

An Andrus family of stars

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In some cases, the comment about joining the military and seeing the world is very true. For Robert Andrus, a sailor with the Coast Guard at the close of World War II, it certainly was.

Robert William Andrus, called Bob, was born on Feb. 18, 1927, in Lock Haven to Manuel and Ada Andrus.

He attended Lock Haven High School and worked for General Armature of Mill Hall until he turned 18. Andrus enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard on Feb. 16, 1945.

"There were three brothers," remembers his sister, Betty Deihl, 87.

"At one time, all three were in the service. We had three stars in our window to show that."

His older brother, Manuel L. Andrus, served in the Army while his younger brother, Richard A. Andrus, enlisted in the Air Force.

Robert Andrus reported to Manhattan Beach, N.Y., for training and was then assigned to Miami, Fla., for his first posting. In Miami, he was assigned to the U.S.S. Admiral W.L. Capps, an Admiral W.S. Benson-class transport ship. He served aboard as a Seaman, 2nd Class.

His time aboard the Admiral W.L. Capps took Andrus to France and North Africa, then through the Panama Canal and on to Okinawa and later Japan. Many of these voyages were transporting prisoners of war back to their countries and bringing U.S. troops back home.

Andrus stayed with the ship until it was decommissioned in May of 1946. That same month, he was discharged and returned home just in time for his sister's wedding. He was an usher for the service.

"Just before it began," recalls Deihl, "He joked 'are you sure you want to get married?'"

"He said the same thing to each of his daughters when they got married," said Andrus' wife, Martha K. Andrus.

After returning from the Coast Guard, Andrus took a job with R.S. Homler Specialty Shop, installing floors, walls and countertop coverings. Both Martha and Deihl remember him being an excellent handyman.

"He was good around the house," recalls Deihl. "That was how my dad and mother raised us."

It was during this time that Andrus first met Martha.

Andrus met Martha at a high school football game after the war. She recalls that she was a junior at the time.

"I remember our first date," she laughed. "He took me roller skating. He put my skates on me and laced them up for me. I thought this was heaven, but that's the way men were back then."

The two were married in 1949 and had three daughters, Karen Nestlerode, 60, Susan Darrin 58, and Tina Provo, 54.

In 1962, Andrus took a job with Piper Aviation in the publications department. He worked his way up to supervisor, and stayed with the company until it moved to Florida in 1984. He traveled to Piper's new factory and helped set up publications there, but returned to Lock Haven afterwards.

Andrus is remembered as being very detail oriented.

"He said that if you did something it should be done right," Martha recalled. "He was very precise."

"I had six children," said Deihl. "They all thought uncle Bob was great."

"After all of us were married," Deihl said, about her brothers and sisters. "We would all go out on Saturday nights. If the songs Alleycat or Winchester Cathedral played, he'd take Martha's arm and pull her up to dance."

"He was a very nice man," said Martha. "We spent a lot of time skating or going to the movies. Then we'd go next door to the Dairy Bar for a Dusty Miller sundae."

Andrus kept in touch with some of his friends from his days in the service. Seymore Nesseson, of Chicago, attended his wedding in 1949.

Another friend, Jack Noll, visited from Williamsport.

"Even when Bob was sick," recalls Martha. "Two of his friends came to see him in Philadelphia."

Robert Andrus passed away on Sept. 6, 2003. He is well remembered by his family through stories and the photo albums he kept.

Both Martha and Deihl are very supportive of the Hometown Heroes program.

"I think it's wonderful," said Martha. "I'm so proud."

"From the very beginning I thought it was a great idea," added Deihl. "And I was so glad that my brother's family did that for him."