

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Richard Lowe

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

Interview # VR2-A-L-2019-065

Richard Lowe, who served in the U.S. Navy during World War II before returning to Illinois and a distinguished farming career, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: October 3 and 4, 2019 in Effingham, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio/Digital video

Interviewer: Dr. Craig Moots

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 0:49 + 0:51 + 0:32 / 0.82 + 0:85 + 0.53 = 2.2 hrs

Session 1: Early life on the farm, military training and initial experiences in the Navy

Session 2: Navy experiences during WW II in the Pacific and return to ag education

Session 3: Life as a high school agriculture teacher and agricultural innovations

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on December 18, 2018.

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

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Abstract

Richard Lowe, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2019-065

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Richard M. Lowe was born on October 9, 1923 in Lester IL, a tiny town between Vernon and Kinmundy in southern Illinois. Richard's early childhood was spent on his parent's farm where they raised redbot (a perennial grass), corn, oats and wheat in addition to Percheon horses, cattle and sheep. Richard loved farming and wanted to follow in his father's footsteps as a farmer. He attended a one room school in Lester through the 8th grade and high school in Ashley and later Oblong, Illinois. On December 7, 1941 Richard was a senior in high school and riding in his friend's Studebaker and listening to the radio when they heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor. He finished high school and one semester at the University of Illinois majoring in Ag. Education while also doing military training in the cavalry. After talking to the draft board, he joined the U.S. Navy.

After basic training and Quartermaster school, Richard was assigned to the destroyer *USS Wadsworth* in the Pacific. During his two years on the *Wadsworth*, it supported combat operations on Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. His ship spent ninety-seven days on radar picket duty during the fighting on Okinawa and the *Wadsworth* received a Presidential Unit Citation. While on picket duty, the *Wadsworth* was struck by a kamikaze plane which fortunately caused only minor damage. Following the Japanese surrender, Richard personally witnessed the destruction in Tokyo and Nagasaki. He was discharged from the Navy, got married and returned to the University of Illinois in January 1946.

After graduation, Richard taught vocational agriculture at Effingham, Mulberry Grove and finally at St. Elmo over the course of thirty-two years. In addition to teaching high school, he also taught night classes for veterans interested or involved in ag. business. Richard describes the challenge of not having up-to-date teaching material that focused on the newest farming practices. He was part of an advisory council that worked with the Vo-Ag services at the University of Illinois to develop best practice pamphlets and teaching kits to be used in high schools in Illinois and surrounding states. Richard's most meaningful accomplishments include training future ag. business and farmers on techniques that contributed to raising yield levels in southern Illinois and starting the 5 Acre Club in St. Elmo. The 5 Acre Club attracted a great deal of interest, first in a yield contest but later developed into a best practices teaching tool that helped to maximize income per acre. Richard is an excellent example of his generation that grew up during the Depression, won a World War, and returned home to make up for lost time raising a family and making a positive impact in his community and beyond.

Subject Headings/Key Words: McKindree College; redbot (perennial grass); Oblong High School; University of Illinois; US Navy quartermaster training; *USS Wadsworth*, DD-516; Guadalcanal; Bougainville; Great Marianas Turkey Shoot; Iwo Jima; Okinawa; Radar picket duty; postwar Nagasaki, Japan; Atomic bomb; G.I. Bill; Vocational Agriculture Education; FFA; Agriculture Advisory Council; 5 Acre Club; People to People Project

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