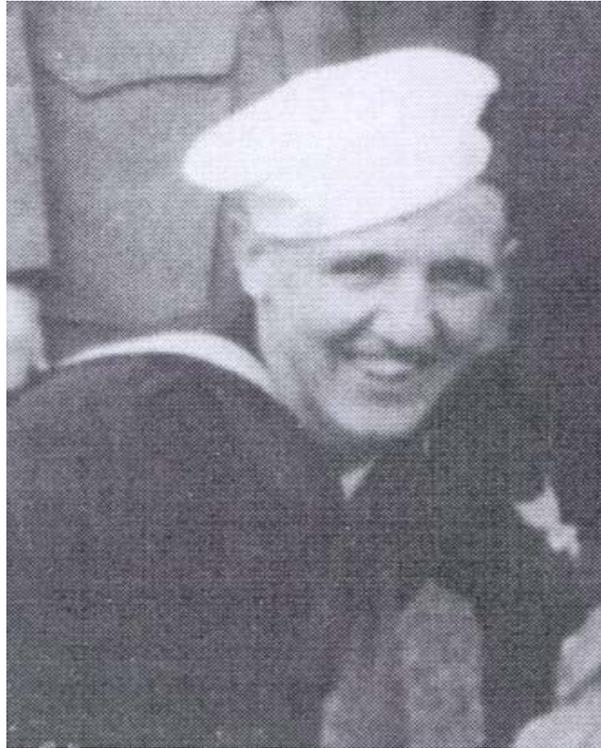


# Milton Anderson



Milton Anderson enlisted in the US Navy on 30 April 1943. He trained at the Naval Training Stations in Farragut Idaho and Wahpeton North Dakota. Anderson trained as a Machinist Mate and was assigned to the engine room on the USS Clay (APA39). The Clay was an Attack Transport ship, new to the US Navy and commissioned in December 1943. Milton and the USS Clay left Pearl Harbor on 30 May 1944. They were a part of a great American Naval Armada that was to drive through the Japanese occupied islands in the Pacific. On 15 June 1944 they executed realistic feint landings off northwestern Saipan that diverted a large number of Japanese forces. Early on that afternoon, they joined the main assault, launching elements of the 2nd Marines into the battle.



**USS Clay APA-34**

After the battle for Saipan, a major Japanese naval effort was crushed by the US 5th Fleet in the battle for the Philippine Sea. Undamaged by the air attacks, the Clay transported troops and prisoners to Pearl Harbor, arriving on 9 July 1944. They then traveled to San Diego to load the 5th Marines for the invasion of Guam. The resistance on Guam fell before they arrived and the Clay traveled back to Hawaii where they landed at Hilo and disembarked their troops to prepare for the next operation. The crew trained and prepared in Maui until August when they left with members of the Army 96th Division and joined the assault group scheduled for Yap.

Enroute to Yap, the plans were changed and their new objective was to be Leyte, 700 miles beyond. Attacks along the Philippine Archipelago had weakened the Japanese resistance and brass believed that the invasion of the Philippines was at hand. Leyte was the strategic heart of the Philippines. The USS Clay was diverted to Manus to prepare for the invasion. They sailed on 14 October and on 20 October the US Naval power was unleashed on the Japanese in the Philippines.

In the battles that followed, the USS Clay remained unscathed and on 24 October departed from Leyte to Hollandia and on to Morotai. For five nights the Japanese aircraft flying from Halmahera kept the gun crews on the Clay on alert. The men of the Clay brought vital reinforcements in men and supplies to Leyte and unloaded in one day. On 14 November they departed for Manus and then on to Cape Gloucester where they anchored on 27 November to prepare for the invasion of Luzon at Lingayen Gulf. It was anchored here that Milton remembers Santa Claus coming to visit them on Christmas 1944. The story he recalled for the Willmar West Central Tribune in 1998.

On 31 December 1944, they began their tough and torturous passage to Luzon. They sailed through and between Japanese held islands, in a bold thrust deep behind Japanese positions.

Before nightfall on 9 January 1945, Japanese suicide planes opened up a full scale attack. By sundown of that first day, the Clay had unloaded and set course for Leyte, with the gunners holding off the Kamikaze attacks. After loading troops of the 1st Cavalry Division at Leyte, the Clay hurried back to Lingayen and unloaded them in a single day on 27 January 1945.

They took on wounded, and arrived on Guadalcanal on 12 February. They unloaded the wounded and loaded elements of the 6th Marines to prepare for the huge Naval assault for Okinawa, one of the largest amphibious assaults in naval warfare.

En route to Okinawa, the Clay and its men rode through a hurricane. On its final approach, met a wall of attacking planes and gunfire. They arrived off their Okinawa beach on 1 April 1945. Against Japanese Kamikazie attacks and suicide submarine attacks, the men of the Clay unloaded the troops and sailed again unscathed on 5 April.

The Clay was on its way back to California and San Francisco to overhaul and prepare for the assault on Japan. They received additional armament and refresher training in San Diego before heading off again to the Pacific on 27 July 1945 with around 1,700 passengers.

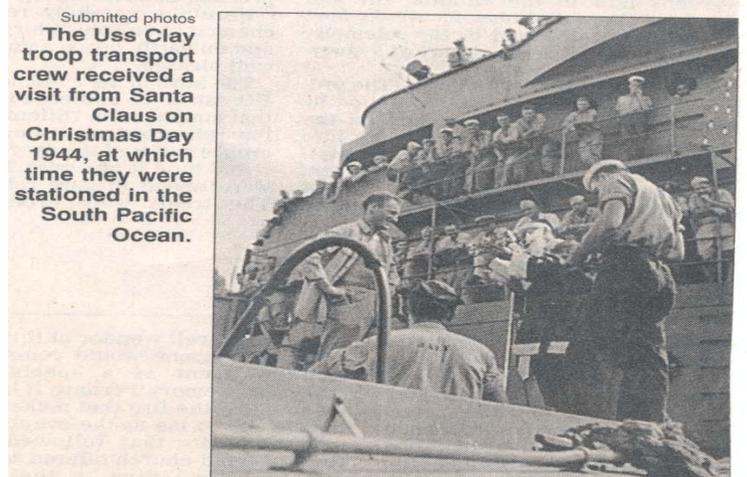
CHRISTMAS 1998 WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

# Christmas on the Clay

By Milton L. Anderson  
*New London*

The USS Clay (APA39), a troop transport, was in the harbor of the island of Manus, in the South Pacific Ocean, on Christmas Day, 1944. The convoy of ships carrying troops of the U.S. Army were there making preparations for the invasion of Luzon at Lingayen Gulf. It was anything but a white Christmas that found the Clay in the hot and humid harbor at Manus in 1944. After a mild celebration when Santa came aboard giving a small gift to each crew member and a sack of goodies to each troop member, the ship steered away to Lae, New Guinea, to participate in final rehearsals for Luzon.

Milton L. Anderson, 19206 Co. Rd. 5 N.W., New London, Minn., was a machinist mate, assigned to the engine room on the Clay. The USS Clay crew has been holding annual reunions for the past 29 years. Each year in a different city. The crew enjoys getting together to renew friendships and to reminisce of their experiences during World War II, including such events as Santa coming, even during wartime and when you're thousands of miles from home.



**Milton's article about the visit from Santa Claus on Christmas 1944, from the West Central Tribune, December 1998**

Enroute to the Pacific operations, the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, which brought about the collapse of the Japanese resistance. When the Japanese arrived in Manila to surrender, the men on the Clay were anchoring in Leyte Gulf. After V-J Day, Milton and the crew proceeded to the city of Cebu and early on 8 September swept the channel through minefields and swift currents into Tokyo Bay.

They unloaded the men assigned for occupation duty, and the next day sailed back to Cebu and on to Otaru on the northern island of Hokkaido. They then traveled to Guam, arriving on 12 October and loaded Marines for reoccupation duty in north China. From Tientsin, they sailed to Saipan to take on board homeward-bound servicemen, arriving at San Pedro California on 5 December 1945.

Milton Anderson was discharged from the US Navy on 20 April 1946 as a Petty Officer First Class.

Milton's ship, the USS Clay, was decommissioned in May 1946, and sold on 12 September 1946. The ship itself was used privately for a number of years before being scrapped in 1974.



**Milton's tailor made dress uniform (#11). Milton wore this uniform during his time in the Navy during the war, after which his brother Orvis used the uniform for his enlistment. Donated by Milton - 1996**