

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with N. Ron Thunman

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

Interview # VRC-A-L-2012-023

Admiral Nils Ronald (Ron) Thunman, a career submariner and former commander of the Pacific submarine fleet, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: May 29, Jun 4, 11, 22 & 25, Aug 3, 10 & 17, Sep 10 & 28, Nov 5, 14 & 29, 2012, Jan 14 & 22, 2013

Location: Admiral Thunman residence in Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Patty Maynor and Jan Culp, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 472 pgs Total Time: 2:50 (Session 1) + 2:28 (2) + 2:44 (3) + 1:16 (4) + 1:31 (5) + 2:29 (6) + 1:35 (7) + 1:29 (8) + 2:08 (9) + 2:09 (10) + 1:03 (11) + 2:21 (12) + 1:27 (13) + 2:02 (14) + 1:43 (15) / 2.83 (Session 1) + 2.47 (2) + 2.73 (3) + 1.27 (4) + 1.52 (5) + 2.48 (6) + 1.58 (7) + 1.48 (8) + 2.13 (9) + 2.15 (10) + 1.05 (11) + 2.35 (12) + 1.45 (13) + 2.03 (14) + 1.72 (15) hrs = 27.65 hrs

Volume I: Thunman's Early Life and Career; pp 1-179

Session 1: Early life in Springfield, IL & years at the U.S. Naval Academy

Session 2: Early Navy career & transfer to the submarine service

Session 3: Early days of nuclear submarine fleet, USS R.E. Lee & USS Snook

Session 4: Tour on USS Snook & tour as Program Mngr for Naval Nuclear Pers

Session 5: Tour as Program Manager for Naval Nuclear Personnel

Volume II: Command Opportunities and More; pp 180-332

Session 6: Thurman's career as commander of the Attack submarine USS Plunger

Session 7: Tour as senior member of Nuclear Propulsion Examination Board

Session 8: Cmd of a Squadron of nuclear ballistic missile submarines in Guam

Session 9: Tour with the Bureau of Naval Personnel
Session 10: Command of the entire Pacific Submarine fleet
Volume III: Thunman's Challenges as an Admiral; pp 333-472
Session 11: Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Submarine Warfare
Session 12: Deputy CNO for Submarine Warfare II, and finding the Titanic
Session 13: Relationship w/Tom Clancy & tour as Chief, Naval Ed & Training
Session 14: Chief, Naval Education & Training and early retirement years
Session 15: Reflections on end of Cold War and Submarines in War on Terror, plus retrospective on his career

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on April 16, 2013.

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

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Abstract

N. Ronald Thunman, *Veterans Remember*, VRC-A-L-2012-023

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Nils Ronald (Ron) Thunman was born on February 26th, 1932 in Cleveland, Ohio, the son Swedish immigrants. His engineer father moved the family frequently until they settled in Springfield, Illinois, where Ron attended Springfield High School, becoming an all-state football player in his senior year. He spent one year at the University of Illinois before being accepted into the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, where he excelled, and ranking second in leadership in the class of 1954.

By 1957 Thunman commanded the USS Marysville, a small surface patrol craft. He then made the switch to submarines, serving as chief engineer on the USS Volador, a diesel powered submarine. He then made the crucial move to the new field of nuclear powered vessels, and began a long relationship with Hyman Rickover, who was revolutionizing the naval community with his push for nuclear powered craft, especially submarines. Highlights of Thunman's career following that move include serving as the executive officer of the USS Snook from 1964-1966, command of the nuclear attack submarine USS Plunger in 1968-1971, command of a Fleet Ballistic Submarine Squadron in Guam from 1974-1976, Director of Officer Development and Distribution in Washington D.C. (where he finished off the tour studying how to incorporate women into the navy), and commander of the submarine force for the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Admiral Thunman's penultimate assignment was as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Submarine Warfare from 1981-1985, where he promoted the development of the Tomahawk missile, testified frequently in Congress, helped discover the RMS Titanic on the ocean floor, and worked with the young author Tom Clancy, along with a host of other

responsibilities. His last assignment was as the Chief of Naval Education and Training from 1985-1988, located in Pensacola, Florida. Vice Admiral Thunman retired in 1988, served for a time as the President of Valley Forge Academy, then moved to Springfield, Illinois in 1995.

Subject Headings/Key Words: U.S. submarine operations during Cold War; U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis; Admiral Hyman Rickover; USS Plunger (SSN 595) as commander; USS Snook (SSN 592); trailing Soviet submarines; USS Robert E. Lee; Chief of Naval Education and Training; development of Tomahawk missile; sinking of the USS Thresher; Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD); Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Submarine Warfare; Guam refugee camp for Vietnamese; introduction of women into the U.S. Navy; Three-Mile Island; Bureau of Naval Personnel; women in the Navy; finding the Titanic; Tom Clancy; sinking of the K-141 Kursk; Valley Forge Academy; General Norman Schwarzkopf

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