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Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...



It's not uncommon for a business firm, a building, or even a street to bear an individual's name. It is, however, somewhat less usual to lend one's name to a battleship.

In Annapolis, Maryland, the one runs across the name **Klakring** without necessarily realizing that the references are to the descendants of Danish immigrants. Carl Theodor Klakring was born in Copenhagen in 1821, the oldest son of a small shopkeeper, Niels Madsen Klakring, and his wife, Dorthea. Carl trained as a copperplate engraver and by 1850 he was working in his profession, had married, and fathered a son named Olaf. The family lived in Holmen parish, one of the Copenhagen neighborhoods close to the Danish naval shipyards. Sometime in the 1850s Carl's wife apparently died; he fostered out his son and came to the Washington, DC, where he married a young German immigrant woman in 1860, changed his name to Charles, and had a second family. He continued to live and work as an engraver in the nation's capital until his death in the late 1890s.

In 1869 Olaf Klakring, now 20 years old and a trained cooper, became the 2nd generation of the family to come to the U.S. He gravitated to Annapolis, married an American girl, and raised a large family while working as a barber there for several decades. Olaf's 2nd son, Leslie, born in 1883, was a lifelong resident of Annapolis and employed for many years at the U.S. Naval Academy, where his only child, Thomas Burton Klakring (1904-1975), became a midshipman. Following his graduation in 1925 one of the young officer's first postings was on a submarine stationed in the Panama Canal Zone. From 1941 to 1943 Lt. Commander Klakring distinguished himself when the USS GUARDFISH, a submarine he commanded, was sent to patrol off the coast of Japan. Without the benefit of sonar or other sophisticated equipment his vessel sighted and torpedoed 77 Japanese vessels in just over a month. The GUARDFISH continued to chalk up an impressive record during subsequent patrols. For his heroism during the war, Thomas Klakring was promoted to Rear Admiral and awarded the Navy Cross with two Gold Stars, the Silver Star, Bronze Star and numerous other decorations; the GUARDFISH was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation while under his command.

Admiral Klakring died in 1975. In 1983 the USS KLA KRING, an Oliver Perry class frigate, was commissioned as part of the U.S. Navy, honoring this notable descendant of a sea-faring nation. Images of the USS KLA KRING and further information about the Admiral may be seen on the official vessel website: www.klakring.navy.mil.