Fully aware of the dangers involved and of the possibility of further explosions, but without regard for his own safety, CHERNOSKY repeatedly entered the explosion area on the third deck where, despite asphyxiating smoke, and passageways littered with wreckage, he exhausted two oxygen canisters in the rescue of the trapped and injured personnel and removal of the dead. His heroic actions were directly responsible for saving the lives of at least five injured and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

CHARLESWORTH, Irvin Jr. FN USN

USS BENNINGTON (CVA-20)

Rhode Island

RECOMMENDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION (Ribbon) on CO, BENNINGTON ltr dtd Ser 5025 dtd 26 Aug 1954. Rec'd Bd D&M 14 Dec 1954.

AWARDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION (Ribbon) by Sp Bd D&M mtg, Ser 2 dtd 4 Jan 1955. App SecNav 8 Jan 1955.

“ For heroism, courageous action, and performance beyond the call of duty in connection with the disastrous explosions and fires which occurred on the BENNINGTON while serving in the Engineering Department. On 26 May 1954, the BENNINGTON was conducting air operations 75 miles south of Newport, RI, when the ship experienced a series of violent explosions. These explosions spread flame, flash fires, intense heat, and dense smoke throughout the forward section of the ship, caused severe damage to the ship, and resulted in the or injury to 220 officers and men. Because of asphyxiating smoke in the number one fireroom the personnel on duty there were ordered to evacuate. However, CHARLESWORTH volunteered to remain behind with the petty officer in charge to secure the boilers. Feeling weak from the noxious fumes, he used a compressed air mask briefly then proceeded to aid in making a complete check of the space. During this final inspection, one man was discovered prostrated from the fumes. Knowing full well the asphyxiating effect of the smoke, but with complete disregard for his own life, CHARLESWORTH helped carry the unconscious man to a compressed air supply. He unhesitatingly shared the mask with his unconscious shipmate until a rescue party arrived. By his outstanding self-sacrifice initiative, heroic action, and coolness under extremely hazardous conditions, CHARLESWORTH was directly responsible for saving of one man's life which otherwise would have been lost and contributed greatly to preserving the security of the ship. His courageous actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”