

Clifford Longcoy  
US Navy, SOM 3C, Sonar Man  
Atlantic, Mediterranean, Pacific  
USS Jordan, USS Gillette

I lived in Black Mountain, enlisted in the Navy at age 17. "I saw the flag waving." We stayed a lot in Norfolk when I was a kid and I always wanted to be in the Navy. I was at Western Carolina for a year when I enlisted. Most of the boys at Western had gone into the service (there were only 10 boys to 220 girls). When I enlisted, you had to weigh 120 lbs, so I ate bananas all the way to Raleigh and I made it.

Boot camp was 12 weeks at Great Lakes, IL. It was July- the heat was miserable. Our chief was a tackle for the Green Bay Packers during the week, and he was one mean son-of-a-bitch. Our company was comprised of a bunch of people from here- Black Mountain, Asheville, Madison County. We were buddies and comfortable with each other. After two weeks in we were joined by "Yankees"- boys from New York and New Jersey. One of our instructors was a Chief Officer over two companies, Johnny Vaught. He was a coach sat Ole Miss and mean (when you're 17 you don't know).

"We don't know if we're going to hang you boys or not", "You boys will never see daylight again."

There was one older fellow with us (19yrs), a family friend who looked after us boys from Black Mountain. His name was Charles Leagon. He played football at Western and kept our noses clean. He was killed at Iuwo Jima.

After 12 weeks we had leave and then went to the Naval Station at Key West for anti-sub warfare training (July 1943-Dec. 1943). We had taken aptitude testes and I was designated as a Sonar Man- used to detect enemy subs. The reason I was selected for sonar training, I studied the classical violin and could hear high-pitched sounds.

After training I joined the USS Jordan in Charleston. We had a shakedown cruise for a month in Bermuda to learn how to run the ship. We escorted convoys across the Atlantic. Our ship was built for one thing- to hunt subs. We had depth charges-"hedgehogs"- not much for defense but we weren't worthy of being attacked.

Our first deployment was in the N. Atlantic on the USS Gillette. Most of the Wolfpack (a bunch of Germany's subs waiting for a convoy) were gone, so we were basically looking for individual subs. It was rugged, cold, miserable, very high seas. You could only go as fast as the slowest ship in the convoy.

On the USS Jordan we were in the Mediterranean. We had contact with a sub off of Gibraltar. We think we sunk it (Easter 1944) but couldn't prove it. If you don't see debris, there's no credit. Nine miles ahead of one of our convoys, planes came in and bombed. We never felt like we were in combat. There was little fear except during "general quarters", which was a go-to-battle-stations command and created a little apprehension. The sonar could ping on whales or bluefish. You could sure get your butt whipped for a false alarm in the middle of the night. ("Ain't nobody happy at 2 a.m.") I got off the boat once- the biggest thrill- to go through the Rock. We couldn't go to Spain - it was neutral.

In January 1944 I went to New London for sub training. I thought it would be fun. It wasn't - a glorious but very deadly service. Most men in sub service were killed in WWII. They were looking for a sonar man to service on the USS Gillette so I was pulled from sub training. We were in the North Atlantic and Pacific for two years.

When the war was over and the bomb dropped, we were 400 miles off Japan. When the surrender was signed, we were 2000 yards from the USS Missouri. We could see McCarther and Nimitz with spyglasses. Every available ship was there as a big "show" for the Japanese.

We mostly did escort runs and delivered mail- like Mr. Roberts, we really wanted to be with a fleet. "It ticked me off- I wanted to be with the big boys!"

We had lots of leave between convoy runs. I never felt far from home. I didn't think too much of the conscientious-objector camp around here, that's for sure. Didn't have to get my weight up with bananas. I weighed 150 when I got out- probably the beer!

A lot of WWII vets feel ignored, overlooked. Twenty-two million were killed overall and there's no National Monument.