

## MY DAD'S NAVY " WW II

By Charles R. Kenow



On May 22, 1944, Raymond Kenneth Kenow enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He was 18 years and 3 months old. He was the youngest of twelve kids - three other brothers were serving already: Harlan " Army, George " Army Air Force and Leonard " Army Engineers. At the time he enlisted Dad was living on the farm at 519 Prairie Ave in Faribault, Minnesota. Dad had to travel to Farragut, Idaho for his initial training. He trained here from May 24 to August 4, 1944. I guess this is where he learned to swim also, since he told us he didn't know before - they just "threw him in" and he learned quickly. His monthly pay was a whole \$50 as Seaman 2nd Class.

When his class graduated, he was assigned to USN TADCEN at Shoemaker, California on August 6, 1944 until August 14. From September 7 to September 12, 1944 he was with COMSERV #4, 7th Fleet (R/B EDUP). This was most likely a temporary administrative slot until he was placed on a ship. That happened on September 28, 1944 when he was ordered to report to the *U.S.S. Mobjack* (AGP-7). The *Mobjack* was a PT Tender headed for duty in the Pacific. Dad stayed with *Mobjack* until January 12, 1946.

### U.S.S. Mobjack



According to the Naval Historical Center, the **U.S.S. Mobjack** was 1,760-ton motor torpedo tender built in Houghton, Washington and commissioned in October 1943. She was originally built as a Barnegat class small seaplane tender and then converted to a PT boat tender. She had a length of 310'9", beam 41'1", displacement 1760, and draft of 13'6". Her speed was 18+ KTS and had a crew of 360. Her armament was 2 - 5"/38DP, 4 X 2 40 mm, 8 - 20mm, and 2 depth charge tracks.

Dad was promoted to Fire Controlman 3rd Class upon reporting to the *Mobjack*. According to his job rating description, "fire controlmen are petty officers who maintain and operate the complex electro-mechanical and optical equipment which controls, positions, and fires all types of naval guns and other naval armament." In other words, he had to be able to read blueprints and diagrams of various electrical and mechanical fire control equipment as well as maintain and target the guns.

It's interesting to note at that time the Navy provided employer information as to where a qualified individual might find a civilian job, once they left the Navy. They listed the locomotive and car building industry, an electrical repairman, plant mechanic, elevator mechanic and plant electrician. I guess that's why he ended up a civil engineer, you have to read plans and like the math!

### Pacific Duty

These accounts are taken from the U.S. Department of Navy "Naval Historical Center in Washington, D.C. during the time Dad was on the *Mobjack*.

The *U.S.S. Mobjack* departed the West Coast in December 1943 and commenced duty tending PT boats in the Solomon Islands. In March 1944 she helped establish PT boat base in the Bismarcks at Emirau, and May returned to the Solomons to tend PTs, PGMs, and LCIs in the Treasury Islands. In July she joined operations in New Guinea and tended PT boats at Aitape. Between September 1944 and February 1945 she supported boats and seaplanes at Morotai Island.

*Mobjack* departed Western New Guinea region April 1945 and moved to the Philippines, where she tended PT boats at Palauan and Mindoro. In June she joined the force preparing to assault Balikpapan and took part in the landings there in July. Still there at the end of the war, she returned to the Philippines in September to help decommission PT boats and left in November for San Francisco and her own inactivation. *Mobjack* was decommissioned and transferred to the Coast and Geodetic Survey in August 1946. She served as C&GS *Pioneer* (OSS-31) until sold May 1966.

Dad had mentioned a couple close calls while he was on ship. The Naval History Museum reports one of these at Morotai.

Arriving on 16 September 1944, the day after the American landings she commenced tending the boats in her squadron. The first three days she went unscathed. At sunrise on 19 September 1944 a smoking Japanese fighter emerged from heavy overcast and dove for *Mobjack*. Unable to crash into the ship, the pilot dropped two bombs that exploded close alongside, holing the deck and wounding one of her crew. Making temporary repairs, she remained at Morotai tending PT boat of Task Unit 70.1.2 and PBVs now ranging over the Netherlands East Indies on relief and intelligence recon missions, until February 1945.

During February and March 1945, *Mobjack* transported material, spares, and advanced base personnel as she accompanied motor torpedo boat squadrons to forward areas. At Mios Woendi on 1 April 1945, she took on base force personnel of MTBRons 9 and 10 and on 2 April 1945 got underway in Samar in the Philippines. She continued on to Palauan, Mangarin Bay, and Mindoro to overhaul and repair motor torpedo boats to use in the upcoming Borneo operations.

On 8 June 1945, *Mobjack* steamed to Samar to stage for the landings at Balikpapan, Borneo. She joined the minesweepers at work since 1 June 1945 and the ships of the bombardment group which had been pounding the Japanese-held center since 17 June 1945 preparing the way for the Australian assault force. *Mobjack* fueled and sustained the motor torpedo boats assigned to night patrol off the coast to prevent the Japanese from replacing, restoring obstacles or disturbing markers placed by the minesweepers. On July 1, these preparations proved well executed as wave after wave of Australian 7th DIV forces of I Corps went ashore without a casualty.â€•

For his combat service in Borneo (6/26/45) and Western New Guinea Operation (7/1-11/15/45) he and the *Mobjack* were awarded two battle stars. Dad also was awarded the Philippine Liberation Medal with bronze star for action there.

## **Return to the U.S.A.**

Dad returned to the US Naval Receiving Station at Treasure Island San Francisco on January 12, 1946 and spent 5 days there before going on a 30 day leave. Dad remained on leave until February 19 (his birthday). He was then assigned to the R/S Naval Station at Seattle Washington February 25, 1946 until March 23 when he was reassigned to the **U.S.S. *Yellowstone*** (AD 27). This ship was a larger destroyer tender with a crew of 977.

While in Seattle his fiancÃ©, Arline Mills, traveled by train to see him. However, the visit was short as he was ordered to depart with the *Yellowstone* whose destination was Boston or Newport, Rhode Island. After staying a couple days with friends she returned by plane to Minnesota. It appears Dadâ€™s ship took the route through the Panama Canal on April 11 to the east coast. His short time on the *Yellowstone* ended on May 4, 1946.

He departed from New York and On May 8 he reported to USN PSC Minneapolis and on May 11, 1946 he was discharged. At the time of discharge he was receiving \$98.76 plus \$3.55 expenses. For mustering out of the Navy he got an extra \$100 and an Honorable Discharge. Upon returning to Minnesota he once again found the woman waiting for him and on June 30, 1946 was married to Arline Mills.

## His Uniform

Dad passed away on April 5, 2008 at age 82. He never talked a lot about the Navy but we were able to learn a few stories when we asked. The quarters on ship were close, the food was not bad and he had a dry place to sleep. He developed a taste for spam and S.O.S. His only injury was a graze he received when he didn't duck fast enough as the gun swung to action. I know he was proud to be a Navy veteran. I'm glad I was able to locate a picture of his ship for him from the Naval History Museum a few years ago.



I didn't realize we had his uniform until Mom was cleaning, found it and asked me if I wanted it. Of course I wanted it! I also have his sea bag. His "winter" blue uniform was in great shape but it was missing any medals and a neckerchief. I decided to research his Navy records and see what he should have received for his service. After communicating over 4 months with the Military Archives in Washington, D.C., the paperwork finally arrived. From the 30 pages of his personnel file received, I have confirmed the service dates listed above and medals he should have been awarded. His uniform jacket and medals will be displayed to preserve this heritage for our family.

On the uniform right sleeve is the Fire Controlmen 3rd Class rank with an Eagle perched on a fouled anchor. The specialty symbol for fire controlmen is in the center and a red chevron is below. The rank symbol dates back to uniform regulations 19 February 1841. After WW II, on 24 February 1948, all rating badges were moved to the left sleeve as they are currently worn.

Another "mystery" patch was in the upper right breast - a golden bird in a gold wreath. This took a little more research. With the help of a Navy recruiter we found this is the symbol for an "Honorable Discharge". It is described as the "captured duck". I have no idea why it got that name!

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As I mentioned, the other awards that Dad should have received in order of significance are as follows:

- American Campaign Ribbon
- Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Award w/ bronze star
- WW II Victory Medal
- Philippine Liberation Medal w/ bronze star.
- He also received while serving on the *U.S.S. Mobjack* battle stars for Western New Guinea and Borneo Operations. I have added these to his medals as well.

The last piece of uniform that was missing was his neckerchief, which I was able to supply from a Navy surplus store. This scarf is 3' X 3' before folded. Being an Army guy myself, this was the most challenging to tie. I can see why they didn't wear it often!

Overall, this has been an interesting and rewarding project. I hope the family will enjoy reading this and maintaining his uniform as one way to honor the service of a very young, WW II Navy veteran.

With great respect and love, your son. Â

Last modified on 2011/10/17 by [sknow](#)