

**Bud Knopf**

# Bud Knopf tells his war story

*The following article comes from “Memories of World War II,” a book written about the residents of the Concord Deaconess community.*

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I was working as a Philadelphia representative of Time, Inc. and was a trainee in their public relations firm, when I joined our Navy in June, 1941. England was taking a pounding and I wanted to help. At least I knew my parents would be safe in the U.S. from the kind of attacks that were happening in England. My best buddy was in Navy Intelligence — he was the one who urged me to go into the Navy.

The Navy sent 400 of us to Harvard Business School for three months of training — all of it a Navy curriculum about the business operations of a Navy afloat and on-shore. (Harvard had lost most of its students because war was approaching and people were joining the military. So Harvard turned its whole campus over to the military.) Mine was the first class, and that group is the best group of men I have ever been associated with. From then to 1945, Harvard trained class after class of Supply Corps Ensigns using all Navy faculty. The Harvard professors went to Washington, D.C. to work for the Federal government. There were no civilian students. (Many colleges like Babson and Wellesley were taken over to train military staff.) This experience exposed many to the Harvard MBA program — the Navy sponsored me again in 1948 with 15 others and I completed the degree program. The main thrust for the school during the war was to get all of the supply officers trained for supply and business assignments afloat and ashore.

My initial Navy service took me from Boston to Newport and then the Aleutians. From the Aleutians, we went back home for the commissioning of the USS Sherburne. I remember walking into the hotel in San Francisco and feeling something strange on my feet — it was the first time in 18 months I walked on carpet. I was the supply officer of the USS Sherburne. The commissioning occurred at the end of the ship’s construction when everything was operational for the first time. Then we embarked full crew and supplies.

We carried 20 smaller craft on board, L.C.V.’s, which are landing craft. We could get all 2,000 passengers into boats and send them ashore. We sailed throughout the Pacific and saw some combat, participating in the invasions of the Philippines and Okinawa. During one mission, we were putting troops ashore and all were under attack. Another time a typhoon came through and threw ships up on land. We picked up many survivors.

Until my ship sailed into Ulithi Lagoon in the Western Pacific in 1944, it seemed as though the war would last forever. But when we sailed into the Lagoon for the first time, I saw a concentration of ships — carriers, barges, oil tankers, supply ships, repair ships, troop ships, etc. and immediately revised my estimate of the duration of the war from 4 years to 1 year. We had two carrier and destroyer task forces which rotated attacking Japan from Ulithi.

When the war ended — it was unbelievable to be there! The USS Sherburne sailed into Tokyo Harbor on Sept. 2, 1945 and we could see the ceremony. The peace treaty was being signed on the Battleship USS Missouri. We could see our Admirals, Generals and the Japanese leaders from where we stood on deck. It was a thrill to know the war was over right there!

The war changed us, because most had never previously set foot outside the U.S. For the first time, we had an appreciation of how fortunate we were in terms of the standard of living, the education and opportunities available in the U.S., especially after we saw how people lived in Guam and the Philippines. It gave me a real appreciation for how much my parents had done for me.

World War II was the last time I remembered the country being so united in effort, not just in the military but on the home front as well.

It is hard for people to understand how much the GI Bill changed people’s lives. It gave people the chance for educations and home purchases. I had a long satisfying career in the Navy and retired as a Commander in 1961.

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