

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
WORLD WAR II

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O.H. 1820

Arthur Joachim
Interview
By
Elaine Fowler
On
June 13, 1996

Arthur Cameron Joachim

Arthur Joachim was born in Youngstown, Ohio, August 16, 1925. He attended South High School where he graduated in 1943. Upon graduation he joined the Navy and served until May 1, 1946. As part of his training, he attended Oberlin College in the Officer Training program but stayed only a couple of quarters.

After returning to Youngstown, he attended Youngstown College where he earned a BA in History. He married Louise December 27, 1949. They have two children, David-45 and Lynn-43.

He worked for Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. and Republic Steel. He was ordained a Presbyterian Minister in 1951 and worked for the Presbyterian Church USA for forty years. He retired in 1990.

He is a member of the Presbyterian Church. He has been associated with Habitat International and at present Veterans Organizations. He enjoys running races over 100 per years with a total of 1893 in 20 years.

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EF: This is an interview with Arthur Joachim for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Elaine Fowler at 3137 Meanderwood Drive in Canfield, Ohio on June 13, at 10:10 A.M. What do you remember about your parent's and family?

AJ: I lived in the South High School area, and I was an only child. My parents, I imagine, intended for me to go to college, but when the war came along the question going into September 1942, was whether you would be able to finish the year, senior year of school, or whether you would have to go into the service? We found out we could finish the year and graduate, so I did graduate in June, 1943. On May 15, 1943, while I was still seventeen, I enlisted in the Navy, I did so because I wanted to, also because, in the back of my mind, I didn't want to at eighteen be drafted, into the Army. So if I enlisted on the day of our senior prom on May 15th. Then, an unexpected thing happened, I was put on inactive duty. The Navy didn't call me up until the first of November, and I was put into an officer training program at Oberlin College, where I got in two semesters of college. On July 1, 1944, the Navy program for officer training was cut in half and I was the wrong half, so I went to boot camp for three months, and after that I went out to San Francisco to become a mailman in the fleet post office, because in my senior year, I had during Christmas vacation worked two weeks down at the main post office in Youngstown. And that experience is the only experience I could put on my dossier at boot camp. They needed mailmen at the Fleet Post Office in San Francisco, so I served six Months. I didn't live in barracks, but I lived on subsistence. I got some extra money, and I could go live wherever I wanted. And I lived with, believe it or not with a French artist, which was an unusual experience. In those days anybody that had extra room in Frisco had to rent, because there was a need for people in shipyard work and whatnot, to find a place to live, and in Frisco the only way you can build is up. They only had so much room so if you had any extra room you had to rent out, and that's how I happened to live with this French artist. In the end of March of '45, I was made a third class petty officer. I had it in my mind, I didn't want to go out to sea until I had a petty officer, otherwise I would be what they call

a deckape, first or second division where you swap decks, paint bulk heads and do manual work, and I thought I would rather do something else. When I got my third class petty officer rating as a mailman, I volunteered to go out to sea, and was put on an aircraft carrier. This kind of aircraft carrier was the smallest there was. They were called Jeep-carriers, and all together there was some seventy-five of them. They were first used to go out with some convoys and put airplanes up in the air to look for submarines. But then later they used them for all kind of things, invasions and what have you. From the time I got on this aircraft carrier it was put on transportation duty. It came from the Western Pacific, it had been in action, but now was transferred to transportation duty, and what we did was to get squadrons of airplane pilots, take them out, train them, and then take the someplace in them Western Pacific where they would do they're thing. We traveled all the time from place to place, and we were never, stuck in one situation. I was in and out of Pearl Harbor eight different times, I got to Guam three times, and after the war was over we were part of the Magic Carpet, that brought back servicemen and once we got to Shanghai, China, and brought back some airplane pilots. All in all I was on this ship for thirteen months, and was discharged in Boston, Massachusetts, May 1, 1946 after a trip through the Panama Canal. I was on active duty, to the very day, two and a half years. I got to see the world, and I was very satisfied, and wound up a petty officer second class, and my navy experience was very enjoyable. I got through all of my college on the G.I. Bill, and two-thirds of my seminary work. So it was a very satisfying experience for me.

EF: That's good. You mentioned the carrier that you were on was a Jeep-carrier. Do you remember the name?

AJ: Sure The Kadishan Bay, CVE 76. That was the type of carrier. I got a picture. All 27 airplanes had propellers.

EF: And this was an aircraft carrier.

AJ: And the faster airplanes at the end of the war had a hard time landing and taking off, because it was a smaller carrier. The Corsair was an airplane that they could just make it by landing and taking off. We had mostly Hell Cats and Torpedo planes, on our carrier.

EF: You spoke of going through the Panama Canal.

AJ: It was interesting. We had liberty on both ends of the canal, and I remember the troops, the American troops, they had down there were from Puerto Rico. Also you saw some of Latin America, and you saw a lot of poverty. They had these little jitneys that would take you around for transportation. You were glad to get out of them, because they're traffic habits were very hilarious.

EF: What exactly is a jitney?

AJ: It would pick you up and take you where you wanted to go, but on the way they might stop and pick up five different people. In other words, it was not a cab it didn't belong exclusively to you. It was more like a bus. They had them in Frisco, by the way too, during World War II.

EF: Aboard the carrier what was a typical day like?

AJ: During the war you got up about 4:30 in the morning, and you went to your battle station, until the sun had been up for a half an hour. That was because subs would attack half hour to an hour before dawn, and maybe the first half hour afterwards. My station was up on the bridge, or the island as they called it, on the aircraft carrier. I had contact with seventeen lookouts. I was the contact man that stood right beside the gunnery officer. These seventeen lookouts report to me if they saw anything, the gunnery officer would then hear my report. They were to report anything they saw floating in the water, anything at all that was unusual.

EF: And then after that?

AJ: Well then the gunnery officer would take it from there. If he saw something a lookout didn't see he would get very angry, and he would want me to get very angry with this lookout. Now this lookout may be more highly, or older than me, and I was supposed to get angry with him, that was difficult. He might be bigger than me too. (laughing) Well that was the first thing, then we would go to chow, and your heaviest meals were breakfast and lunch, supper was just to tide you over. You would have meat and potatoes for breakfast, you would have beans for breakfast, and pie maybe for lunch, and supper was more of like a delicacy. Sunday evening chow was the lightest of the week, Sunday noon was the meal, you might have chicken, or something like that, and that was a big deal. Our two biggest meals were on VE Day and VJ Day. First, Victory in Europe and then Victory in Japan later, and a banquet each time. Steaks, cigars, and a menu printed, that was really something special. We were out to sea on both occasions.

EF: So it was very festive when you heard that they...

AJ: Very festive right. I heard about the war being over August 15, 1945. We were at Envetok in the Marshall Islands, we were on our way to rendezvous with the 3rd fleet for the Invasion of Japan, which was to come off the 1st of November. But Harry Truman dropped the atomic bombs in August, the end of the war came real quick. I always had a good feeling for Harry Truman and there was never any question, in my mind, that I thought his dropping the bombs was the best of choices. Sometimes you don't have a good choice, but it could have saved my life, and it was thought our casualties could have been anywhere from a half a million to a million all together. The second invasion of Japan was to come off in March 1st of '46, and that would have been where Tokyo was, and the Japanese had fought to the death in the two big battles of 1945, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. So when they were going to fight on their homeland of course they were going to

fight to their death. And that would include all civilians, so it was a wonderful thing when that war was over in August of 1945.

EF: Did you see anything of any significance that really set in your mind? Any travels?

AJ: Well I enjoyed seeing China, I could show you some pictures I got, the poverty, and the number of people. Anytime you were in China, you could smell it too.

EF: Smell it?

AJ: Yeah, if somebody wanted to relieve themselves, they just did so at a corner stall. (laughing) It was semi-public all the time. They used human excretion for fertilizer, so you could smell China. We were in a bad storm, coming away from China, and we had to have repairs made in Pearl Harbor, then back to the States for more repairs. Once when we were down at Guam we saw some of the big aircraft carriers that had been in big typhoons, with their flight decks peeled down. The waves in the storm had done that. It was fascinating to see the damage a storm as sea could cause.

EF: Peel down, you say...

AJ: Peeled down at the corner, yeah. Bent down like some giant had done it. Let's see, twice we went to Maui, one of the Hawaiian Islands, which was beautiful, we picked up Marines to take them back home after the war. Once we crossed the equator, and had the ceremony when you go from pollywog to a shellback in a day long initiation, and that was interesting. I have a tape, a videotape of it.

EF: Now what is a pollywog?

AJ: A pollywog is somebody that had not been across the equator. And you went through an initiation where the old hands who had been through this, gave you a lively time and after a day you were a shellback. Then you get a certificate. I could show you the certificate that I have. We went down to the New Adminalty Islands, to a place called Manis, which was below the equator.

EF: Manis?

AJ: Manis, and we asked the fellas stationed there, what they thought of their duty, and they said Manis was they anus of creation. Oh, and I was the ship's mailman, and to take the mail on the beach in Manis they told us the natives might steal the mail, so to sit on the sacks when we went into the Fleet's post office. The natives, I noticed had their hair dyed orange. We didn't have any mail taken from us, only it was so hot in Manis, that you would sweat even though you weren't moving. The sweat would just roll down your forehead, because it was so close to the equator. You'd stand under a tree and still sweat, and it would drip off your forehead.

EF: And that was Manis...

AJ: In the New Admainalty Islands. Another thin, we didn't have a ship's reunion until 1991. I've gone to all five of reunions, '91 through '95, and I'm going to this reunion, '96 in Las Vegas. The first one was in Reno. We've had eleven so far thru 2001. I've been to all but one.

EF: Well we're going to digress a little bit. I want to know a little bit about your Childhood, such as games or anything like that...

AJ: Softball, that was the main neighborhood sport. There was very little, if any organized sports. You went down to the corner where you lived, and fellas from your street would play the fellas from the next street over in a game of softball. You would have one softball, it was during the Depression, and you would have maybe a couple of bats. And the guy with the softball would want to pitch or he might take his softball home. It was very unorganized, also our football, we didn't have any equipment, and we would play tackle on the sand lots, and you would get scraped up. It was good training because it hardened you. We played tackle not touch. So that was the two main sports, and tennis as we got older, we played tennis on the city playgrounds.

EF: Do you remember anything about your school?

AJ: Yeah, I went to Sheridan, named after the Civil War General, that was grade school, went to Princeton for junior high that was 7th, 8th, and 9th, and that's named after a battle in New Jersey in the Revolutionary War. Then I went to South High, 10th, 11th, and 12th. The big thing in high school, outside the academic side, was the football games. We all took that very seriously.

EF: Why did you decide to join the Navy?

AJ: Well as I said, you were going to go if you were healthy, and you were happy that you were able to graduate from high school. So if you could enlist you could pick, and choose. So I wanted to be in the Navy. I wanted to be in the Navy, because they said you had three square meals a day, and a clean place to sleep.

EF: That's a good reason. Did you have any training while you were in?

AJ: Well we had training in this officer-training program at Oberlin College for eight months, and that was quite good. I enjoyed that, and academically Oberlin was a good college to go to. I enjoyed the subjects. There was one subject I flunked twice, and I would flunk it yet today. That was physics, that was part of the reason why July 1, 1944, I separated from the program. In boot camp, they had a three month long boot camp, and that was like a three months Boy Scout camp. I mean I enjoyed it, some of the kids had a hard time. I enjoyed all the training with the

rifles for instance, if there was a fire you had this big spray hose, and you would go into a fire that was on all sides of you, but as long as you kept the spray hose in front of you it was alright. You had artillery training, I don't know why, but they had to put in our time. Boot Camp was good for discipline, I enjoyed it. And the interesting thing I think is, once you went on board ship, unless you worked at it, you could get out of shape, because you weren't doing something physical all the time. I was fortunate enough, with my assistant, to be able to live in our post office, and I could do calisthenics in there. I also took up boxing and was a boxer on board ship. We would put on three round bouts, and the gloves were not skin tight, they were like pillows, more or less, with stuffing in them. We learned to box, and I kept in real good shape, and when I go on to a point in the States, I would go work out with weights. So that was good training. Another interesting thing, to my mind, is the officers were really what you would call gentlemen. I go and see movies nowadays, the modern day idea of what World War II officers like in the Navy, curse and swear, a lot of times. But the officers that I had anything to do with, always were expected to act like gentlemen, and to conduct themselves as such. Let's say a bunch of enlisted men are cursing and swearing in a motor whale boat as you were going into the beach, why an officer would stop you from doing it. It was different than what they portray in the movies today.

EF: Very interesting. Where was this camp that you...

AJ: Boot camp was Great Lakes. They had about four boot camps all around the country in different places, and that was the big one. There was maybe a 100,000 men there at one time in Great Lakes, now that is north of Chicago.

EF: Of all of your duties which one did you like the best?

AJ: Well being the ship's mailman was a good rate, a political rate. You had some clout with that, you were in K Division, which was communications. Men on board ship, in other divisions, like the cooks, would do little favors for you, and you would do little favors for them. Let's say somebody won a lot of money at cards around eight or nine o'clock at night, and he didn't want to take his money back into the general quarters with him. Let's say he had eight hundred or a thousand dollars, well he would come to the Post Office, the Post Office was closed of course but I would be in there, I lived in there, and he would maybe slip me ten or fifteen dollars and asked me if I would make out some money orders for him? So it was a political rate, and people were good to you, even the officers were nice to you. It was a good rate to have. My rate was a MaM2k. That's what I wound up. Petty Officer Second Class. There was the two of us on board ship, and there was one mailman for every five hundred Navy personal. It was the same as buglers. Buglers, one for every five hundred personnel.

EF: Was there a major event that happened, during your last year?

AJ: Major event?

EF: Other than VJ-Day or VE...

AJ: VJ and VE, no. Well I remember the signing of the peace treaty, September 2, 1945. This was right after the war. That was on the USS Missouri, and they broadcasted it, and we had a radio in our mess hall. This is of interest. There were three of us, listening to the signing of the surrender, keeping our ears glued to the radio, but the rest, of the guys, were playing poker. They knew the war was over and the weren't interested in the history, but I happened to be. The biggest thing was getting to the beach, coming to port and going on liberty. You would shove off, let's say from Frisco, and you had no idea where you were going. You would go and go, and you would wind up in Guam, and you didn't know you were in Guam until the day you went in. Then you pull out at Guam and you would go and go and go, and have no idea where you were going, and they would say today we are going to pull into the Wangpoo River, and go up to Shanghai, and you had no idea where you were going. (laughing)

EF: Amazing. So you just, you were never in any...

AJ: No action.

EF: No action.

AJ: We were on transportation duty. The gangplankers on board our ship, the guys that came with the ship they had five battle stars. They had been in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, which was the biggest naval battle of all time. They were one of the ships where the aviators scared the main Japanese Admiral, was in charge, that he got cold feet, and retreated when he could have caused great damage to our troops who were still on unarmed transport ship just ahead of him.

EF: Is there any particular person on the ship that you remember?

AJ: Well the Executive Officer who came on board the ship the same time I did, he was the one that would go around and roust, and roast you, and cause all kind of problems for you. He was the one that carried out the captain's orders. I was afraid of him actually. I was only nineteen twenty at that time, I could be intimidated. One time he came in from the beach when he had had to much to drink, and he was buddy buddy with myself and my assistant. The assistant was called a Striker by the way.

EF: A Striker?

AJ: The Striker and I were sorting out the mail, getting ready to take on the beach, and that Executive comes in, he wasn't supposed to come in the Post Office. Nobody except the two us was supposed to be in there. But he's came in buddy-buddy, and he's talking that way, and we got worried. We knew he was going to sober up, and

was going to have to come back and get his authority back. So we kept our mouths shut until after he left, but sure enough he shows up later on, and he came in the Post Office again and tried to find something wrong in there just to recapture his authority. To let us know that he was boss again. (laughing)

EF: Do you remember his name?

AJ: Edwards, his first name I can't remember, but Edwards was his last name. Now he hasn't come to any of our reunions, we've lost him, we don't know where he is. But the captain onboard ship was in his forties, now he's in his middle nineties and he comes to our reunions.

EF: And his name?

AJ: His name was Monroe, and he gave the main speech at the banquet two years ago.

EF: My goodness. On your typical day you said you, what was the evenings like?

AJ: Well my Post Office was open in the morning, it was open in the afternoon, then the evenings was more or less leisure time. I myself never had to go on watch, my striker had to, and most guys, and a lot of the petty officers had to stand watch. But I didn't when I was aboard ship. At the end of the war, the last three months when we were Boston, I had shore patrol duty every third night, so they caught up with me, and I helped the shore patrol duty people in Boston.

EF: And what did they do?

AJ: You go around and try and keep the Navy personnel out of trouble, get them back on board ship if they were drunk, get them out of some of the bars on lower Washington St., and Scully Square before they got rolled. Break up fights and, we had a baton, we didn't have a gun with us, but we had this baton, which was a night stick. We were told not to hit anybody over the head with it or you would kill them, but to poke them in the stomach if we had to knock the air out of them. I remember we had a ships brawl going in the Silver Dollar Bar on lower Washington Street one night, and I went in there and there was a big guy there ready to hit me in the chin. He looked at me, and I looked at him, and here he was a classmate of mine from high school, so he didn't hit me. We had a drink together later. (laughing). Oh, on St. Patrick's Day 1946, the British sailors were kept on board ship out in the harbor, because of St. Patrick's Day. The Navy didn't want any English on the beach then because the Irish in Boston and the English didn't get along that well.

EF: Oh my! About the things that you saw, or had happened to you, is there anything you might have changed?

AJ: I'm trying to think quickly here. It would have been easier for me in the Navy if I had been more mature, because I worried about a lot of things. I could be intimidated even though I was big and strong when somebody like an executive

officer would yell at me. If I had been a little older and had a little more experience, I would have shrugged it off. I guess that's about the only thing.

EF: Just matured?

AJ: If I had been a little more mature it would have been a little easier.

EF: Is there anything of any importance that we haven't covered that you would like to reiterate?

AJ: It was good experience. It was one of those things you couldn't buy with money. Oh another thing in World War II, you were respected in the service, and you were respected after the war. I am still upset by the way they treated the Vietnam Veterans during and after the Vietnam War. It's still bothers me that we were not allowed to win that war, they were afraid that World War III might develop and so they held back the military from doing the things that they needed to do to win it. When I think about when we evacuated the embassy there in Saigon, and were getting our last people out, and there were all those Vietnam people who had fought for us, and their families in the Embassy compound that weren't able to get out. I still feel very bad.

EF: I think we all do. When you came back to Youngstown after your tour...

AJ: I went right into college.

EF: You went right into college?

AJ: Yeah, I came out and man I went to summer school in June at Youngstown College, at that time, and went altogether three summers. You could take, back then at Youngstown College, you could take as many hours as you wanted in the summer as long as you had a B average, and my third summer I took 22 hours, I graduated with exactly the number I needed to get a Bachelor of Arts degree.

EF: Wow. What were some of your favorite subjects?

AJ: History, I would read ahead in History, English Lit I liked, that was my minor. I enjoyed them. The Science subjects I wasn't good at. I ended up taking Everyday Chemistry to get my one credit in Science. Well I wasn't good at languages either. I took Chemical German that the engineering students took, you know to learn the symbols for hydrogen and oxygen, and whatnot. And it was an easy language course, and that's what I had to take to get out of there.

EF: What were your favorite subjects in History?

AJ: Well any History. I was always interested in any History, American History. I learned about those things, about the blacks and the Indians, and problems in our

country back in 1946, '47, and '48, that a lot of people didn't learn until twenty years later. So when we had all these problems come up in the late sixties, I was aware of them.

EF: That's interesting. Well I thank you for your time.

AJ: You bet.

EF: I really appreciate this.