

BRIDGTON BIO

4 ON THE FOURTH RACE PRESIDENT

REAR ADMIRAL, USN, RET. JIM COSSEY

At 85 years old, it's apparent that Bridgton resident Jim Cossey's secret to a long and happy life is staying busy contributing to the greater good.

Jim is the President of Bridgton's 4 on the Fourth Road Race. This year will be the 47th annual race. Established in 1977, this event has raised approximately \$750,000 - all to benefit the Bridgton Public Library and local non-profits.

Jim's career as a Navy man was good preparation for being able to lead the 4 on the Fourth race team.

Jim Cossey was born an identical twin in Shattuck, Oklahoma in 1937, to Loyd and Kathryn Cossey. He and his brother, Charles, along with older brother, Jerry, and younger sister, Sue, grew up in the Oklahoma towns of Edmond, Barnsdall and Bartlesville. The twins graduated from College High School in 1955 and both matriculated at the University of Oklahoma, about three hours south of Bartlesville. Jim graduated in 1959 with a BS in Physics. Shortly thereafter, he was commissioned as a Navy Ensign. His first assignment was to the USS Basilone, a destroyer based in Norfolk, Virginia.



*Rear Admiral Jim Cossey
Commander Naval Forces Japan 1987*

In May of 1961, a fellow officer reported that a friend from Wheaton College, an all girls school at that time, had contacted him about finding a rental house for a week on Virginia Beach. A two-story house was found. Jim says, "Five young ladies arrived and were welcomed by a few of us from the Basilone. That's when I first met Beth Chalmers. A few days later, the Basilone was unexpectedly deployed to the north Atlantic as one of several ships positioned for rescue for a Presidential flight to Europe. I wrote Beth a letter and invited her to come back for another visit. Over the next few months, we had several dates and I visited her in Bridgton. I proposed in September and we were married in late October 1961."

In 1962, Jim received orders as Executive Officer of a minesweeper based in Charleston, SC. The Cosseys spent the next 30 years, and moved 18 times, in connection with Jim's Navy assignments.

Beth says, "We saw the world and loved every minute of it. The kids and I went wherever the ship was homeported. Our daughter, Catherine, was born in 1962 and son, Mark, in 1964. Typically, Jim would be deployed three to six months at a time."



*1961 - Lieutenant Junior Grade James D. &
Mrs. Bethia Chalmers Cossey*

In 1963, Jim was selected for the Navy Nuclear Power Program and, following a year of schooling and prototype training, volunteered for submarine duty and attended submarine school in Groton, CT. He then served on four nuclear submarines: the USS Shark, USS Narwhal, USS Henry Clay, as Executive Officer, and the USS Snook, as Commanding Officer, earning promotions from Lieutenant to Commander. Other than schooling, Jim's first shore duty assignment occurred in 1976 when he reported to the Pentagon in the Attack Submarine Division. Promoted to Captain in 1979, Jim was reassigned to the U.S. European Command at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) in Mons, Belgium, as a Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff.

In 1982, the Cosseys returned to Washington, DC, where Jim became the Chief of the Middle East/Africa Division of the Joint Staff's Plans and Policy Directorate. In that assignment, he was selected in 1984 for promotion to flag rank and went on to assignments in the Department of Defense, as Commander Naval Forces Japan, as Chief of Naval Technical Training, and as Assistant Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Plans, Policy and Operations.

Jim says, "We had a great life in the service. It was a journey you couldn't have planned and couldn't have made any better. A Navy career is not for the money, it's for the love of country."

Jim retired from the Navy on January 1, 1993. Over his career, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, three Defense Superior Service Medals, two Legions of Merit, and the Government of Japan's Order of the Sacred Treasure.

Following retirement, Jim spent six years working in the private sector for the defense company, Science Applications International Company (SAIC, now LEIDOS) in Washington, DC. He retired from SAIC in 2000. In 2003, the Cosseys moved to Maine full-time. Jim says, "When we moved to Bridgton, I wanted to be busy and to contribute, so I got involved with the Library, the First Congregational Church and Bridgton Highlands Country Club. In 2004, the Library assumed control of the 4 on the Fourth Road Race, and I became the President of the Library's Board of Trustees. My race duties started as the registration coordinator (and I still do that!) and, in 2006, I became the President of the Bridgton 4 on the Fourth Race Corporation and its race director. The library is a private corporation, and it's clear that without the annual financial support from the town and the race that the library would not survive. It's also clear that the race could not happen without the 90+ volunteers involved."

Married for 61 years, Beth adds, "Our life together and living around the world has been exciting. We have loved each location and still communicate with Navy and civilian friends we've made over the years. Our ties to Bridgton have remained strong. We are close to my brothers, Bruce and Bill, and their families, and we live on the same street. We also stay in close touch with our two children and three grandchildren."

Maintaining U.S. Navy connections, the Cosseys were able to attend the October 2022 commissioning of the new Arleigh Burke destroyer built at Bath Iron Works.

Currently, Jim is busy with race registration for the 2023 race which requires lots of e-mailing and entering spreadsheet data. He meets regularly with race director and fellow Navy retiree, Bill Graham. Bill says, "Our organization is better than ever thanks to Jim. His fingerprints are on everything. We've had more runners, campers and sponsors participating since he arrived on scene. His leadership and efforts are top-notch and appreciated."



*Rear Admiral Jim Cossey and wife, Beth
Japan 1987*



*Rear Admiral Jim Cossey (Ret.) and wife, Beth, at their home in Bridgton
Photo by Rachel Andrews Damon*

Bill adds, "We were so pleased to just learn that Jim was named by the Bridgton Lion's Club as their 2023 Volunteer of the Year. They have made an excellent choice."

Future goals for Bridgton's 4 on the Fourth include increasing participation to 2,400 runners and increasing sponsorships.

This year's race takes place at 8:00 AM on July 4th at the start line on Main Street adjacent to the Food City building. Pre-registration is required and can be done online at www.fouronthefourth.com until 8:00 PM on July 2nd. A Kids Fun Run/Walk takes place on July 3 at 4:30 PM at Stevens Brook Elementary School. Registration for the Kids Fun Run/Walk can be done online and in-person on Race Day until 15 minutes prior to the Run/Walk.

Jim says with enthusiasm, "See you at the 4 on the Fourth!"

Written by Rachel Andrews Damon