

**William H. Hunley**

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### **Summary**

William H. Hunley was born May 1, 1925 in Mathews County, Virginia, where his family lived on a small farm. His father was a Steam Engineer for a lumber company and, also, worked on a steamboat. At first William had to walk four miles to school but in 4<sup>th</sup> grade they got a school bus. He was nine years old when he decided to be an engineer. During his childhood he fished in the river and hunted. He also played ball, was on the track team and in the archery club. He graduated high school in 1942 and enlisted in the Air Force. The quota was filled and he passed specialized exams and was sent to Loyola University to study mechanical engineering. The program closed after five weeks due to requiring more soldiers in combat. William was sent to Camp Roberts, California in 1943 for basic Infantry training and was selected to be a Scout Sniper and given marksmanship training. For six months he watched the West Coast for the Japanese and then was sent to Camp Butler in South Carolina. From there he was sent to New England and then was shipped to Le Havre, France in January 1945 along with his school friends. They trained in maneuvers and traveled through Belgium and Luxembourg on the way to Trier and the Moselle River. In March 1945 he saw two Germans on a hill and fired and got hit by a grenade fragment. He lost his rifle in the Rhine River but two days later found a machine gun with two packages of ammunition. On April 3, he reached Ohrdruf, a work camp for Jewish prisoners, where he saw hundreds of dead bodies piled up and a few prisoners alive and standing but he did not know German to speak to them. The support troops took care of the survivors. William's unit ran after the escaping German guards catching them in the forest. His unit passed Langenbach May 5<sup>th</sup> on the Czech border and saw many German soldiers surrendering after the War was over. William was stationed near Salzburg, Austria until April 1946. He thought the German citizens were more pleasant than the Austrian citizens who were upset that their belongings were taken away from them. He was shipped home from France and went AWOL for a short time to DC to see his family before being discharged from Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. He returned to DC to enter George Washington University in fall '46 and lived with his father on 15<sup>th</sup> & M and worked part-time in the hospital where his father ran the power plant. After 16 years, he got his degrees from the University and went to work for the Navy where he designed ships for 30 years. William met his future wife, Carol, at a party at George Washington University in 1947. They got married in September 1950 and had two daughters, one in 1955 and one in 1958. He attended the University of Michigan to study Naval Architecture and retired from the Navy as Chief Naval Architect in 1980 and then worked for them under contract for another 30 years. His ancestors came in 1620 and spoke Elizabethan English which he still speaks to some extent. In 1992 he was Chairman of Alexandria's Seaport Association and started a project to teach teenagers to build wooden boats and tutor them in academics by relating the subjects to the sea. His projects expanded to 185 organizations. After the war, he was affected by loud noises but soon he recovered. William thought the draftees did not work as well as a team

as those who enlisted in the service. He was in the reserves at the time of the Korean War and was ordered to serve but the Navy needed him so he was excused. He bought a lot in Waterford County, VA and later built a house out of two log cabins on the property where they lived for 51 years. His wife died in 2003. He does not understand Holocaust deniers as he was there and witnessed it. He returned to Germany six times to see his English friends in the design programs and trace his wartime travels.