

War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: Canal Winchester, Ohio

Age: 89

I was home for the weekend from Wilberforce University and was at the Empress movie house on Long street in Columbus, Ohio when the movie was stopped and the announcement was made that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. We were all amazed and not quite sure where Pearl Harbor was. I was 19 years old at the time and trying to establish my way in a world that was trying throw off the effects of The Great Depression. This was Dec. 7, 1941.

Suddenly everything was urgent, people were getting married and the young men were enlisting and going off to war. I left school, registered for the draft and went to work at the defense supply depot. Soon after, I was drafted into the Navy as a mess attendant, most black men were assigned this kind of work at the time.

My Basic Training was held at Norfolk, Va., Unit X. The training lasted for six weeks, after which I was assigned to be a part of a new crew to put into commission a new ship at Hingham, Mass., the *U.S.S. Charles Laurence* DE-53, a destroyer escort assigned to convoy duty in the north Atlantic. We made 12 successful trips to Europe without losing a single ship to U-Boats.

I was transferred to a new ship, put into commission in Hoboken, N.J. in 1944, The *U.S.S. Westmoreland* APA-104. We went through the Panama Canal and up the coast to Long Beach, Ca. where we were given the duty of taking combat troops to the war zone. I served as head cook until the war ended. I left my ship in Portland, Ore. and traveled across country to the Great Lakes Naval facility in Illinois, where I was discharged on Nov. 26, 1945.