



Mathias Francis Gutman
Chief Petty Officer U.S. Navy
15 June 1943 – 19 December 1946

Mathias was born on 26 January 1925 in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where he attended Allen-Herbst grade school, Harrison Morton Junior High School, and Allentown High School. Prior to entering the Navy, he worked for Acme Food Stores in Allentown during 1942 and 1943. He enlisted in the Navy on 15 June 1943 and attended basic training at Sampson Naval Training Center in New York for seven weeks. Mathias was then sent to Camp Bradford, Virginia, for amphibious training, after which he was sent to Crane, Indiana, to await assignment aboard the *USS Landing Ship Tank (LST-135)*, which was undergoing construction at Seneca, Illinois. While he was awaiting assignment, *LST-135* was re-designated as a Motor Torpedo Boat/Patrol Craft Tender (AGP) on 3 November 1943. After she was launched on 16 November 1943, she underwent conversion at Baltimore, Maryland, where she was commissioned on 25 April 1944 as *USS Orestes (AGP-10)*. Mathias and the *USS Orestes* crew were then ordered to Crane, Indiana, to await completion of construction of and re-assignment to *USS LST-553*. They boarded *USS LST-553* on 17 April 1944 and were deployed to the Asiatic-Pacific Theater with stops at Cuba; San Diego, California; Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; and Guadalcanal to prepare for the invasions of the Southern Palau (Peleliu) Islands (September/October 1944); Leyte, Philippines (October/November 1944); Lingayen Gulf, Philippines, (January 1945); and Okinawa Gunto (April – June 1945). As a Coxswain, Mathias took part in all these invasions, transporting U.S. Marines and supplies to the beaches. After the invasions, Mathias, along with a skeleton crew of 27 other volunteers who remained aboard *USS LST-553*, was assigned to Command Minecraft, Pacific Fleet for 60 days to sweep pressure-activated mines in the harbors of Japanese ports to ensure the safety of entering U.S. Occupation Forces. While on active duty, Mathias advanced from Seaman Recruit to Chief Petty Officer. In addition to his campaign ribbons and WWII Victory Medal for his wartime services, Mathias was personally awarded the Navy Commendation Medal for his participation in the post-war minesweeping operations. *LST 553* earned six battle stars for her wartime service. She was decommissioned on 13 February 1947 and transferred to the Army at Yokohama, Japan. After Mathias left *LST-553*, he was assigned to Navy Base Yokosuka, Japan, before returning to the States for discharge at U.S. Naval Air Station, Alameda, California, on 19 December 1946. Mathias later enlisted in the Navy Reserves on 5 August 1955 and served as an instructor. On 1 January 1965, he volunteered for Temporary Active Duty as a recruiter with assignments at Folsom, Bethlehem, and Allentown Naval Reserve Training Centers in Pennsylvania. He completed his Navy career with retirement on 1 September 1973 in Allentown. He then entered into a four-year sign-painter apprenticeship at Stehly Sign Company. He became a Journey Sign Painter in 1951 for Stehly and was also an Insurance Representative for Mutual and United of Omaha and Metropolitan Life Insurance Companies. In 1970 he went to work for Mack Trucks, Inc., in Allentown on the "Fire Line" producing fire trucks. He became Chief Steward on the Fire Line for United Auto Workers Local 677 until his retirement in 1987. He continued to remain active, including holding several leadership positions, in Local 677 and Mack Truck Retirees organizations, Navy Enlisted Reserve Association, Sampson WWII Navy Veterans, Fleet Reserve Associations, Pennsylvania LST Association, and several civic activities in Allentown, Bethlehem, and Macungie, Pennsylvania. Mathias eventually settled in Lower Macungie Township. He married **Arlene Hess** (born 1 September 1923). His parents were **Mathias Alfonz Gutman** (14 February 1884 – June 1963) and **Veronica Gombocz** (24 June 1889 – May 1983).



USS LST-553