

The following piece, dealing with a former Hugh Purvis Shipmate suffering from asbestos poisoning, was supplied by the law firm Weitz & Luxenberg. They are representing him in a legal case verses the U. S. Navy. This is not an endorsement by the HPRA and it is provided as information purposes only. The HPRA does not endorse or promote any communications or involvement.

Hugh Purvis Vet Suffering from Cancer Due to Asbestos Exposure Needs Your Help

The recent reunion was a great experience for many of those who served on the Hugh Purvis. Everyone toasted to the good times, and to those shipmates no longer with them. Many made the journey, but some former servicemen, like Carmine Rufolo (69-72), were too sick to attend. Carmine was too ill because of recent chemotherapy and a need for upcoming major surgery.

Carmine is sick with mesothelioma cancer. It comes from breathing in or swallowing asbestos. He was exposed to this asbestos 40 years ago, like many other Navy vets, onboard the USS Hugh Purvis.

Carmine is currently in the fight of his life. This time, it's a war against an illness that was caused by the products he used while doing his duty to his country as a Seaman E3 from February 1970 to July 1972.

Asbestos Was Used Almost Everywhere

Asbestos is a mineral used by manufacturers in lots of products and materials. It was a large part of your seagoing life. Virtually every U.S. naval ship that was commissioned between 1930 and 1970 used asbestos anywhere that generated a lot of heat. It helped prevent anything from catching fire.

Even if you don't remember coming into contact with asbestos, the odds are that you'd be shocked by how much asbestos exposure you had in the Navy.

Aboard ship, asbestos also prevented fires from spreading from one compartment to others and melting the bulkheads. That meant it was almost always in the mess, because fires could easily break out in the galley.

It was often also in the paints coating the bulkheads, plates and hatches. Not to mention pipes, ducts and machinery. You'd also find asbestos in drywall, flooring and ceiling tiles. The pipes over your bunk, or anywhere in your quarters, probably had asbestos that vibrated off regularly.

You may have been exposed if you worked in the engine room on the turbines or shafts. Or if you worked on the boiler, removing gaskets and making replacements. There was also asbestos in the armory or magazine, and in the insulation materials – and maybe even paint – throughout the ship.

Asbestos Exposure in the Navy

Asbestos gets in the air whenever the product it is in gets hammered, welded, clamped, drilled, or cut into.

This frees up tiny fibers, which are the size of small flakes. The fibers float in the air and can stay there for days. Even when they land and settle down, like a dust coating, they can get stirred back up into the air.

This can happen from a breeze, or a crewman walking past. The fact that below deck the areas are enclosed and not well-ventilated doesn't help.

These tiny particles were all over the ship, and got into your body when you breathed. They've been in your body ever since. Over the decades since you served about the Hugh Purvis, the asbestos particle may affect your cells, and cause them to turn into mesothelioma cancer.

Carmine Rufolo did a lot of painting. Any of this work that disturbed the old paint – even just repainting or sanding, could have caused particles of asbestos to come loose.

One of Carmine's fellow bluejackets remember how, when shots were fired on board, the dust came down so thick off of the pipes that you couldn't see. Once the asbestos fibers got into the air, they could get into Carmine's lungs.

Whether he was just cleaning up around ship, or installing sheets in the sleeping quarter under a rain of asbestos, Carmine, and many others who served aboard, were exposed to asbestos that could lead to mesothelioma cancer.

Our law firm, Weitz & Luxenberg [link to <https://www.weitzlux.com/>], is working with Carmine to help get him the financial compensation he deserves from the manufacturers of these deadly asbestos products. It's been 40 years since he served on the Hugh Purvis, so he's having trouble remembering what some of the products were called.

If you remember working with him, and seeing the names of the products he used, please reach out to Neidra Wilson at 856-755-1115, so we can help him make his legal case about wrongful exposure to asbestos. And if you're suffering from cancer due to asbestos exposure, let us know if we can help you, too. We also have a website, the Mesothelioma Clinic [link to <http://www.mesotheliomaclinic.org/>] which can give you more information on this deadly cancer.

The Navy is aware of the problem of asbestos, and has an Asbestos Medical Surveillance Program that you might want to participate in: Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center Occupational and Environmental Medicine Division website.

[link to <http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/occupational-and-environmental-medicine/oemd/Pages/asbestos-medical-surveillance-program.aspx>]