

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert McPeek

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

Interview # VR2-A-L-2016-041

Robert (Bob) McPeek, a member of the Coast Guard at the end of World War II, 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: September 14 & 15, 2016

Location: Greenfields of Geneva in Geneva, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:51 + 2:11 / 2.85 + 2.18 = 5.03 hrs.

Session 1: Early years during depression & WW II, joining Coast Guard & initial cruise

Session 2: Service in Coast Guard in Pacific, German POWs and service in Atlantic

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on December 14, 2016.

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

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Abstract

Robert McPeek, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2016-041

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Robert (Bob) McPeek was born on March 25th, 2016 in St. Paul, Minnesota. Since his father worked for Montgomery Ward, he spent the next few years moving from city to city. By his high school years, the family lived in northeast New Jersey. The United States was at war while Bob attended high school, and he talks extensively about what it was like on the home front during those years for a rambunctious teen. After he turned eighteen in March, 1945, he decided to enlist in the Coast Guard, prior to the end of the school year rather than wait to be drafted.

Following his basic training at a Coast Guard facility near Coney Island, McPeek was sent to Monterey, California. Eventually, at his own request, he was assigned to the USS General R.L. Howze, a troop transport that could carry up to 4,500 troops. He was assigned to work in the ship's galley. McPeek's first cruise was to the Philippines, where they picked up troops from the 37th Infantry Division and brought them back to the U.S. The Howze then picked up 3,000 German POWs (Afrika Corps veterans) who had been working in California. More than a score of them worked with McPeek in the galley, and he discovered first-hand their disdain for the SS. After dropping the Germans off at Liverpool, the Howze sailed to LeHarve where the crew picked up more Army veterans. McPeek made this journey twice, the second time transporting troops from the 84th Infantry Division that before VJ Day were earmarked to help invade Honshu Island. McPeek was discharged in May, 1946, attended William and Mary College on the G.I. Bill, and graduated in 1950. He was married in 1953, and spent most of his adult life working for Sears and Roebuck.

Subject Headings/Key Words: service with the U.S. Coast Guard – post World War II; USS General R.L. Howze (AP 134); cooking on board ship in the Coast Guard; transporting troops across the ocean; view of Afrika Corps troops toward the German SS; American home front during WW II; 37th Infantry Division; 84th Infantry Division; Regina Roche; VJ Day; FDR's death

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