

ALL GAVE SOME; SOME GAVE ALL

This is the first in a series of articles about the Craft brothers, sons of Charles and Rebecca(Grammer) Craft. This week's veteran is Bob Craft.

Bob played football at Assumption High School and was a member of the team in 1938 and 1939, graduating in 1941. The bombing of Pearl Harbor three weeks before his eighteenth birthday determined his immediate future.

In his own words, he related the following on his experiences:

"I signed in the Navy for six years on January 27, 1942, at Decatur, Illinois. We were sent to St. Louis by way of Springfield for physicals. Since there was a shortage of barracks at Great Lakes, we were sent home until February 18th when we regrouped and took a slow train ride to Great Lakes. We got there at 3:00 a.m. - slept till 5:30 and then got our first Navy chow - 1/2 grapefruit and two scoops of baked beans.

It was a cold eight weeks of boot - on the Grinder with Lake Michigan winds and an Arctic chill. Company 139 was ruled by Joe Kuharich - a Chicago Football Cardinal who, after the war, coached the Philadelphia Eagles.

After Boot, a number of us were just in the Fire Control School there on base. It was a sixteen week course which ended in August. It was a hot, dirty train ride to New York - behind a coal-fed steam engine. We spent two days at Pier 92, and I was then assigned to the U.S.S. Washington. We went aboard August 18th and left New York Navy Yard to anchor out for ammo fuel. We left Brooklyn, New York on August 27th - thru the Panama Canal, on August 29th, with our first and only stop at [Nukualofa Anchorage] Tongatabu [Tonga Island], From there, straight to Noumea [New Caledonia].

Aboard the Washington, I was assigned to the "F" Division, as were the other graduates from Fire Control School. At that time the radar operators were from the fire control men and the maintenance was done by the electricians. A rate for Radar Operation was authorized in early 1943 and several of us received a 3rd Class stripe in March."

The *Washington* along with the battleship, *South Dakota*, and four destroyers made up a task force given orders to intercept a Japanese task force at Guadalcanal. In the ensuing battle during the night of November 14-15, 1942, the *Washington* sank the Japanese battleship, *Kirishima*, and destroyer, *Ayanami*. The *Washington* was not damaged, but three of the accompanying destroyers were sunk, and the *South Dakota* and the fourth destroyer were heavily damaged. Bob was stationed in the radar room.

From September 15, 1942, to February 23, 1945, Bob was part of the following battles: Eastern Solomons; Northern Solomons; Occupation and capture of Gilbert Islands; bombardment Nauru Island; occupation and capture of Marshall Islands; bombardment of Kwajalein Island; neutralization of Japanese bases in the Bonins, Marianas and Western Pacific; capture and occupation of Saipan; Battle of the Philippine Sea; capture and occupation of Guam; Palau, Yap, Ulithi raid; capture and occupation of Peleiu and Anguar including carrier strikes on Central Philippines and Luzon; Battle of Cape Engano; Luzon raids; Okinawa; Jima, Formosa and Luzon raids; Okinawa, Jima, Formosa and Taiwan raids; Camrahn Bay, Saigon, French Indochina raid; Formosa raid; Hong Kong, Hainan, Canton raid; Formosa raid; Nansei raid; Tokyo strikes; bombardment of Iwo Jima.

After Iwo Jima, Bob transferred off the *Washington* on March 3, 1945 and returned to San Francisco on March 23, 1945. He spent some time on the U.S.S. *Los Angeles* before serving as Barracks Commander in Great Lakes. He was discharged October, 1946.

During his term of service, he was awarded the World War II Victory Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Philippine Liberation Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic Campaign Medal, European Occupation Medal and Philippine Independence Medal.

Bob stayed in the Navy reserves and began working for the United States Postal Service on Mobile Railway Mail Service on February 2, 1948, as a substitute, then became a regular distributor on the railroad.

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He was called back to duty for the Korean War and was assigned to the *U.S.S. Tarawa* where they trained pilots for deck landings and did a tour with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. He was discharged from active duty June 1952 and from the reserves in October 1956.

He returned to the U.S. Postal Service, but with the mail trains being phased out in 1967, he left the postal service and returned to Assumption. Bob served as the weigh master at the Assumption elevator and later was the manager of the grain elevator at Dunkel, Illinois. In 1973 he purchased the grocery store in Assumption, which he operated until January 1987, when he sold the grocery store and began his retirement.

After Pat retired, the couple traveled to the southwest for the winters. He served the Assumption community as a Scoutmaster, as a member and later President of the Assumption School Board and as Mayor. He was a member of the American Legion, where he served as post commander; U.S.S. Washington (BB56) Reunion Group; U.S.S. Tarawa (CV/CVA/CVS-40) Veterans League; U.S.S. Los Angeles (CA-135) Association; and a life member of the Guadalcanal Campaigns Veterans.

Bob passed away on June 14, 2011, and was laid to rest with military honors in the Pleasant View Cemetery in Assumption.

Thank you, Radarman 1st Class Robert Frank Craft, for what you gave for us