

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Charles Sehe

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VR2-A-L-2015-016

Charles T. Sehe, a crewmember on the *USS Nevada* during the Pearl Harbor attack and for the remainder of World War II, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Apr 14, 2015 Location: Quality Inn Hotel, Mankato, Minnesota

Date: Apr 14, 2015 Location: Charles Sehe residence, Mankato, Minnesota

Date: Apr 15, 2015 Location: Charles Sehe, Mankato, Minnesota

Date: Apr 15, 2015 Location: Charles Sehe, Mankato, Minnesota

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Janice Culp, ALPL volunteer

Total Pages: 126 pgs. Total Time: 1:16 + 1:42 + 1:56 + 2:34 / 1.27 + 1.7 + 1.93 + 2.56 = 7.46 hrs.

Session 1: Early life, basic training, assignment to *USS Nevada* at Pearl Harbor

Session 2: The Pearl Harbor attack from the perspective of a *USS Nevada* seaman

Session 3: Repairing *USS Nevada*, action in the Aleutians, convoy support and D-Day

Session 4: Southern France, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, release from service and post-war life

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on May 20, 2015.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Charles T. Sehe, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2015-016

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Charles T. Sehe was born on February 26, 1923 in Geneva, Illinois and grew up in a poor family during the Great Depression, learning early in life to work hard and the importance of improvising. He graduated from high school in 1940, when he was seventeen, and soon enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Upon completing basic training at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, he was sent to Bremerton, Washington where the *USS Nevada* was undergoing repairs. By late 1941 the *USS Nevada* was based at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Sehe was assigned to searchlight duty, which placed his battle station high up on the ship's mast. On December 7, 1941 the *USS Nevada* was one of eight battleships anchored in the harbor. During the Japanese surprise attack the Nevada was hit by one torpedo, but managed to get underway. While steaming past other battleships, it suffered multiple bomb hits. The decision was made to beach the ship rather than have it sunk and block the channel. Following that attack, the ship underwent major repairs, first where it was beached, then in dry dock at Pearl Harbor, and finally at Bremerton, where it underwent a complete modernization, including being up-gunned.

Sehe stayed with the ship for the entire war and, after its refitting, was reassigned as a radar operator. The *USS Nevada* next saw action in the Aleutian Islands in April 1943, then passed through the Panama Canal en route to convoy duty in the North Atlantic. On June 6, 1944 the *USS Nevada* provided naval gunfire support for the D-Day landings on Utah Beach. Twenty days later it supported ground operations near Cherbourg, France, where German shore fire narrowly missed it. The *USS Nevada* then supported the Allied landings in southern France, before replacing the tubes for its fourteen-inch guns at Norfolk, Virginia and returning to the Pacific in November 1944. After resupplying at Ulithi, it supported the landings at Iwo Jima (Feb-Mar 1944) and soon after that, at Okinawa. In late March, a kamikaze aircraft struck turret number three, not far from Sehe's battle station, but he suffered only minor injuries. On April 5, the ship was hit by Japanese shore gunfire, adding to its battle scars. Since Sehe had enlisted in the Navy prior to the war, he was one of the first to be sent home, near the end of the war, beginning that journey in late July 1945. He took advantage of the G.I. Bill and eventually earned a Ph.D. in anatomy, teaching at several colleges and universities and retiring from Mankato State University after many years on that faculty.

Subject Headings/Key Words: *USS Nevada*, Pearl Harbor attack; life in Depression era, Geneva, Illinois; D-Day at Utah Beach; naval gunfire support at Iwo Jima; fight for Cherbourg, France; naval gunfire support at Okinawa, Japan; kamikaze attacks; dry dock operations during World War II; convoy duty; landings in southern France; naval support for operations in the Aleutian Islands; naval gunfire

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