



## Paul White

Motor Machinist 2/C, United States Navy  
World War II  
1943-1946

I was seventeen years old and working at a mortuary in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, when I went into the service. After basic training in San Diego, California, I was sent to Chicago and from there to diesel school on Navy Pier, then to Norfolk, Virginia. I attended two more diesel schools before I was shipped out to Orange, Texas, where we picked up a new ship, a destroyer escort. We had a shakedown cruise in Bermuda and then we came back and made ready. We started running convoys to Europe, and I made seven convoys--Italy, France, England.

You know, we were very fortunate. They were sinking ships all around us and the closest we came to being in a war zone, was when we approached LaHague, France. Just before we pulled in, the Germans sank three ships there in the harbor. The wolf packs were attacking all the convoys they could, but we were never attacked. Once we came upon a supply ship near the Rock of Gibraltar, and we had to break off from the convoy and, alone,

escort it into Italy while the wolf packs were out there waiting for us. We thought we had run into one. We did kill a few whales thinking they were submarines.

My work was pretty much routine. I stayed in the same engine room and slept in the same bunk the whole time. I was on the same ship all the time. But I guess that's as much excitement as we ever did see. One night the ship took a roll, a 70-degree roll, and everyone went topside. I was the last one to get there. I asked them how large the waves were and they told me they were 60-70 feet. The water was about 20 degrees. I said, "If this ship goes down, I'll go with it. I'm sure not going to jump into that ocean." And I went back enjoyed a good night's sleep.

Before the war was over in Germany, we went to the Pacific Ocean. After we were out at sea, we were told that the war was over. They gave me almost a vacation cruise through the Pacific. Well, very fortunately, when the war ended in the Pacific, we went to Hawaii and stayed about 60 days, and I got leave every other day during that period. So I enjoyed Hawaii. After that, we went back through the canal to Jacksonville and went up the St. John's River about twenty miles from Jacksonville. There the ship was decommissioned before I was shipped out and discharged.

When I entered the Navy, I was a Christian. I almost had no fear. At that time I was very close to the Lord and I never worried about anything happening to me. On our ship we had a group of Christians from every denomination, and we would have Christian conversations quite often. We didn't have a chaplain or anything, but we did have some services where all of us participated.

Well, when I got home, I worked that summer and then, in the fall, went to the University of Arkansas. After a year there, I decided that I wanted to be a mechanic so I went to Chicago to air conditioning school. I was working part time at Swift and Company, a meat company, when a friend from church asked me if I would like to work in the engine room. After a few months of firing the boiler, I became an operating engineer and stayed there for about six years.

I was single when I was in service. After six years in Chicago, I came back to Camden, Arkansas, and worked at a plant there for about three years. A friend and I went to El Dorado and he introduced me to Flo. I dated her best

friend for several months, but then I found Flo to be the ideal person and I married her. We have four children and eight grandchildren.

After work slowed down in Arkansas, I went to Houston and took a job and worked through the pipefitters local in Houston. Being in service really had very little effect on my life. Actually, while I was in the service, it was almost like a job and when I came back I went to work and have worked since.

Well, we have a flourish right now of patriotism, but in WWII the whole United States seemed very patriotic. They loved the service men at that time. Later on, they lost a lot of their love for service men.

Actually I had a very calm time in service, and I enjoyed a lot of it. Being young, I met people all over the world and found that most of them were real nice. I never went to a reunion, but I did visit several of my friends that were in the service with me.