

LALKA, Charles J.

MM2 USN

USS BENNINGTON (CVA-20)

Rhode Island

RECOMMENDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION on CO USS BENNINGTON ltr ser 5025 of 8/26/54. Rec'd Bd D&M 12/14/54

AWARDED: (SECNAV) LETTER OF COMMENDATION (WITHOUT RIBBON) by Sp Bd D&M Mtg, Ser 2 of 4 Jan '55. App SecNav 8 Jan '55.

“For Courageous action and performance, beyond the call of duty in connection with the disastrous explosions and fire which occurred on the BENNINGTON while he was serving in the Engineering Department. The BENNINGTON, while conducting air operations 75 miles south of Newport, RI, 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 the death or injury to 220 officers and men. Although well aware that great danger was involved, and of the threat of further explosions, LALKA volunteered to enter the most critical section to assist in damage and casualty control. The hazards of dense smoke, crumbled bulkheads and twisted furniture covered the area, but he made his way through these obstacles to help remove three men to safety. Numerous times he re-entered the stricken area, knowingly at great potential risk, to help remove the dead or injured persons. His courageous and untiring efforts were instrumental in the expeditions removal of many casualties and undoubtedly saved several lives. His actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”