

Half Staff – James O. Runkle

March 27, 1998

James O. Runkle, 74, died Friday, March 27, at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. He was the husband of Priscilla F. (Davis) Runkle. He was born in Tiffin, Ohio, on Sept. 2, 1923, to the late Lloyd O. and Helen M. (Tarr) Runkle. He was a graduate of Gloucester High School, class of 1941, and had resided in Bedford for many years before returning to Gloucester in 1987. Mr. Runkle was employed as an engineer assistant for the MITRE Corp. in Bedford for more than 25 years before his retirement in 1986. He had also served in the Merchant Marine during World War II and received the Merchant Marine Emblem, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Pacific War Zone Bar and the Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Bar before being discharged in July of 1945 as a second mate.

An avid sailor, he participated in racing at the Sandy Bay Yacht Club most of his life. He was a past officer of the National Bullseye Association, supporting the little 16-foot sloop he so loved to sail. He was also a member of the Rockport Thacher Island Town Committee and was a launch operator when Thacher Island was accessible to visitors.

Active in Masonic circles, Mr. Runkle was a 50-year member of The Tyrian Lodge, A.F. & A.M. of Gloucester, a charter member and Past Master of the Frank W. Thompson Lodge, A.F. & A.M. of Bedford, a member of the Washington Lodge, A.F. & A.M. in Lexington, Ashler Lodge, A.F. & A.M. of Rockport and the Scottish Rite Bodies of Salem.

Mr. Runkle was an active member of the Independent Christian Church Unitarian Universalist, where he recently retired from the Board of Managers. He was also a volunteer at the Sargent House Museum, vice-president of the Sandy Bay Historical Society of Rockport and a member of the Board of Friends of Meals on Wheels, for whom he drove for many years.

In addition to his wife of 49 years, he is survived by a daughter and son-in-law, Virginia R. and Thomas Scott of Gilroy, California; a son and daughter-in-law, Paul E. Runkle and Susan Nindel of Billerica; four grandchildren, James and Kendra Scott of Gilroy, CA, and Scott and Kimberly Runkle of Billerica; a sister, Eleanor Runkle Stevens of Rockport; a sister-in-law, Yilka Runkle of La Canada, California; two nieces and a nephew.

He was predeceased by a brother, L. Daniel Runkle.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, April 4, at 11 a.m., in the Independent Christian Church, Unitarian Universalist. Relatives and friends are invited to attend. It is requested that flowers be omitted. Contributions may be made in his memory to the Thacher Island Ramp Fund, c/o George Carroll, 18R High St., Rockport, MA 01966; or to the Independent Christian Church, 10 Church St., Gloucester, MA 01930.