

Ira E. Graham

**World War II
U.S. Navy
Pacific**

**USS APc 4
Quartermaster/Third Class**

Ira E. Graham

**Veterans
History
Project
Transcript**

**Interview conducted
July 20, 2016**

**Niles Public Library
Niles Public Library District
Niles, Illinois**



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Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: Ira E. Graham Rank: Quartermaster 3rd Class

Branch of Service: U.S. Navy Theater: World War II - Pacific

Unit: USS APc4

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Interviewer: Neil O'Shea

Videographer: Srdjan Vasilic

Transcriptionist: Victoria Marty

This interview is being conducted on Wednesday, July 20th, in the year 2016, here at the Niles Public Library. My name is Neil O'Shea and I am speaking with Ira Graham. Mr. Graham was born on September 5th, 1926, in Chicago. Mr. Graham learned of the Veterans History Project through contact with a veteran whom we had interviewed previously here, Irv Abramson. Mr. Graham has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project, and here is his story.

Ira, can I ask you when did you enter the service. (Interviewer's words)

August, 1944 (Veteran's words)

And where were you living in Chicago at that time?

64th and California, 6415 S. California in Chicago.

And had you completed high school at that time?

Lindblom High School.

You graduated from Lindblom High School. When you were at Lindblom, did they have an ROTC program?

Yes, I was in the ROTC.

Ahh.

And my goal was to at least get out of it as a commissioned officer. I think I was a first lieutenant.

So you probably started high school around the time the war was beginning, or shortly before?

They the war started in '39, so I was 13 years old then. I remember going to a bazaar at the temple I belonged to with my parents, and it was on a Sunday. It happened to be December 7, and we heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. And the people my father's age said, "I'll give those Japanese a week, it'll be over, you know. Who do they think they are?" And it wasn't over in a week. But, so.

Do you think the fact that war was in the offing affected your decision to participate in the ROTC, or the

First of all, I was in Boy Scouts, and I joined the troop, and it folded in six months or something like that. But before that, my parents, one Sunday morning, the bell rang, and somebody was at the door, and it

turned out to be a salesman for a summer camp. And I hadn't heard that they were planning to do that, and when this guy started to show me pictures of the camp, and all that stuff, I just felt I was being sold down the river. So I just got up and ran to the back to the house and locked the bathroom door, and I said through the locked door, when I'm 12 years old, I'll go to Scout Camp. It seemed to be long enough in advance. But when I was 12, I joined the troop that just lasted six months, but I was interested enough in scouting that I went on a provisional basis for individuals that didn't have a troop. And so we did that, and I got my Eagle Scout in scouting.

In those days, did they do an Eagle Scout project?

Yes, we did the project. I can't really remember what the project was. I think it was a park or something like that.

So did you graduate from Linbloom in May or June of 1944, and you fully expected to be, to be drafted?

Yes, but this friend of mine, Alan Milach, I'm really not sure whether he was a semester ahead of me or a year, he was somewhat ahead, and he qualified for military program Army A-12. There was an equivalent to the Navy. I took the test, but whether the war was winding down, or I didn't get as good a score as he did, he got into the program and I did not. So he was in the program and he was sent to Hunter College in New York City, and he wrote me, we communicated a lot, but he wrote me and said: "Please join the Navy before you're drafted." He really made it a strong advice. Whether he didn't like the Army or whether, I don't know what motivated him to do that, but he saved my life in a sense, because he went in and they washed out the whole program, as described in the DVD "Patton," as a companion disc, that showed how the movie was made, in addition to the movie itself, and they mentioned in that the educational programs of early commissioning were discontinued by Patton's request, that he needed troops for that final version of the ...

So, so then you, you enlisted in the Navy then as a result of this, what proved to be wonderful advice from Mr. Milach.

I had asthma as a younger child, it was not active at this, by this time, but I didn't tell the Navy about that, I really wanted to get in, and I didn't want to be a 4F or anything like that.

So you shared, that wish on the part of so many men of your generation, you wanted to get in and contribute to the effort.

Yes, that was just a natural thing. I mean, that's, that's what, you know, I ...

And your parents just accepted that.

Oh yes, they were proud and everything.

Where you an only child?

No, I had a brother four years younger.

So he was spared that, probably.

Yes.

So you were inducted and you went through Great Lakes?

Great Lakes. I can't explain to you how the Navy worked. But it was fantastic. At Great Lakes, they gave us a one-on-one interview, prior to that they showed us the movies of all the duties of Navy people, so we

knew what the sections were and what the occupations were, and this one-on-one interview would be equivalent to being interviewed for Abbot Labs or something like that, I mean, they wanted to know what I wanted to do when I got out of the Navy, and I said I was interested in going to college and being a chemist or a chemical engineer, and they said the thing they would think about would be like a lab tech or something like that, so I said OK, and they said your grades were good in math and we'll put down a second choice, how about a Quartermaster, that would be in the bridge of the ship with navigation and things like that, so it sounded like a pretty good deal. In the boot camp, you start talking to your fellow Navy guys, and when I told them what my first choice was, they said, [laughing] it may be a good choice, but you're not going to be a lab tech, you're going to be in the corps bringing blood to the invasion. And so, I wanted to be in service, but I'm not sure I was that strong of a person, motivated to carrying blood on an invasion. Because Iwo Jima and Okinawa were there. So they said we'll give you a second choice. My chief was a hard-ass guy, I mean, he was really by the book, but when I told him I wanted to change the classification, he told me how to get to the other side of Great Lakes, to where I could do that, and I followed his directions, went over there, they pulled out that punch card, and said, we'll just give you that second choice if you prefer to do that, and that's how I got to be a Quartermaster in the Navy, a quartermaster is not a store keeper, it's on the bridge of the ship.

But you didn't have any difficulties adjusting to life in the military.

No. No. I could swim, you had to jump off a tower in case you ...

I suppose the Boy Scout and the ROTC training it sort of gets used to that, you accept that there's authority, and ...

In service school, after I finished Great Lakes, I mean after I finished boot camp, as I said, I qualified for the service school, and a short time into that program I came down like many other people at the Great Lakes at the time, with Scarlet Fever, there was an epidemic. And so I was pulled out of that company that I was in, for the treatment, I don't know if it was a week or 10 days, and the doctor in charge of the program, was on to the idea of Vitamin C as a recovery thing, so they brought in grapefruit and oranges, and we could eat all those, that we wanted, and I got over it without any heart damage or anything like that.

Well so far it sounds like the Navy's taking care of you.

Yes, yes

Did you have to, did you receive advanced training, beyond the ...

The service school.

The service school. That was also at Great Lakes.

Yes.

From Great Lakes, then, you were assigned to a ship that you picked up on the West Coast.

Right, yes, but, in preparation for this, I was just thinking about this, like, my story is like in three parts. They are not necessarily equal parts. But one-third was at Great Lakes: Boot camp and service school. The second third of the thing was being transported from Great Lakes to San Francisco on a troop ship, and the problem of finding my ship. It was not at Samar where we landed, although we stopped at Pearl Harbor, we heard there was a V-E Day, and then Samar wasn't there. I was transferred to Leyte on another ship, and then from Leyte through the Admiralty Islands and to Hollandia, New Guinea. Each of

these things were smaller ships that I was being transported (in). And when I got to Hollandia, I saw the ship, I recognized it, I had seen pictures of it, and it was called the US APC, the USS APC, A is Auxiliary, P is Transport Personnel, and T is transport, or C was I guess the equivalent of that. APC 4. It was leaving Hollandia, so I got off the ship with a few other people who were on it, and worked my way to the port office, told them that I think I saw my ship, you know, "Where is it now?" and they checked it and they said it's on its way to the Philippines. So, I really pleaded with them to get me to my ship, I wanted to get a rating, I wanted to do what I was trained to do, and I think for a kid that was just a little over 18 years old, I think they thought I was ambitious to do that, and so they got me on a DC-3, I was the only passenger, it was like building materials. We got on a jet to Manila, and eventually to Subic Bay, where my ship was.

Did, any of your friends in the Navy that you met at Great Lakes, did they, did they go west with you but then everybody went to different ships?

Different ships, yes.

And then, what was the hardest part of quartermaster training? Was that ...

It was very academic. You kept a log of the ship every day, weather conditions and things. The ship was, did not move very much, so we were in Great Lakes, I mean, in Subic Bay, rarely got off the ship although it was tied up. I know on one occasion we walked into the town and got some ice cream and brought some of it back.

Subic Bay, that was a huge base, right? So you took the train from Chicago to San Francisco.

Right.

And then you tried to catch onto the right ship. We always have to ask, like did you get sea sick on the sailing?

No. My experience was, as long as I had something to do, I wouldn't get sea sick. If it was just sitting or standing, being a passenger or something like that, my stomach would, I never vomited or anything like that.

And the food wasn't so bad on the ship?

No. On my little ship. The ship was only thing like 103 feet long, made of wood. It was made in Maine. But it was an unusual ship as you can see.

Wow. Yes.

And um. So, uh.

This is the ship. And this is the ship that you journeyed in from San Francisco.

No, no, not a huge army.....

Oh, this is in the Philippines.

Yes, in the Philippines.

Now I have to ask you this: Were you subjected to any, rites of passage as it were when you went over the equator or anything?

Yes, I got that at my office. It's framed as crossing the equator, and then, the dateline, I have one for that. And I saved all those things and framed them.

But it wasn't too unpleasant or ...

No, it was kind of a joke.

It wasn't hazing gone wild or anything. Yes, shellbacks, or something.

Yes. I think that's the equator, I think.

Yes. So, um, was it difficult to stay in touch with your family when you were in the Pacific?

No, there was the forerunner of email that was called V-mail, and I communicated with them. And I took the liberty of doing some sketches on the thing so I could tell them something that might not ordinarily be transmitted that went through the V-mail so I was able to do that. And, one experience, several years before I went into the service, we lived on the south side, and some of the other branch of the family were north. We were kind of like the south side people, they're not, the north side was a little higher class, they thought, I think. And we were driving down a main street in Chicago on an icy winter, and it was very slippery, and my dad had trouble avoiding an accident. But he strained to avoid it and got some sort of a swelling in his neck. And, the doctor didn't think it was any problem or anything like that, but it apparently got worse. And so when I was in the Philippines and in communicating, they wrote me and they said your father is going to have surgery now, and we are talking to a Congressman to get you home for the surgery. And I was very annoyed that they would do that, I didn't want to come back until I was finished regularly, so I did.

I don't know if this would have been a question. Did you have a preference if you did your naval service in the Atlantic or the Pacific? I mean, I know at the time ...

I wasn't given a choice.

You weren't given the choice, yes. So, at this time, I'm thinking back, when some of the gentlemen said it would be short, but the Japanese would be taken care of in a short time. But when you were going to the Philippines, and you were out there in Subic Bay, you really felt the war was coming to an end, and the United States was going to be victorious.

Well, as I said, when we landed in Pearl Harbor on the way over, we heard the V-E Day, so it was like gradually happening. But we got word of an atomic bomb being dropped in Japan when I was in New Guinea.

So you got the news of the bomb when you were in New Guinea which was where you went from the Philippines.

Yes, so you know everything seemed like it was being wrapped up, but you really didn't, you know, there was no television or anything like that.

So at this stage of the war, did you feel pressure or stress or anything, or ...?

No. My stress was, I was on this ship, and they had a quartermaster on it, and the ship would only have one quartermaster. So I wanted to get on, become a quartermaster of that ship. And so when a bigger ship came into port, I would, quarter master is a joint rate with signalman, they work together, so I would signal with the flashing light: Do you need a quartermaster? And no one needed one. So I mean, that was pressure to try get my rating.

When you say rating, is that a promotion?

Yes, I was like equivalent to a private when I got out of uh, I mean the Army equivalent to a seaman, it was called, in the Navy.

But you did rise to quartermaster third class?

Yes, my friend, no third class. When my quarter master got out of the service because of points, you know there was a point system. He got out, and I was left on the ship and, got my rating Quartermaster 3rd Class.

Do you recall the name of the ship on which you got your rating?

Yes, it was USS APc 4.

But this isn't the APC.

That's it.

That's it, there. So did you learn Morse Code or signaling?

Yes, that would be part of it.

Did you, in terms of relaxation or entertainment, were there any USO shows, or did you get any interesting leaves in Manila? Getting the ice cream, was that it? I mean ...

That was one of the things. I know that on one of the ships that I was on going south to try to find my ship, they had movies on the deck of the ship, and we saw a movie, I think it was called "The Picture of Dorian Gray," or something like that. And there was another one that was a great movie, I'm trying to think of it, but, uh, "Laura," I think, was I think the name of the movie. So we had that, and a friend of mine on the ship was a radio man, and he would pipe in USO broadcasts and music and stuff like that. I know I listened to one record that he had over there, "Moonlight in Vermont." It's still a favorite of mine.

"Moonlight in Vermont." Did you pick up any interesting habits in the Navy, like smoking or drinking beer?

I did smoke. The first beer I ever had was, on my ship, the officer in charge, I don't think it was the captain, but probably another officer, took us out in a launch or something like that, and they had beer, and that was my first beer. I know that some guys found women, and I was young, and my values were not in line with that.

So with the timing of the war and the location, , you never felt you were, the ship, was it ever, did you ever sense you were in danger, from planes, or mines or something?

We had a call to, like an alarm, that we, maybe they heard a signal that might have been a submarine, it could have been a fish or something, and we went to battle stations. But there was no action on the thing.

Was your ship, did it have a front gun on it?

It had a gun, but I mean ...

Were you trained in shooting that gun?

No.

So. You would have had, you might have had a hard time defending yourself, then, if you can't ...

Yes. But you know, we were in a port most of the time, so.

So what is the sailing purpose of an APT?

OK, alright, well that's an interesting thing. I mean, this is, you know, it's wooden, and it's small. When it got to Australia or Hollandia, New Guinea, its function was to be a command ship or be the center of a LCT, that's landing craft. So these landing crafts would unload ships from bigger ships, and then bring the material to the shore, and this was a flag ship for that fleet. And so then when MacArthur reached the point where the war was moving to the Philippines, that's where ships like the APC 4 were transferred.

So for how many, for how many months, or period of time, were you in Subic Bay?

You know, I was saying that that's about a third of the time. It would probably be seven or eight months.

And then seven or eight months in Hollandia, New Guinea?

No. New Guinea was only until I could get arrangements to get transportation to the Philippines.

So I mean, I ...

Oh, I see. So New Guinea was the stepping point to Subic Bay.

Yes

OK. Yes And when you went from Hollandia, from New Guinea to Subic Bay, you made that journey on another ship.

No, that was a flight, as I said before.

That was the DC-3.

Yes.

Now I get it, thank you.

There were like reinforced rods, concrete, and stuff.

Yeah. Reinforced rods for concrete, what?

You know, it was like these metal, round, reinforced rods, that when they built something.

Like, the rebars or whatever

Yes, it would reinforce, they would put that inside concrete, to give the strength of the thing. You know, any construction would have rods imbedded in the concrete.

That didn't have anything to do with the DC-3.

No. They were just carrying this material ...

They were carrying the rebars.

Right.

Yes, yes.

Incidentally, the captain on the ship. There were two incidents, there were, on the thing. One was our refrigerator was overused because of the heat, and so there was a sign on the refrigerator saying that only

people allowed into the refrigerator would be the cook or someone working on the refrigerator. So, I was on duty at 2 o'clock in the morning or something, and somebody went into the refrigerator to see if there was any ice, because the drinking fountain, the scuttlebutt, was not working as well. So I put my finger in there to see if the ice had been frozen. Just as we did that, the door to the wardroom for the officers, down the galley there, what do you call it, down the, what do you call it, the hall, the passageway, slammed, so it sounded like somebody was coming down the thing. He looked at me, I was on duty, and he said, 'Graham, did you open the refrigerator?' And I said, "No, but I put my finger in it." That's one of the, put me in, you know, some of the Navy expressions, like don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes, or something. Damn the torpedoes. So he said, 'I think you better see the Captain.' So it was like, it sounded like being put on report. I went up him before I was asked to go up there and tell him about it, he could hardly keep from laughing, I was so worried about the thing. The other time was, we were backing into a slip at the pier, and when backing down, I don't know if I was at the wheel or not at the time, but, I can't remember that, but the ship got tangled, the screw of the, you know, the propeller, got wrapped around, I mean a rope, hawser it was called, and it got tangled there, so the captain told the boatswain mate to get into the water and cut that rope, because they had tried to reverse the screw and stuff. He went over, and he was a husky guy and all that, and he couldn't do it. So the captain got undressed, and jumped in, and did it. Now the captain was from Greenwich, Connecticut, his wife was a *Life* model, and when he got undressed, there was silk underwear.

[Laughing] Everybody chuckled?

We were, just could not believe it. But he cut the rope and ...

You remember his name?

Yes, I do. That goes with it. It's called, oh, I've got to think of it now. Royal E. Peterson II, and I look it up in the Google and apparently he's still alive, was at the time, but his wife had died. And I thought of communicating with him, and I still might do it, but ...

Yes. But he knew how to handle himself in naval situations.

Yes, he was a terrific guy. I mean, it was an interesting ship, and ...

So, what you would have to things to say about the Navy as an institution, based on your experiences at the Great Lakes and in, this was a good officer that you had.

I was thinking of staying in the Navy, or ...

Ah, that's the question, yes. So you did consider making a career of the Navy.

Yes, I had nothing, I mean I had, it sounded like a great deal for me. But I was somewhat concerned about, and that continued through my life, of, you know, I kind of wanted to be more on my own, and I didn't want it to be someone's decision to tell me where to go and stuff like that. So that was a discouragement of the thing.

So you spend the seven months at Subic Bay. So your ship isn't planning on sailing to Japan for the invasion or anything like that.

No. No. But when the war ended, I was in Hollandia, New Guinea, at that time I think, and it was you know winding down. Eventually the orders of the ship were to decommission it, and we had to get the ship ready for decommissioning, which included going into a dry dock in Subic Bay. And, you know, where they, you'd float into the dry dock, and they sink it in a sense. And there was work on that, and

then we gave it to the Philippine Navy, and they, there were two, one thing that I would have liked to take, but I was concerned about it, the legal aspect. I have an affinity towards clocks. So there was a wall clock, stainless steel, and I had, you know, my eye on it, but I didn't take it. But on the decommissioning process, they, people from the shore base came aboard to inspect the ship before they turned it over to the Philippines, they open up a drawer and the clock was in there and a .45 pistol. I didn't ever have the pistol or anything. I just said, I had no idea that clock being there, I'm sorry, I had to rise to the occasion, but I didn't take either of them.

So the fact that you had enlisted, did that affect your, the length of time you had to spend in the service?

Well. It was under a different thing. It was like, I think, until it was decided. There was no time limit to be in the thing. But when the war ended, there was a point system, and you added points for how long you were in, etc. And I don't know the degree of it or anything like that, but the first effect of the point system was that the quarter master on my ship got discharged, and so I rose, and then it was time for me to get, to be discharged.

And then from Subic Bay, then, you took a ship back to San Francisco or ...

Yes, I remember that, it was the Howse. It was an Army ship, the troop ship named the Howse.

So the morale must have been pretty good then, I would imagine.

The what?

The morale must have been good.

Oh yes.

No casualties with an invasion of Japan, or you weren't needed for the occupation presence or support.
No.

No, I did my time and I'm happy I was in the service, but I'm no hero, I didn't have any real brushes with any problems.

Oh, I think everybody that served was a hero. What did they say? In those days, you gave the government a blank check and they could cash it for however much, for whatever they needed. So you come back to Great Lakes, and then you don't have to do any kind of, there was no extension or any reconsideration, it's just ...

No. But my feeling was so good about the Navy that I did join the reserve. And I chose the active reserve, so it was like on a monthly or weekly, I can't remember the frequency of meetings that I would go to. And I was in college by this time, and I decided to, with a degree in engineering, that I could enlist, I could apply that to a commission in the Navy. So I applied for that, and they gave me a physical, and they found that I had a pilonidal cyst, it's like a, you are born with it, it's a cyst that is near your back side. I had that when I went in the first time, but I mean they never noticed it or didn't care about it. But for a commission, they did. So I got a surgeon to remove it, and then discovered that, two things, I would have been drafted probably or activated if I was in the active reserve, but a mistake had been made, and when they changed me in the process I decided because of school and things, to go into inactive reserve, somebody by mistake discharged me from the reserve completely. So I had repaired myself so that I could be eligible for the draft, but I didn't get drafted, but I was not in the reserve anymore either.

So you would have been eligible for the Korean War draft, is that what you're saying?

Yes, possibly. Actually, before the Korean War, there was this heated situation with Truman getting involved with the Greek War - there was something going on in the Greek area so that was a concern about being activated.

We had one veteran who was in ROTC, and served in the Navy, and then he had a nice job going, and then he got the draft board call that says, come in. And he says, I already served in the Navy. Yeah, but he said yeah, but General Hersey says this next war is going to be a land war in Korea, and he appealed, but the draft board voted like 3-2 or 2-1, so he had to go in again.

Yes, I didn't have that, but I had some concern about that.

Just going back to high school, I was in the ROTC, and the principal of Lindblom High School was a very distinguished principal, and through some Chicago politics, he was transferred to Harper, which was a smaller school than Lindblom, and the Harper one came over to Lindblom, and the students decided to strike over that, and so they called out the ROTC, as the, [laughing], forerunner, so I was mobilized at the high school.

So, so you didn't have any difficulty readjusting to civilian life after your time, your first time in the Navy. And then did you seek employment then or did you use the GI Bill to ...

I got the GI Bill to go to Illinois Tech.

IIT?

Yes. I started as a chemist, chemical engineering. And with all the influx of the war, and men interested in technical things, I was concerned that maybe it would be difficult to get a job. And so there was a program at IIT called fire protection and safety engineering. And most of the students in that program were supported by insurance companies that wanted that market. And so I tried to get the scholarship with them, but they said you've got the GI Bill, you're not eligible. So, but I did go into that program after one year at IIT, and I graduated with BS in fire protection and safety, and I got a job with an insurance company as a safety engineer. So I did that for one year and then in the process of talking to an insurance salesman, I decided that I might be better at doing that than as an engineer, so I came into the insurance business.

And the GI Bill ...

The GI Bill supported me while I was in there.

At IIT, yeah. So did you, did you stay in contact with any of your wartime buddies after the service, or ...?

Uh, not, and anyway, one, one, probably the most unusual one, was driving through the area, through Chicago, and came to my house unexpectedly, not very well-bathed on the ship or when he showed up, either. But that was surprising, that was the only one that came by. But on a trip on the Edens Expressway, paying the toll, I noticed the car alongside me, I recognized them as being in the service school that I was in. And I honked, and he pulled over when he got through this gate, and he was an eye surgeon in training, and we agreed to get together and he became a client of mine and a good friend, and he died about a year ago.

So you were an independent insurance agent?

I was an agent at Northwestern Mutual. I just celebrated my 65th year with, with the company. So, I've been that way since, since I started, you know, graduated from college, one year out.

Did you , join a veterans organization or anything?

No.

No. And so there weren't any reunions then or necessarily.

No. A book was featured in The New York Times book section, couple of years ago. And this company, the publisher of that company, it's probably a form of, I can't think of the word now, you know, where you publish it yourself.

Vanity, or self-publishing?

Vanity publishing. Yes. And, it was called The Skipper, this short paragraph about it. It was a Naval officer that was trained at Northwestern's ROTC, Naval ROTC and got on a small ship in the Pacific. So I bought the book, I mean I ordered it from Barnes & Noble, but they said it's BOD, or printed, POD, printed on demand.

POD, printed on demand. Right. Yes. Just in time. Yes.

And so I bought it and, fantastic story, and so I wanted to get in touch with the author. The guy who did it, and so the publisher said, "Well what we do is take your name, and if he wants to communicate with you, he will," which he did by electronic, he didn't call me up. And, so he said, the flotilla, the LCT flotilla, that similar to the one that you were on, is having its reunion at Great Lakes, like next week or something like that, you might want to go. So I did go to it. They were all my age, and they were on different kinds of ships, but there's all kinds of LCTs, so I went to it, but I didn't stay ...

When was that?

I don't know. Probably 25 years ago.

So I sense we're coming to the end of the interview. There's a couple of questions again that the Library of Congress recommends. So Ira, how do you think your service and your experiences in the service affected your life?

Well, I don't know how I would feel if I didn't serve. I'm very indebted to the opportunity, and I mean I got a choke up even in saying it, I just uh. My life has just been affected by the pride of doing it, and the embarrassment if I didn't. If any of those things — my father's surgery, or my asthma as a child — if I had used any of those things to stay out, I'd, I would be very embarrassed.

Do you think, has your military experience, has it influenced your thinking about war or about the military in general?

No. I mean, this love of the Navy is, you know, is very deep. And, there are two books out, one's called "The Admirals" and one's called "The Generals," and I read both of them and the admirals came out as being fantastic characters, and the generals were one problem after another, just not, very few ...

Was there a particular Navy admiral that you admired in World War II?

Well. I preferred, [Chester W.] Nimitz is one.

Nimitz.

He had a collision early in his career which would have probably kept him from getting to be a flag officer, but he rose above that. Bull Halsey, a fantastic character, recently written up in another book about being like a loose cannon. He had a rivalry with [Douglas] MacArthur, and they had a rendezvous

set somewhere in the Pacific, in the Philippines area. And the weather got very bad, and Bull Halsey was concerned that if he canceled the rendezvous, MacArthur would think he was yellow, and so he proceeded there, and there was a terrible loss of ships. Another book I read about the war, that I can't find this quote, but I definitely read it, that was Halsey had his carriers out in December in a trial exercise, and they were due back on December 7. And he said he'd be goddamned to risk his carriers, because he thought there was something going on. And he kept them out and those carriers survived Pearl Harbor, and led us to our victory at Midway. So, there's, you know, those two people are probably the great ones. I mean, [Raymond] Spruance was the admiral for the 7th Fleet when I, where I was in there. I'm very moved by that, by the whole experience.

You touched on it before, the episode with the refrigerator. Were there any other humorous events that you chuckle about, or ...?

Well, someone on the ship moved their bowels in the crew's quarters. I mean, it was not a necessity to do that.

In the cook's quarters?

No, in the crew's quarters.

It's not politically correct to say this, but I mean, the one that they thought did it was a black seaman, but nothing came of it or anything like that. It was something like the strawberry thing or something in "The Caine Mutiny," or something like that, there was some question about that. But the refrigerator and the captain in the silk underwear would probably be the great ...

Yes. So is there anything else you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?

No. You covered my, you know, I've since continued on with an association. Going through the salad bar at Whole Foods in Evanston, there was an officer in whites, Naval officer, and so I approached him, said I was in the Navy, and, you know, wanted to introduce myself, I just wanted to say hello. And he, we had lunch there with what we ate. And I'm in Rotary and so I invited him to speak at our Rotary Club, and when he left — what happens is, it was, the Commandant at the ROTC at Northwestern and IIT, and I think Loyola, too, and when they get to the point where they are captains in the Navy, but if they aren't going to move up to admiral as the next step, they put them in a school for a year or something like that. So as they leave, after their stint, they would refer me to the new replacement. So I've had a chain of these particular ones, some have been more friendly than others, but the one that I did meet, Captain Martin, became a very close friend of mine, and extremely close, we communicate all the time, and I'm having a birthday party, my kids are throwing a party for my 90th birthday coming up in August, and he's coming back from North Carolina to do it, so.

So you still are a Navy-minded man.

Yes. He's not in the Navy, he's discharged now.

But he ...

He was.

And that's how you met him, because he was ...

Yeah, right.

Because of his association.

So one of his replacements. I kind of skipped a couple. My daughter met a woman at some function in Wilmette, or uh, Winnetka, and one thing led to another, and she said my husband is a new commandant at, at IIT and Northwestern, the Naval ROTC, so she said, oh, my father is very involved. So one thing led to another, I met him, I had lunch with him, he's also coming to my birthday party, and um, one thing led to another, and he made me his honored guest at an affair that they have once a year, called the "Dining In." It's a dinner, and kind of like a play in a way, kind of a mixture of Congress and the House of Parliament in a way. But, yes, so, I bleed Navy, if I'm cut. Just 22 months, you know, I mean.

Yes, it's an impressionable age though for a young, a young person. Yes.

Pardon me?

It's an impressionable age for a young person.

Yes.

Yes.. Have you, has anyone suggested, or spoken to you about making the Honor Flight, or did you make the Honor Flight?

I did make the Honor Flight, actually. Captain Martin suggested that, and that's what I did. And it's, they kept on, my assistant, Katie, would be, making some of the arrangements, and a person, I met this woman, I can't remember her name now, but she's in charge of that program. I always thought ...

Oh, Mary Pettinato ?

Yes. It's an Italian sounding ...

I just had the feeling that she was a older woman, from ... Well, she was at Irv's ...

Oh yes, 'cause she's ...

You were there?

No, no. But I heard about it, yes.

Yes, a knockout. I mean, she's really a beautiful young woman. So I was surprised to see that. But anyway, so Mary, you know, in the conversation, the woman says, your boss, or whatever you call them, your employer, will never get over it. Katie said, "What's so unusual about it?" she says, well, I'll tell you, but it's fantastic, it's something, he'll be very impressed. So we left for Midway, I know it sounds, Midway, and they picked us up, it was very early in the morning, got there, and some delays, but while we were having donuts and coffee, the imitation of the Andrews Sisters were singing.

The Legacy Girls.

Yes. So we got to Dulles, and there were fire engines with sprinkling water, and for some reason we got off schedule or something. So we saw the monuments in the air.

The Smithsonian in the air.

Yes

Yes.

But we didn't have time for dinner in a restaurant or at the airport, and they served it aboard the plane. And, then mail call.

Oh.

You know, it's so simulating, the thing. Just, well, everyone else got one of those envelopes, that I didn't think I'd got one, but everyone got one. But then when we landed, there were the fire engines again, and you go through the gauntlet of everyone shaking your hand, saluting, and just pandemonium, and then to top it off with the Scottish bagpipes, that's what Mary was trying to say. That's fantastic.

And you made that Honor Flight in, recently, or ...?

Well, three years ago, maybe.

Three years ago.

Did you do it, or?

No. But I've been down there at Midway, to welcome, a couple of veterans back The emotion is, well, yes. It's an amazing thing.

I had the feeling that, very briefly, I was at Northwestern Mutual's annual meeting, which I'm going to next week, at the end of this week. And at one of these meetings, they had a football star, and I think it was at West Point, and he was several times to Afghanistan and Iraq, and he lost his legs, and he spoke about, you know, motivation and things like that. And then there was another guy talking about, he was in the insurance business, and he wrote a book that you could get your name on it artificially, like that you helped write it, and it was about your life plans. And I thought about those two guys, you know, one about motivation, and the other one motivation in terms of what happened to him, and I thought it's the unfairness of certain people paying the price, that, it should be more universal. And I was really thinking of getting active in passing a universal service thing, getting some action. And I even had a name, "USA," Universal Service of America, or something like that.

Our interviews often come to this point.

And so I got involved with it, to the point of thinking about it and all that, and my wife's nephew, his wife is, was in Hillary's wing of the White House, she worked for Hillary, and she's been very active in things of this type, and she wrote an article, that this Mc..., the general that got kicked out of the Army from Bush, I think, for saying something.

[Stanley A.] McChrystal.

McChrystal.

Yeah. Yes.

Those two people wrote this article, it was a joint article with three or four people with the general and my wife's daughter-in-law, and uh, or whatever that relationship is. And you know, I looked into it. That was on that. But it had some of the problems with it. And then further investigation, it's a very complicated thing. Even if it could move ahead, there's, what would these people do in the universal service? I guess, the costs of, the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] during the war, I mean, the Depression. That's one idea. But there's union problems, going to be building bridges, would these people be volunteers? It just got so complicated, that I kind of, haven't followed up on it, but I think in spirit, it's just terribly unfair. And I read something recently, that people in the southern part of the United

States seem to be in service because of the economics, or something like that. And it's just unfair, so. I'm gonna ...

But the Navy was certainly fair to you, and you were fair to the Navy, and yes. Well thanks for coming in.

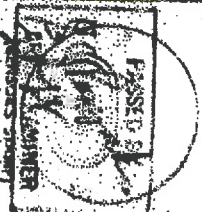
I appreciate this opportunity.

You're welcome, sir.

Reader's Note:

Please continue on through the following four pages to see a copy of the important letter referenced by Mr. Graham from his friend, Alan Meilach, then serving with the Army in Europe. Mr. Meilach would die later that month in January, 1945. Other items include a picture of Mr. Graham's ship, his Lindblom High School yearbook picture, a screen shot of Mr. Meilach's overseas headstone, a photo of Mr. Graham's grandson attending an event at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center - an instance of Mr. Graham's continued proud association with the US Navy in the Chicago area.

Print the complete address in plain letters in the front bottom, and your return address in the upper part of the flap. Use typewriter, but not in dark ink. Print or write nothing to and address for forwarding.



To: **MR. GRAHAM**
COL 1557 U.S.M.C.
CREST LAKE, ILLINOIS
U.S.A.

From: **MR. ALLEN MELACH**
COL 200 INF ARMY
2 CM NEW YORK

See Instructions No. 1

Postage, stamps, return address

Dear Sir,

Brooklyn, N.Y. 11218
 January 13, 1945

Dear Sir, I am writing a letter to you from a few days after fighting and following the German from 1941 to 1945. I am out here in a pretty rough and life in a pretty rough comfortable. I have to make out here pretty at night and it's pretty bad the paper since it is on Christmas day you will know what has been doing. I have the animal with me, I know that we all very out here you get a small thing by getting the money and it's just you little get into the bank. With all the animal thing around me, I have a private occupation. It is in digging for the and the are big. I have even killed a cow? We get a horse now and when the morning some village and when we do we not believe we can. On getting a number and it is small now. I have to you like you occupation in the morning? I have playing long and you will be a thousand night. I have you all a horse to go home yet? I'll let you the guide of every man you. I'll have the 1945 to put some around on the fire at 11:44 when you get the 1945. I'll have the 1945 to put some around on the fire at 11:44 when you get the 1945.

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE

Letter received from Mr. Graham's friend Allen Melach, written from the front in Europe and referencing Mr. Graham's choice of the Navy, the service branch he had recommended. Mr. Melach would die in combat on January 17, four days later. He is buried in Belgium.

Mr. Graham in the Navy on board the USS APc4, pictured below.





ETHELYNE GEHRKE: G.A.A.; Office Assistant; Honor Society; Franch Club Secretary; Teachers Assistant; Art League, Band Lyre.

ROBERT GEIGER: R.O.T.C.; Hall Guard; Inter-Class Basketball; Inter-Class Baseball; Rifle Company; Inter-Class Football; Inter-Class Volleyball.

WILLIAM GENTRY:



ARTHUR GERKE: Greenhouse; Swim Team; Swim Team Manager; L Club.

RICHARD GIRVIN: Bowling; Concert Band; R.O.T.C.; Weekly; Dance Orchestra Manager; Public Speaking; Inter-Cabinet Council.

JUNE GLISYNSKI: G.A.A.; Sophomore Girls Club; Junior Girls Club; Senior Girls Club; Weekly; Honor Society; Scholarship Certificate; Team Games; Socy. 4A Class.



MARY GLOMBICKI: G.A.A.; Sophomore Girls Club; Junior Girls Club; Senior Girls Club; Los Dormillones (Spanish Club); Honor Society (7 Sem.).

LORETTA GOLON: G.A.A.; Sophomore Girls Club; Junior Girls Club; Senior Girls Club; Team Games Rhythms; Honor Society (1 Sem.).

JEANNE GRADY: Sophomore Girls Club; Junior Girls Club; Senior Girls Club; G.A.A.; Team Games; Rhythms; Leaders; Spanish Club.



IRA GRAHAM: Honor Society; Rifle Team; R.O.T.C., Lieut; Hall Guard, Capt.; Ushers; Art League; Rifle Company.

DAN J. GREEN: Bowling Team; Hall Guard; Inter-Class Baseball; Inter-Class Football; Band; Inter-Class Basketball.

EDITH GRUBBE: A Cappella Choir; G.A.A.; Senior Girls Club; Tap; Honor Society; Library Assistant; Office Assistant; Junior Girls Club.

DON GUENDLING: Honor Society; L Club; Captain Junior Basketball Team; Wrestling Team; Swimming Team; Cross-Country.

ELEANORE GUHL: Senior Girls Club; G.A.A.; Honor Society; Junior Girls Club; Sophomore Girls Club.

MARY LOU HANLON: G.A.A.; Weekly; Office Assistant; Glee Club; Honor Society; Sophomore Girls Club; Junior Girls Club; Senior Girls Club.

AUDREY HANSON: G.A.A.; Sophomore Girls Club; Tap Dancing; Team Games.



HEADSTONE INSCRIPTION AND INTERMENT RECORD							
SECTION A	INSCRIPTION (Front) (Name, Rank, Organization, State, Date of Death, Grave No.)						
	XXXXXXKARX XXXXXX XXXXX		AKKRXAX		ALLEN E. MEILACH S SGT 75 DIV ILL JAN 17 1945 19		
	INSCRIPTION (Rear) (Service Number)						
SECTION B	16174460						
	PERMANENT CEMETERY HENRI CHAPELLE 1201				BLOCK B	ROW 9	GRAVE 19
	CREED 3	RACE 1	SEX	DECORATIONS PH			
	TEMPORARY CEMETERY 1240				BLOCK BBB	ROW 6	GRAVE 119
	NAME AND ADDRESS OF NEXT OF KIN MR. SAMUEL MEILACH 6453 SOUTH RAKKRRONKAXXRX CHICAGO, ILL.				D-D NUMBER ARM 1		
REMARKS						ROSTER REFERENCE 308	

ABMC FORM-1
1 DEC 48

D.M. LH

Mr. Meilach is buried in Belgium at the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial which contains the graves of 7,992 members of the American military who died in World War II.



Ira's Grandson,
Jack Kenter's 10th Birthday
At Great Lakes Naval Training Center
June 2008