



Robert Barsky

**World War II
U.S. Navy—Pacific
USS Foote DD511
Machinist Mate—3rd Class**

Robert Barsky

**Veterans
History
Project
Transcript**

**Interview conducted
June 2, 2010**

**Niles Public Library
Niles Public Library District
Niles, Illinois**



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Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: **Robert P. Barsky**

Rank: **Machinist Mate 3rd Class**

Branch of Service: **U. S. Navy**

Theater: **World War II – Pacific, Okinawa
Philippines**

Interview Date: June 2, 2010, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

Place: Large Meeting Room

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on Wednesday, June the 2nd, in the year 2010, here at the Niles Public Library. My name is Neil O'Shea, and I am a member of the reference staff here at the library, and I am privileged to be speaking with Mr. Robert Barsky. Mr. Barsky was born in Chicago on January the 21st, 1921, and he now lives in Niles. Mr. Barsky served in the Navy aboard the USS Foote, and we appreciate his coming in for the interview today and also for sharing some clippings and descriptive material about that proud vessel and, also, some details of his shipmates. And we hope to add these in the appendix to the transcript. It should make for an interesting interview and an insight into Naval operations, particularly in the Pacific and Okinawa and the Philippines.

So, Mr. Barsky, what were you doing when the war broke out? (Italics indicate interviewer's words.)

Well, I wasn't in then, you know.

Yes.

Well, Pearl Harbor was hit, then later on, March 27, 1943, was when I decided to join the Navy. And I enjoyed being in the Navy.

Were you in high school when the war broke out?

No, I was working as a tool and die maker at a company.

In Chicago.

Right.

Where did you live, any particular neighborhood in Chicago?

Yes. It's on there, the little one, the little ticket.

Yes.

At 3406 Waveland.

Oh, yes.

And then I moved to Niles.

Yes. That was after the war?

That's right, yes.

Yes. So, you entered the service then in 1943?

The end of '43, and then stayed in until the war was over.

So were you-- Did you enlist then, or they called your number, or--

No. I went down and enlisted and, right away, the Marine was standing there, and he patted me on the back, and he said, "You'd make a good Marine." And I says, "Well, I'd like to be in the Navy." So, he says, "Here." So, he let me go in the Navy then.

So, you weren't afraid of water? Could you swim or--

No, I really didn't think about that. I just figured it would be better to be in the Navy. And, now, when I see all the different things that happen with the Marines, and the way they have to crawl through the mud, and what they go through, the Navy was pretty good. Of course, you could get killed there, too.

Oh, yes.

You know, why, we were just lucky.

So what did your family think of you going into the Service?

Oh, it was okay with them, yes. Oh, yes, my mother and father, yes. In fact, after the war was over, they drove out to New York, and I had them aboard my ship.

So did you attend high school at all in Chicago.

Oh, yes, Four years, the regular high school.

What school did you attend?

Lane Tech High School.

Oh, the Lane Tech Indians.

Four years.

Yes. Western and Addison.

Right, yes, That was a good school. I enjoyed going to Lane Tech.

Yes.

So you chose the Navy and then for your-- did you have any brothers or sisters that were affected by the war.

No. I had a brother that was born and and he died later on. Something happened to him.

Yes.

So for your, is it basic training? Did you go to Great Lakes?

Great Lakes, the regular training, yes. In high school, I was even in the ROTC Reserve.

Officer training course.

Training course, right. And in the Navy, they even let me march the men around, because I had a little training from school.

Oh, yes. So, after the-- so, did you have any trouble adjusting to being in military life?

Didn't seem to have any. You know, I was young.

Right.

Yes.

It seemed to be okay. Everything went along fine.

And then a lot of the men there, it's the first time they're away from home for any length of time, and they're meeting all kinds of different people from all over the country.

That's right.

But they all seemed to say, "We got along. We got along."

Oh, yes. There were-- I think, it's marked on there somewhere, three hundred, what sheet was that on? Three hundred men, I guess, aboard our ship.

And you never had any problems?

No.

Everybody got along.

That's right. I got along with everybody. I don't know, there were some fellows that, you know.

I was in the engine room and--

Yes, as a machinist.

And then when I went in, when we went into action, I was on a five-inch gun, and, well, they had me doing everything, setting depth charges. There was a movie on the other night about-- *Enemy Below*.

Yes. That's a fine movie.

Did you see that?

Yes.

And the man was setting depth charges. That's what I had to do for a while. And then he got hurt. He cut his hand up or took his fingers off. I thought of that when I was doing that, where, you know, they release it from the bridge, and you set them, but they release it.

So the timing has to be in sync, yes.

Right. Yes.

And that's to hit a submarine or something?

That's right, yes. I'm pretty sure we sunk one. We got credit for one submarine.

Yes. So--

And some islands. Philippine Islands.

Yes. So, you, when did you join up, when did you become part of the crew of the USS Foote?

Well, that's a hard thing to remember, exactly when I went in. The Great Lakes, and then they sent me to San Diego to catch my ship.

Yes.

Then we used to take men out to sea, past Treasure Island. We used to take men out to sea for a couple of days, or a day and a half, and bring them back in, training for some of the men. And then, all of a sudden, we went overseas, and we ended up at Okinawa with the kamikazes.

Yes.

I was glad that was over with.

Yes. The Navy sustained a lot of casualties and damage in Okinawa. Twenty percent of the casualties, I think.

Right. And they were crashing right next to us. We were lucky we didn't get hit, you know. They just come right into you.

Yes.

But we were firing the five inch guns. And a lot of men were on the 40 millimeters and the 20 millimeters. They train you on just about everything in case somebody got killed, you could take over, you know.

That's a good principle. Yes.

So do you remember when you got your first promotion?

When I went in, they gave me Fireman First Class right away. And then I took the test. There were so many men in the Navy with rates, it was hard to get your rate right away. So, at the very end, when I passed the tests, and then that was the end, then I left the Navy and retired.

Were you ever frightened at any time?

Oh, I imagine so, but, well, I believe in God.

It helps.

Some of the fellows didn't believe in anything, but they were— there, at times, we were kneeling down even.

Yes.

When we had-- we weren't fighting, but about the Navy, at least when each battle and the different fighting, was over, then we'd be able to clean up, you know, which-- the Marines and the Army, they had it pretty rough.

Yes. Did you like the captain of the Foote when you served, I wonder?

We had four different captains. It is hard to remember.

Were they all good? Were they all good, admirable?

Pretty good, yes. We used to show movies on the fantail, if you are interested in that.

Oh, yes.

We had a screen on the fantail. When we weren't in the war, we'd watch movies. And the captain would say, "Go ahead with the movies. I won't be down right away." And most of them were pretty good, but one made us wait for him before we would start the movie. The last captain we had was pretty good.

We used to protect the Missouri in the beginning.

Wow.

The Missouri. Just in case a torpedo came in. We were supposed to take it.

Was that around Okinawa then?

No, that would be, say, maybe around the Philippine Islands or some islands.

Yes. Did you get to go ashore in the Philippines ever?

I think we did get a liberty to go ashore. I'm not sure if it was the Philippines, different islands. We did go out. We had beer parties, different things, not very many.

Did they have some kind of ceremony when you crossed the equator?

Oh, yes. I got beat up so bad that I couldn't sit down for a week.

Did they tackle your behind or something?

Oh, yes, they would take rice, and put it in a sack, and wet it, and then, after it was dry, they'd beat you over with that sack of the rice in there, and beat you, and take all your hair off, just a little down the middle, and put grease on it. Well, to me, I thought that was, it was rough, but it wasn't as bad as the war, though.

Yes.

I told the guys, "If you think this is bad, wait until we get in the war!" They said, "Were you in the war?" I said, "Not yet," but I figured this is-- they took your hair off, you had to walk, you had to get into a pit, full of garbage. You had to crawl in a pit of garbage. And you had to wear your clothes backwards so, and then they would hit you, and you would feel it more. And then they'd put the hose on you and cool you off, you know. You were a scurvy pollywog until you went over the equator. And then you were a shellback. And I got a lot of literature and a big framed picture of all this, too, you know. Yes, that was interesting. Then we get some more people, guys aboard the ship, and we were supposed to beat them up, too. But I never even bothered going out beating anybody up. But you felt it.

And my best friends were beating me up, my best, my real buddy, close buddies. And about three days before you went over, they were throwing fish into your sack. You had to get used to it. That's all that was. I imagine, the Marines and the Army had worse things than that, I don't know.

Yes. Some traditions.

Yes. Putting pins on you, sticking them in your chest. I remember on TV.

So there were a lot of ships at Okinawa, a huge fleet?

Yes, well, I didn't-- We didn't really see many ships. A lot of them were hit, and there was-- we were always alone, you know, but I imagine, if you get hit, and something happens, they come and pick up the guys that are-- if you didn't drown, the sharks would get you anyway, I would say.

Yes.

But I never thought about that.

There was never any doubt in your mind that you're-- that the United States was going to win the war against Japan, was there?

No. I figured we were going to win the war. Oh, yes.

And then I suppose-- what was the reaction when you heard that they had dropped the atomic bomb?

Oh, well, I didn't know what to think then, just that the war was over then, you know. And then we were headed for home. And, first, we went to South Carolina and decommissioned the ship, our destroyer, was called a tin can. You may have heard of them.

I've heard of the tin cans. Yes.

And then we put parts of it in the Nimitz Museum.

Oh, that's what you mentioned, down in Fredericksburg, Texas, yes.

Right, yes.

The Museum of the Pacific.

Like I say, I wasn't married when I went in. After, I was just going with a girlfriend, and then, after the war was over, then when we got out, then my wife and I got married. But when I went in, she joined the "WAVES" (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). And my son was in the Navy.

Had you met your wife in high school, or while you were working?

While I was working at Mills Novelty Company where they made the slot machines and things. And I was a tool and die maker, and I met her. She was the girl that delivered the mail, and all the guys would say, "There's a girl for you Bob." And I ended up going out with her and, like I say, after the war, I married her.

Did she ever see you in uniform? She did?

Oh, yes, well, at Great Lakes.

Yes, and then she went into the WAVES at the same time?

No.

Shortly after?

Shortly after, yes. Oh, yes. And I had to have a special uniform made up, you know, more bell bottom to look right, but I hardly used it, just around San Diego for a while. And then we went overseas right away.

Yes, you and your wife, got married after the war?

Right, yes.

But you might have married her anyway as you met her before the war?

Oh, yes. We planned on getting married.

In fact, we were going to get married. They wanted tool and die makers in the islands, but I didn't go to the Hawaiian Islands. They wanted tool and die makers out there.

Yes.

And I figured, well, we wouldn't have to go to the war or do anything, but I joined the Navy and my future wife joined the WAVES.

So you're saying you would have got an exemption to work in Hawaii?

If I went.

Oh, yes, Hawaii.

Yes. So when you were at Lane Tech, had you taken classes in shop, and--

Right. I took a technical course, right, yes.

So that kind of helped, sort of helped a little bit?

I would say so. Yes.

And then your background as a tool and die maker?

Right. Yes.

Yes.

My father was a tool and die maker. I imagine I would have gone to college. Instead, I went into tool and die, and I really enjoyed it. I miss it today, and I'm retired twenty-five years now.

Wow. Yes.

At sixty-four, I retired.

You probably docked in Hawaii, did you, when you were aboard the Foote?

Yes. Oh, sure, yes, we were in Hawaii.

Pretty nice.

Yes. Then after the war was over, I took my wife there. You probably went there, didn't you?

I've been there once, yes.

Oh.

So, you were in the Service until 1946?

I came out after the end of the war on April 4, 1946.

They let you out?

Yes. Right.

And did you ever think of making a career of the Navy or--

Not really. But it would have been, I'd say a lot of these fellows that didn't have a job or they had a hard time learning different things, it would have been good to stay in the Navy.

Yes.

No, I never thought of staying in the Navy.

Now you mentioned that your wife, Mrs Barsky, she was a WAVE?

She joined the WAVES when I was--

Is that a Navy auxiliary?

The WAVES were part of the Navy

It's the same as, let's see, this booklet here, they showed a girl, don't they. It's the Women Acepted for Volunteer Emergency Service --

Yes, exactly.

Yes.

Yes. And I think you mentioned that Mrs. Barsky might be willing to be interviewed for the project?

She said she would.

That's great.

I asked her, "Would you be interested if Mr. O'Shea called you on that?" She said, "Oh, sure."

That would be wonderful!

Yes. And my son, like I say, he joined the Navy, too, but he got a brain tumor and died at 48. Isn't that something? He was-- everything was going good. But, today, you wouldn't think of these young people dying at a young age like that, you know. And here I'm around yet.

Yes.

Had your dad had any experience in World War I or--

No, he was never in the war. No, he was-- They just wouldn't take him for some reason.

Yes. And then were you proud that your son went into the Navy then or happy about that decision?

Yes. But he was-- he wanted to get on a carrier or something. He was stationed at Glenview Naval Base Air Station They had a ship for carriers, like a carrier, but it wasn't a regular carrier. And he was-- he'd bring the planes in. He was with the planes, and he wanted to get on a ship. I said, "Stay right where you are." There was a golf course on the base that we played on later.

Yes, I think, during the war, they used to have some kind of, the Wolverine or something, some carrier, plane carrier, out there on Lake Michigan.

Yes.

And they'd practice landing.

I don't know if he was there, or was just at Glenview.

So, when the war ended, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life or anything like that?

I didn't seem to, no.

The job that you had, you were able to go back to?

I went right in. I went right back into the same shop, yes, that I left.

Terrific.

That was pretty good.

Yes.

They were-- they said, "Come right in. Just come back."

Yes. So you got your job back and then you--

Right.

You married Mrs. Barsky, and so--

Then she, later on-- She, that took nerve, I don't know how she, for her to go in, you know, a woman like that.

Yes.

Did you ever think of using the GI bill, or anything like that, or--

No.

Yes. And then your family must have been happy to get you home. You must have been excited to come home.

Yes.

Did you-- You mentioned that the USS Foote was decommissioned in the East Coast and then your parents came out to see you in New York?

Right.

Came out?

Yes.

And did you all drive back together or take a train or something?

No. No. I came back on the train. No, they just drove out.

They drove out?

Yes, to see me, and walked. I took them aboard the ship. And then I came in on the train.

And you made a lot of good friends, it seemed?

Oh, I used to go to these reunions every year. They would have a reunion in a different state. Like, at one time, they had it in Disney World twice. And we would drive out there. With all these, get together with all these people. And we'd stay at a certain hotel for about four days. But, lately, I stopped. I went to about eleven of them. And then we stopped. I really don't care to drive too far, now.

Yes.

Of course, we-- I have a daughter living in Washington around Oregon. And we fly out there, or we took a train out there, too, you know.

Yes.

And now she's coming in to see us now, in a couple of weeks.

Any of your pals, good buddies from the ship, do you still stay in touch with them?

Oh, yes. Now and then. I call them, yes, and they call me. Not lately, it seems. A lot of them are dying, you know.

Yes.

And I'm still here.

You look terrific!

If it's my time, it's all right with me.

Yes.

I'd like to be here to take care of my wife.

Yes. How do you think your wartime experiences affected your life? That's a question we always ask the vets.

I don't really think it hurt my life like some of these people that were in the-- guys that were in the Marines, different things, you know. We saw pilots, that ran out of fuel, landing in the water next to us. And we'd pick them up. We'd go out. The men would go out in a whale boat. We had two boats on there, the whale boat and the gate, one on each side of the ship, hanging there. You couldn't even see them on the ship. And we'd go out and pick these guys up. And you'd see the legs, everything, hanging out where the sharks got them already, you know. And we brought them aboard. Some were okay, and some were dead. But with the war going on, you know, it isn't like you'd see men in the Marines like when they were in the trenches. I think it bothered those people.

Yes.

It seems to be bothering the soldiers overseas now. They should let these men come home now before they lose, all of them lose their legs. This doesn't seem like a war to me.

Yes.

The pilots that you would take out of the water, they had parachuted from their planes, or the planes just crashed in the water or were shot down?

Some pilots, they could see they were running out of fuel, and so they'd come down in the parachutes. And we'd shoot over and pick them up.

Yes.

Now and then. Whatever how many of them there were.

Do you think you learned any lessons about life from being in the military?

I would say so. I think so. What happened is on our ship-- My ship was hit by a torpedo. I wasn't on it then. It was hit by a torpedo, and it was towed in to California, and that's when I caught it. There were, when they towed it in, they had to pull all the dead men out of there, and everything. And they rebuilt the back of the ship, the stern. And I was lucky I wasn't on the first cruise. But the guys were telling me that the second cruise was worse than the first cruise, even though they got hit. Twenty guys were killed that were close to the stern, you know. But I wasn't on it. And then I got on it after that. And then they claimed it was worse the second time. I don't know.

When you were tending to the machinery down below deck--

Yes.

It must have been hot down there, was it?

Oh, it was so hot down there! In fact, it was hot in the South Pacific. I used to try to sleep on the toolbox topside on the second deck when the water was pretty smooth that you wouldn't roll off, and go in the water, and get drowned, you know. If the water was pretty smooth, I'd sleep out there because it was so hot down, not just the engine room, the sleeping quarters were pretty hot, yes. But that was better than the winter, than being in cold weather, I guess.

Oh, yes. And the Navy has good food, somebody said.

Very good, right, except when they'd have greasy pork chops to eat or something. I wouldn't eat because I didn't-- I never got sick on the ship, you know, seasick.

A born sailor, eh

I don't know. I didn't get sick, but, you know, I wouldn't eat something greasy. I'd wait for the cake, and I'd eat some cake. Because when that water got pretty rough, they used to have our coffee pot hanging on a rope, you know, and then, all of a sudden, when it got really rough, the table collapsed! We used to eat at a long table like twice as long as this. It was pretty nice to sit at a table that way on a tin can. We were the larger, two engine rooms and two fire rooms, it was a big destroyer.

Yes.

They had different sizes, you know, and we were the large one.

And, most of the time, the ship's engines worked okay? They were--

Oh, yes.

Good machinery and--

You wouldn't think so after it was hit once, right?

Yes.

Yes. And then they took it out again. And these guys that were on it that didn't get killed, they went out again with me. We went out. They should have let them stay home, stay back.

You'd think they would have earned their credits or whatever.

Yes.

So did you pick up any bad habits, or drink a lot of beer, smoke a lot of cigarettes?

No, not really.

Gamble, or anything, no?

No, not really. I drank beer when I got home. And cigarettes, I did a lot of cigarette smoking, which I quit years ago. When I learned they were really bad for you. But I smoked quite a bit awhile, you know, when I came home.

Yes, We're approaching the end of the interview. Is there any time that you can remember that was something extraordinary, or something very funny, or humorous, that you still chuckle about today, or remember the time that so and so--? You mentioned getting paddled on the behind with the rice.

Oh, yes.

Yes. Going over the equator, yes.

Yes.

Well, everybody seemed to take it all right, you know.

Yes.

You had to-- What else were you going to do? But it just seemed my friends were after me harder than the other guys, you know.

Yes.

But they meant good.

Yes.

Did you get any news from home while you were--

Oh, yes. My girlfriend used to write me letters. I used to look forward to that all the time.

Did you get them whenever you docked, or something, or--

Well, we really never docked. Another ship would come alongside not too close and, you know, then we'd string them, bring them across on a--

On a cable or something.

Cable. Yes. We got the mail pretty good. And everybody looked forward to that. That's what kept you going, right?

And like I say, which in the beginning, when there wasn't too much action, we used to watch movies on the fantail. But that didn't last long because we went over to the Philippine Islands, Okinawa, and Mindoro, and all the different islands that we bombed, you know--

Yes. So did you ever-- Did you ever dock in Japan or--

No, we hit Japan and different islands, you know.

Yes.

We went in so close that I could see them on motorcycles going along the beach.

Wow.

That's pretty good that, you know, that the destroyer could go in that close.

Yes.

But we made it back. And we're lucky.

Yes.

And I would say, I look back at it, and I'd say the Navy was pretty good, though, that we made it back.

Well, Mr. Barsky, I want to thank you for coming in and sharing your wartime experiences. I feel like I learned quite a bit.

Thank you very much. I know you are a busy man.

Yes, but thank God, men like you were busy, and women, were busy during the war, yes!

But I thought I'd just bring those other one notes.

No, this is terrific. Yes.

And if you wanted my wife's picture, I know, she'd be interested, you know, to come in-- at any time.

Yes. We have one other couple who've interviewed, so you'd be the second one.

Oh. Yes?

Bill Shipp, he was in the army in Europe, and then she, and then Martha, was in the-- she's the one that was the cadet nurse, yes. She was from Michigan.

One of the men that was on the stage was up here (for the Okinawa Program). This is where you had that, where I sat--

Yes, sir.

when I was here that day.

Yes.

What was his name again, Charlie, can't think of his last name now.

Charlie Matz?

Yes.

Oh, yes.

I know Charlie quite a bit, you know. He's about ninety-one now, I suppose.

Yes. He's colorful!

Oh, he's a nice guy.

Oh, yes.

Very nice.

Yes. He was in the library last Saturday.

Oh. Yes?

Yes, and that was his birthday that on the day of the Okinawa Program..

Oh, yes, that's right, yes.

When we cut the cake, yes. Yes.

Lately, he said he didn't feel that good, so I was telling him, "Don't worry about it. You'll be okay". I don't know.

Maybe it's the heat or something.

Could be, yes, I don't feel the same when in this heat, either, you know.

Yes. The weather really affects us.

But yes, okay, as I say, if there's anything you want to add to the interview we can do that, if there's anything else.

Okay.

Anything that comes to mind.

You didn't want those big pictures, did you? I don't care, you can throw them away, or do what you want.

No, I'm not going to throw them away. No, I'll probably use them.

Oh, okay. You can have them. I just thought that I'd bring them in to show you that--

No, that's great.

my wife was in there, too.

Yes. Handsome couple. Oh. Yes. So, you married then in

Let's see, when were we married exactly? In June, 1946 we were married!

Yes.

Well, we were married sixty-four years.

Wow,

Sixty-four years, and my wife is just 86, yes.

We have a book with all of the pictures of all of the sailors, you know, or most of them, anyway, about five, six pages of them, every page. And this, they send to you every month or, yes, at least once a month. It's another-- it's a little booklet-like.

After the war, you went back to the same company?

Right.

And then did your wife also go back to the same mail position?

I'm not sure if she did or not.

Yes.

If she went back to-- I guess she did go back, sure, because that's when I actually got back together with her again.

Then you didn't have any trouble getting an apartment or a house after the war when you got married or anything?

Well, when we got married, we lived with her mother. They had a two-flat. No, it wasn't a two-flat. They had a room upstairs in their home, and we stayed there and lived there for, I don't know, about a year or so. And then we found an apartment.

Yes. I've heard some of the vets say it could be tough to get apartments and housing after the war.

Yes. I bought a home in Niles. This-- I'm in my second one now. The first one was where the nursing home is.

On Bethany, on--

Yes. Down one of those streets. Right there, I had a home.

Yes.

In fact, I, lately, I looked at it, and it is gone! There is a brick house there, a great big, two story house.

Yes. It's gone?

Well, that was a brick house, too, but it was--

This was-- whoever I sold it to, they sold it to somebody else, and a lot of homes are being built larger now, did you notice?

Yes.

In Niles. Big, fancy homes but--

So have you gone on any cruises since-- have you been back on the water since then?

Oh, yes. We went on a cruise and, of course, my wife would like to keep going on cruises, but I kid her. I said, "I've had enough of the Pacific," you know.

Yes.

But there's a big difference, you know. It seems that's all you do is eat on those cruises. Have you been going?

No, I've never been on a cruise.

You're not missing anything. It's okay, for the people that like them, it's alright, but it's nice.

They're very popular, and I think the food is delicious?

Oh, yes, the food is great, yes.

Yes. Just like the Navy, good food. This is a really interesting hat you wore today.

What's that? Oh.

It's got all these--

That's not the one I wore the whole time when aboard ship.

No.

I had another one. And my campaign bars, those are the ones that are on there, my campaign bars are real ones, you know. And I've got them at home with four stars for battles. I have battle stars. Some of the guys tell me I should put them on here, but I don't bother with that, you know.

Oh, yes, there's the USS Foote reunion pin.

Oh, yes, that's in San Diego, 1997.

Yes. I've got quite a few of them.

And then you've got, what does that one say?

Let's see. This says Charleston, South Carolina, 1992.

Yes.

Then-- oh, no, these are-- it's just these.

Yes.

I've got all kinds of them at home. Every time we went to meet all the guys, they had pins, you know, reunion. See, the USS Foote reunion.

Yes. *You were saying that the mast from the ship was down at the Nimitz Museum.*

The mast. Oh, yes.

Have you ever been down there?

Oh, yes.

You've been to Fredericksburg, Texas, for the--

Right. Yes. See here in this picture. We are right here. The group is right there. There's the fellows.

So you were here at this time?

Right, yes. I was in there. I don't think that's me. It could be me. You could tell they all wore the same caps. But I was there. Now, this is the captain right here. Let's see, now. Yes, he was the captain at that time. He died, I heard.

He was a nice guy, though?

He was pretty good, yes.

So the destroyer also fired torpedoes, right?

Right. We had ten torpedoes, yes. And we fired them. And 5 five-inch guns. When we'd go into action, I'd go into the five inch gun and handle the five inch gun. And then after we'd fire out a lot of shells, you'd take the powder cans and throw them out at the deck. And then after the war, after it calmed down a little bit, we'd go out there and put holes in the powder cans, the five inch powder cans, and throw them over the side. And they'd sink, you know, because the whole deck was loaded with those, with the five inch guns going off.

Must be a lot of scrap metal on the bottom of the Pacific, I suppose.

Yes. I bet there was.

Or something?

Yes.

Yes.

As far as the Little Beaver squadron, I've got one cap at home, it's got this on it.

Oh, yes.

Now, this picture of this beautiful young lady, was that taken in Chicago?

No. That was taken in Oakland, California.

And then this handsome man, this picture was taken?

That was taken in New York.

In New York.

Yes.

Was this at the end of your time?

I would say that was after the war ended, yes.

But did you have this picture with you when you were in the Navy on board the Foote?

No. Oh, no.

No?

No, when I came home, she had this taken somewhere, you know, in Oakland,

Yes. I interviewed one vet, and he had a picture of his wife, and the picture would disappear.

The picture would disappear?

Of his wife would disappear, you know. I guess she was pretty.. He used to tell a story about that, yes.

Oh, yes, somebody would get in their locker or something.

Yes. Well, I'm going to-- it would be great to interview Mrs. Barsky and--

Yes.

Is that her here?

That's her here.

Is she Martha?

Right. Martha's her name, right. But they call her Marty.

Yes.

Yes. And there was-- This is in Oakland, California, and this is when the war was over, and I was just standing here with this-- This fellow died just lately.

Yes. So sad.

Yes, that's this fellow here, right here, see. Nice guy.

"Weary," yes.

Oh. Yes.

Nickname. He was from Ohio, and he was a farmer before the war, and the page says he was a farmer after the war.

Yes, that's right. And mine, they just put down tool maker, and I was a tool and die maker. It was a good--

Yes. So your outfit was integrated? You had African Americans serving with you? Mr. Bass was from Kentucky?

Oh, yes. I have the booklet at home.

Yes. This guy's nickname was "Rebel."

In fact, I have four books, like that thick, of all this different stuff, you know.

Did you have a nickname?

No.

That, at that discussion here after Okinawa, the one Navy guy up here--

Oh.

Mr. Lewan, his nickname was "Commando."

Commando. Oh.

That was his nickname, yes.

I went to one of these meetings, I don't know what day it was or anything, is there a man named Marty that takes care of something?

Yes, Mr. Friedman, across the street.

Oh, that's right.

Yes. Marty Friedman, the head of the Niles Family Services Department.

I went to that Veterans Group. It was on the second floor or somewhere.

Yes. Perhaps on the third Thursday of the month.

Some guy, some man, stood up and talked, and I should have talked, tried to talk to him, because he might have been on my ship, for all I know.

Oh, my goodness.

The way he talked.

Yes.

It just bothered me. I should have got together with him at the end of the meeting, you know.

Yes.

I may run into him again sometime. I don't know.

Yes. So maybe my final question is did you, so, did you join any of the veteran organizations? Well, of course, you had, you were a member of the Foote reunion.

Oh, yes.

I belong to the American Legion. In fact, every Friday night, I get together with about eighteen or twenty people and we go to dinner. We go to different restaurants, and they set up tables. We all sit together on a long table, you know, like this big.

Yes.

As wide as two of them. We all eat together. Then we go upstairs, and we play dice, some kind of a dice game. So you spend a dollar and a half, and then you win a couple of bucks. It's something to do, get together with people. It's interesting, you know.

Yes. So is that a particular post or--?

Yes. It's 134, up on Dempster.

Is that the Morton Grove?

Yes.

Yes. Mr. Matz is in that. Charlie, is that the one he's in?

Yes. Right.

Yes.

He plays dice with us and sits and has dinner with us, right.

And, well, I've been playing golf all these years. I haven't been playing this year, yet. I don't know what happened with the rain, or the heat, or what.

Yes.

And all we do, it seems, we spend time running to doctors. I don't know. At our age, you know, it's you go to doctors instead of being on the golf course. And bowl, I bowl, too. But I haven't been bowling lately. I've been feeling okay, but it just seems like every two weeks I go in and they take some blood out of your finger, you know. And then two weeks later, I go see the doc and he checks me over, all he does, and that's it. He says, "You're okay." I don't know.

Yes. Well, you look terrific.

Oh, thank you. If it's my time, it's, you know.

Yes.

What are you going to do? But it's interesting to come in and talk to you about this.

Thank you for sharing the details of your life in the Service and life afterwards. And so I think think you will be our fiftieth interview for the Veterans History Project.

Oh. Yes? Fiftieth?

Fiftieth.

Oh, that's pretty good.

And across the country, there's over sixty-five thousand that have been taken now.

Oh.

So it's a great project. If anybody wants to go back and understand your generation and how and what they did, this is the way to do it.

Some people are interested. Some people are interested in it.

Oh, yes.

Because you talk to some young people, they don't even know. They say, "Were you in the war?" or something, and I tell them, "Yes, World War I." I kid them, you know.

Yes.

They don't-- they've never heard of Okinawa.

No. No. It's, but I think the pendulum is going to come back. I think they are going to be more interested in these things.

Oh, yes. Well, now, it's Iraq and all these other wars, little wars, going on, but that's terrible, all this. Because World War II was a war, you know. They hit Pearl Harbor, and it was a war, I would say. But the other-- little kids running around now, and our men are looking for the enemy, and with little kids running down the street. That's, to me, that doesn't seem like a war.

Yes. It's difficult. The world has changed.

But, anyway, thank you, Mr. Barsky. And I'll turn off the tape recorder.

Sure. Thank you.

And get this typed up, and we'll show it to you.

Alright.

And if we're on the right course, we'll complete it. And then we'll talk to Mrs. Martha Barsky.

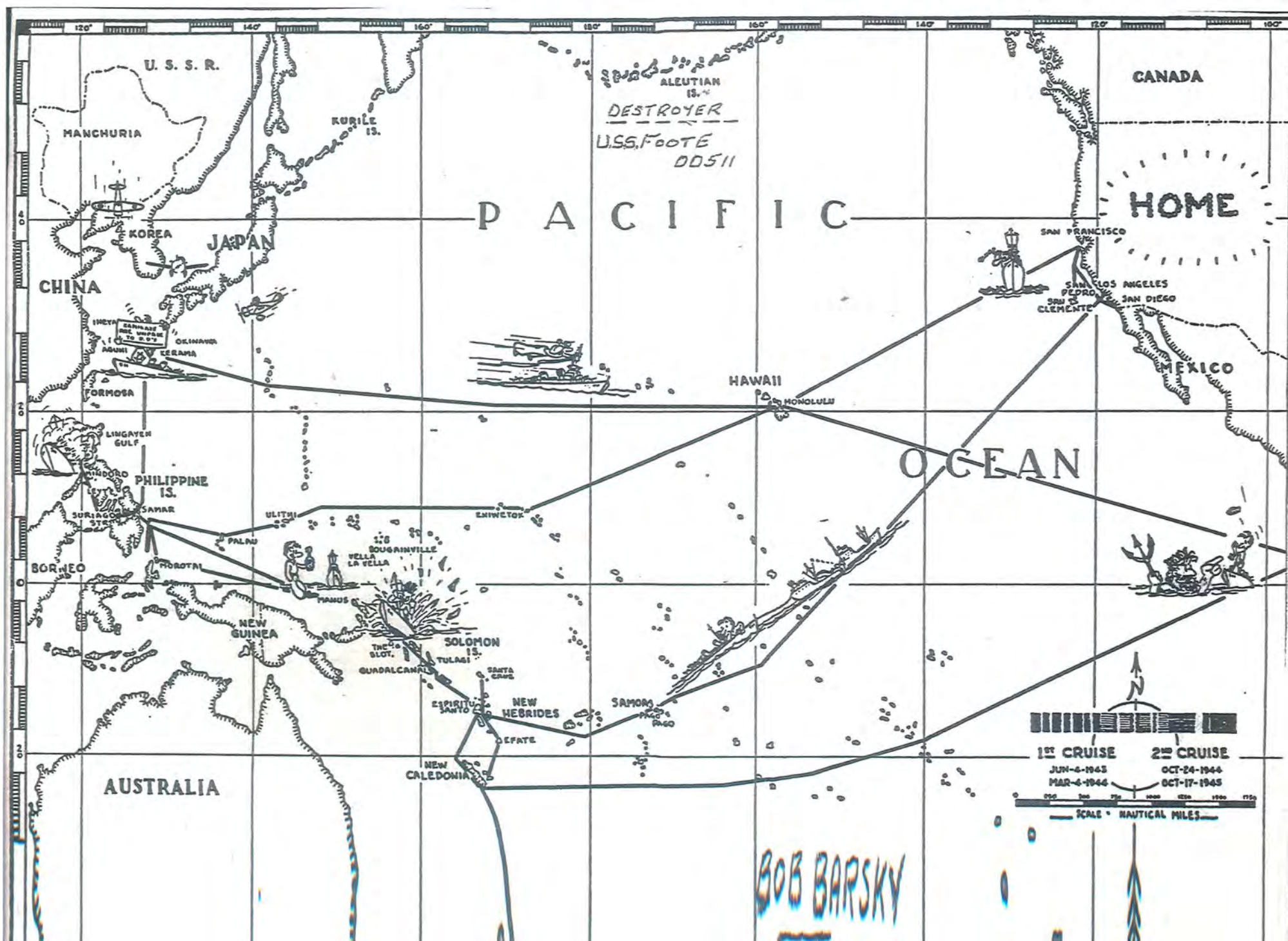
Thank you very much.

You're welcome. Thank you for taking care of me.

Reader's Note: The following eight pages illustrate Mr. Barsky's interview.

His pictures and clippings detail his remarks. The final two pages are scans of his "Honorable Discharge" and "Notice of Separation."

Map showing the 2 Pacific cruises of the USS Foote



Information sheet provided by Mr. Barsky.

c/o Fleet Post Office
New York, N. Y.

Welcome aboard the FOOTE. It is a pleasure to have you. We are proud of our ship, and happy to show her off. It is our hope that your visit will be both informative and enjoyable. You will be shown as much of the ship as is possible. A guide will be assigned to show you the ship, point out the ship's equipment and answer any questions you may have.

Here is a little dope about the ship and what she has done:

Type:	Destroyer
Class:	2100 Ton
Armament:	5 - 5"/38 Caliber 5 - 40 mm, twin mounts 7 - 20 mm 10 - 21" torpedo tubes
Complement:	16 Officers 309 Enlisted men
Built:	Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine
Commissioned:	December 22, 1942.

To be returning to the United States in company with the famous battleships that rose from the bottom of Pearl Harbor to wreck vengeance on the Japanese, has a double significance for the U.S.S. FOOTE (DD511), for she also came back after a near knock-out to strike her blows for the ultimate victory.

Off Hagushi Beach the night that Okinawa erupted pyrotechnics in celebration of the first rumors of the Jap surrender, older members of the crew of this 2100 ton destroyer, grimly satisfied, could remember a night off Bougainville almost two years previously, when a Nip torpedo blew off her stern, snuffed out the lives of 20 of her men, and left her helpless in the dark waters of Empress Augusta Bay right in the midst of a raging air and surface battle.

The FOOTE had gotten in some licks: She had taken an important convoy to Casablanca, North Africa; she had participated in the first bombardment of Buka Bonis Airfield in the Solomons; she had received partial credit for sinking an enemy destroyer; she helped beat off an air attack at Vella Lavella, flaming two planes; but the torpedo ended the nightly runs up the "Slot" with the rest of the "Little Beavers", Captain A.A. "31 Knot" Burke's destroyer squadron, and sent her back to the States for a new stern, training and retraining.

Captained by Commander Alston Ramsay, USN, of Salisbury, North Carolina, the FOOTE returned to the action areas in time to assist in the final stages of the Leyte Campaign, screening the "jeep carriers" whose planes were safeguarding the convoy lanes along which vital cargoes were streaming to the Philippines.

When newly-captured Mindoro was an embattled island surrounded by a sea of fire from impotent Japanese, the "511" was in the protecting destroyer van that fought its way with the first resupply ships to the brand new American airfield there. On this trip the Special Attack Corps, Japan's suiciding airmen, made a bid for "eternal glory". Two of them found it - from the business end of the FOOTE'S guns - and the rest were "splashed" by other ships of the formation or put to flight by the concerted action of all.

BOB

BARSKY



Destroyer History Foundation from Bureau of Ships photo. Source: USNI
Foote, DD 511, off Boston Navy Yard, January 1943.

A Fletcher class destroyer, the USS Foote had a top speed of 35 knots and its armament consisted of

5 × [5 in \(127 mm\)/38 guns](#), 10 × [40 mm AA guns](#), 7 × [20 mm AA guns](#), 10 × [21 in. torpedo](#) tubes,

6 × [depth charge](#) projectors, and 2 × depth charge tracks. The USS Foote carried 309 enlisted men and 16 officers. The USS Foote joined with 7 other
Fletchers to form the Destroyer Squadron , DesRon-23, which would become known as the “Little Beavers.”

The future Mr. and Mrs. Barsky shown in their service uniforms. Robert's Navy picture was taken in New York, and Martha's in Oakland, California



Newspaper clipping of USS Foote Reunion held in Fredericksburg, Texas. The ship's mainmast and torpedo tubes are on permanent display in Nimitz Park.

WII Shipmates Gather Here

For Memorial Service At Nimitz Park

200 veterans and wives of those who served aboard the USS Foote (DD-511) in the Pacific during World War II gathered in Fredericksburg last Tues-

day, Oct. 17, for a special reunion at the Admiral Nimitz State Historical Park.

Among the highlights of the gathering was a memorial service at 11 a.m. beneath the main mast (right photo) of their ship to honor the 19 men who died at Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville in the Solomon Islands on Nov. 2, 1943.

From the main mast, which faces Main Street and is located just west of the Old Nimitz Hotel building, reunion participants gathered at the nearby Memorial Wall for the unveiling (lower left photo) of a plaque honoring lost shipmates. Performing the unveiling duties were Bruce Smith, left, park superintendent, and Capt. Harry McElwain (USN ret.) from Falls Church, Va.

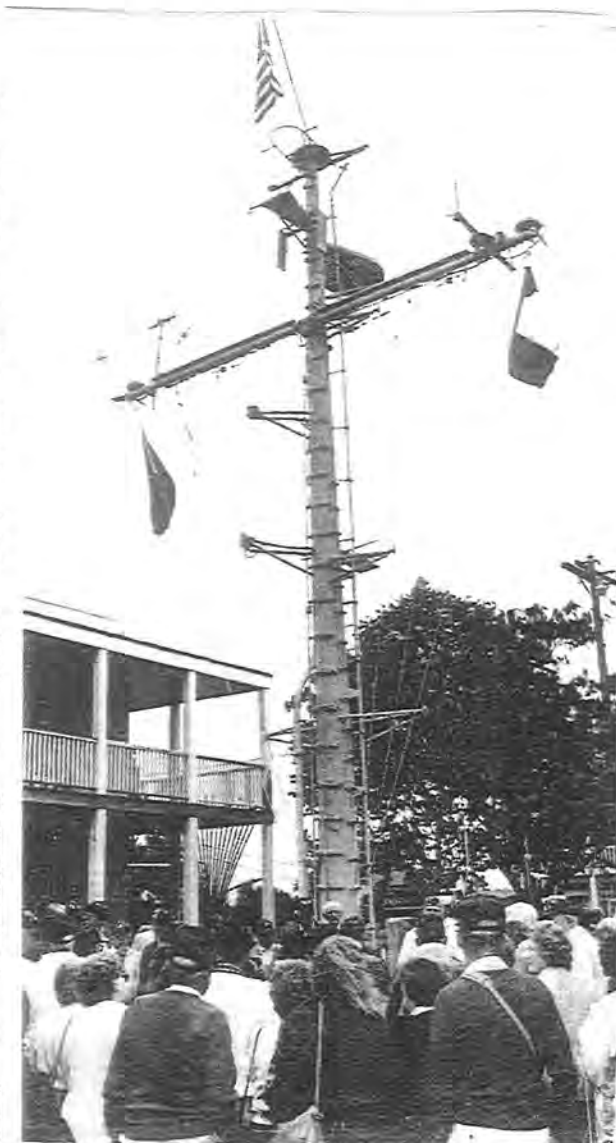
The plaque (upper left photo) also remembered the officers and men who kept the severely damaged ship afloat and returned to the Pacific to fight again.

Serving also with distinction in the Philippines and at Okinawa, the Foote was part of the "Little Beaver Squadron" (Des Ron 23) and served from Dec. 22, 1942, through April 18, 1946.

Others participating in the Oct. 17 service included Harold Ashley, who gave the introduction; Rev. Don Siders, who offered a prayer; Monte Moncrief, who led the Pledge of Allegiance and who hoisted the commission pennant; Floyd Shelton, who led in the honor roll call, and Cdr. Ed. Forrest (USNR ret.), who offered a tribute to the lone sailor.

Members of a U.S. Navy Color Guard also took part in the ceremony as did Bill Smallwood of Fredericksburg who blew "Taps".

In addition to the Foote's main mast, the destroyer's torpedo tubes are also on display at the Nimitz Park's History Walk of the Pacific War.



Mr. Barsky's entry in Foote crew directory

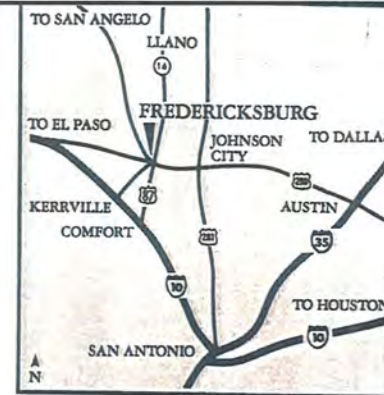
ROBERT PETER BARSKY
3406 Waveland Avenue
Chicago, Illinois

Pre-War — Toolmaker
Post-War — Toolmaker

6935 SEWARD
NILES, IL



25



Fredericksburg where Admiral Chester Nimitz was born and reared, is easily reached by excellent Texas state highways.



The Nimitz Steamboat Hotel, built originally in 1852, houses the Museum of the Pacific War

MAIN MAST OF THE

USS F-100



Left:
Seth Abbott
Bob Barsky
On board in
Brooklyn
Navy Yard
1945

Right:
Marty Barsky,
Bob loved the
Navy & a Wave



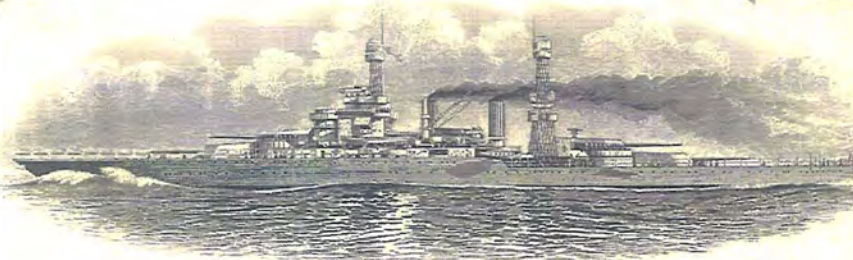
NOTICE OF SEPARATION FROM U. S. NAVAL SERVICE
NAVPERS-553 (REV. 8-45)

BOOK 41022 PAGE 521

1. SERIAL OR FILE NO.		2. NAME (LAST) (FIRST) (MIDDLE)		3. RATE AND CLASS/OR		5. PLACE OF SEPARATION	
RANK AND CLASSIFICATION		4. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES				USN PERS SEP CEN, UNIT #3 GREAT LAKES, ILLINOIS	
BARSKY, ROBERT PETER FIREMAN 1C SV6 USNR 4-8 WAVELAND AVENUE CHICAGO 18, ILLINOIS COOK COUNTY						6. CHARACTER OF SEPARATION HONORABLE	
						7. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SAME AS #4	
8. RACE W		9. SEX M		10. MARITAL STATUS SINGLE		11. U.S. CITIZEN (YES OR NO) YES	
12. DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH 1-21-21, Chicago, Ill.							
13. REGISTERED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		14. SELECTIVE SERVICE BOARD OF REGISTRATION #139, Cook Co., Chicago, Ill.				15. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE Same as #4	
16. MEANS OF ENTRY (INDICATE BY CHECK IN APPROPRIATE BOX)		17. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE 3-27-44		18. NET SERVICE (FOR PAY PURPOSES) (YRS., MOS., DAYS) 02-00-12			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUCTED		<input type="checkbox"/> COMMISSIONED			
DATE 3-27-44		DATE 3-27-44		DATE			
20. QUALIFICATIONS, CERTIFICATES HELD, ETC. SEE RATING DESCRIPTION BOOKLETS Flc				21. RATINGS HELD AS, Flc		22. FOREIGN AND/OR SEA SERVICE WORLD WAR II <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
23. SERVICE SCHOOLS COMPLETED None				24. SERVICE (VESSELS AND STATIONS SERVED ON) USNTS, Great Lakes, Ill. USS FOOTE (DD 511)			
IMPORTANT: IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTOR'S SUBDIVISION, VETERAN'S ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.							
25. KIND OF INSURANCE NSI		26. EFFECTIVE MONTH OF ALLOTMENT DISCONTINUANCE APR		27. MO. NEXT PREMIUM DUE MAY		28. AMOUNT OF PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH 6.60	
29. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO CONTINUE INS. YES		30. TOTAL PAYMENT UPON DISCHARGE \$ 39.03		31. TRAVEL OR MILEAGE ALLOWANCE INCLUDED IN TOTAL PAYMENT \$ 1.60		32. INITIAL MUSTERING OUT PAY 100.00	
33. NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER J. P. COLE 520025		34. REMARKS Point System American Area Ribbon Asiatic-Pacific Area Ribbon - 2 Stars Philippine Liberation Ribbon - 1 Star World War II Victory Ribbon		35. SIGNATURE (BY DIRECTION OF COMMANDING OFFICER) FOR M. GOLDSTEIN, LIEUT., USNR			
36. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST EMPLOYER Mills Industries Inc. 4100 Fullerton Ave. Chicago 39, Ill.				37. DATES OF LAST EMPL'MT. FROM 9-41 TO 3-44		38. MAIN CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D. O. T. NO. Tool and Die Maker	
39. JOB PREFERENCE (LIST TYPE, LOCALITY, AND GENERAL AREA) Same as #36 and #38				40. PREFERENCE FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING (TYPE OF TRAINING) Night School - Tool Design			
41. NON-SERVICE EDU. (YRS. SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED) GRAM.: 8 H. S.: 4 COLL.: -				42. DEGREES -			
43. MAJOR COURSE OR FIELD Technical				44. VOCATIONAL OR TRADE COURSES (NATURE AND LENGTH OF COURSE) Apprentice Tool and Die Maker - 2 Years			
45. RIGHT INDEX FINGERPRINT		46. OFF DUTY EDUCATIONAL COURSES COMPLETED None					
47. DATE OF SEPARATION 4-8-46		48. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED					

mb

Honorable Discharge



from the

United States Navy

This is to certify that

ROBERT PETER BARSKY

at

FIREMAN FIRST CLASS

USNR

is Honorably Discharged from the U.S. NAVAL PERSONNEL SEPARATION CENTER

GREAT LAKES, ILLINOIS

and from the Naval Service of the United States

this 8 TH *day of* APRIL 1946

This certificate is awarded as a Testimonial of Fidelity and

Obedience

[Signature]