

World War II was a matchmaker for these two Navy lieutenants

*The Navy said in forty-four,
"Proceed to Arizona."
Unlikely place to fight a war,
but there I met Iona.*

These lines and 10 additional stanzas were penned by Creed Myers in 1986 on the anniversary of his 41st year of marriage to Iona Fackler. The poem highlights their relationship that began by a chance meeting in Tucson, Ariz. in the midst of World War II when they both wore the uniform of the United States Navy.

William Creed Myers was born and raised on a farm near Afton, Iowa, deep in America's agricultural heartland. Hard work was a fact of life to a youngster growing up on a family farm in the 1920s and '30s, and even when he entered the University of Iowa at Iowa City, he was still expected to do his share of farm work when not occupied with his studies.

Early in his sophomore year at Iowa, Creed was asked if he would be interested in assisting sportscasting the Iowa football games, as he knew all the Hawkeye players well, and spotting the players was necessary to the success of any radio sports announcer. Creed agreed to try it, subject to what the announcer thought of him and his ability to identify the players on the field during the games. The sportscaster from radio station WHO in Des Moines, known by all as "Dutch," was none other than Ronald "Dutch" Reagan, our future president. Creed and Dutch immediately became a match at all the games for the next three years. It was quite an honor for Creed when the folks back home in Afton regularly heard Dutch give Creed credit for his important role in the broadcasts, and Reagan's enthusiasm during the games, which made each one more exciting than the last.

After his graduation from Iowa, Creed accepted a position as sales manager for Jewel Tea Company of Berrington, Ill., which required him to make continuous trips to various branch offices in the U.S. It was on one of those extended trips that his draft notice was sent to him early in World War II. Unfortunately, it did not reach him until after his scheduled induction date, and it appeared

that he was in big trouble. His case was heard before the draft board at DeKalb, Ill., and it was then obvious that he had not intended to avoid the draft. He was given the option to enlist in the service of his choice within 30 days, and he selected the U.S. Navy. As a Storekeeper 3rd Class he trained at Great Lakes, then was assigned to the Philadelphia Navy Yard and Gasco Bay, Maine, before being sent to the Pacific.

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Creed was then recalled from the Pacific to attend officer training school in the U.S. and was commissioned an ensign upon completion. During his amphibious training at Tucson, Ariz., he had occasion to accompany a friend who had been in the Seattle office of the Navy Censorship Bureau, to visit the Tucson



Staff photo by Holly Marvin

The memories are vivid and the uniforms still fit for Creed Myers and his wife, Iona. The two wore their uniforms in the recent Memorial Day Parade.

VETERAN PROFILE

Nicholas Loveless

office of the same bureau. At the time of their visit, the commanding officer was busy and assigned his administrative officer, one ensign Iona Fackler to tour the facilities. Obviously Ensign Fackler made a deep and lasting impression on Creed at that meeting, and he continued to see Iona. It was not long before Creed was transferred to San Diego, and then to the USS Southampton, an amphibious cargo attack ship.

"We carried 15 LCVP landing craft," Creed recalls, "and also eight LCMs to carry mechanized equipment for amphibious landings. We also had a unit of Marine officers and men and 20 USMC Doberman Pinscher war dogs and were destined for the invasion of Iwo Jima. About half of the landing craft we carried were lost in the rough surf on the invasion, and we never heard the fate of the men or dogs. Battle casualties were then brought aboard from Iwo and our ship's doctor and medical unit seemed to be performing operations around the clock."

"The Southampton was then committed to the invasion of Okinawa. Enroute we were following the USS Hinsdale, when it was attacked and hit broadside by a Japanese Kamikaze suicide plane. We passed by sailors and marines screaming for help in the water, and I asked our captain if we could lower some boats to pick up survivors, but he refused, stating that we could not lose our position in the convoy. After the battle of Okinawa,

we sailed to Noumea, New Caledonia, to pick up supplies for the invasion of Japan. As the war ended, we delivered occupation forces to Northern Honshu instead, and then proceeded into Tokyo Bay for an unforgettable tour of Tokyo and Yokohama. Back again at sea, I was surprised to receive orders reassigning me to the Bureau of Ordnance in Washington, where Lt. Iona Fackler was assigned."

Iona J. Fackler was born in the old farmhouse on Fackler Road that was built by her great, great grandfather sometime prior to 1820. As a young girl, Iona worked on the farm and along with her brother, Rudolph, was expected to do her share of the chores. Fackler Road was named after her grandfather, Charles F. Fackler, a Civil War veteran from south Jersey, who settled in Lawrence. Iona attended Lawrenceville Public School, Princeton High School, Trenton State Teachers College, and went on to receive her master of arts degree from Columbia University. After teaching at Juliestown and Hopewell, she returned to Trenton State College as its alumni director.

When World War II broke out, Rudolph was one of the first to be inducted into the Army, and took part in the invasion of North Africa in November, 1942, which prompted Iona to follow suit. She joined the Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service, a branch of the Navy appropriately shortened to WAVES. As an apprentice seaman, her college background qualified her for officer training, and on June 29, 1943, she was commissioned an ensign and assigned to the Office of Navy Censorship in Tucson, Ariz., as assistant to the commanding officer. Her duties were highly classified and

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she was required to sign a pledge not to divulge any aspect of her work, which involved troop and organization movements and other top secret information, under penalty of a \$5,000 fine. It was a pledge she still honors to this day.

"My duties," Iona began, "required travel to various branch offices, and also allowed me to fly on a space-available basis cross-country. On one of my leaves back to Lawrenceville, I sat on a gun box in the rear of a torpedo bomber as its only passenger. At a stop-over in Georgia, it was discovered that an oil line on the plane had been sabotaged and we would have crashed after another five minutes in the air. Once on a return trip to Tucson, I again flew in a torpedo



Iona Fackler and Creed Myers, in their military uniforms, walk down the aisle of the Lawrenceville Presbyterian Church, during their wedding on Dec. 22, 1945.

...sommer manufactured in Bremen. It was in a six-plane flight that was destined for combat in the Pacific, and as we left the area, they did a dramatic formation peel-off. It was a sight I'll never forget."

"After serving two years in Tucson, the war in Europe ended and I requested a transfer to the Northeast, and was reassigned to the Navy Ordnance Bureau in Washington, D.C., as assistant to captain in charge of Navy guns. One day the captain asked if I knew any gunnery officers, as one was needed in our department. I gave him the name of W. Creed Myers, who at that time was serving on the USS Southampton in the Pacific. Much to my surprise, Creed was later assigned to our office after being called from the Pacific. Although I could have been discharged earlier, I chose to remain in the service until 1946."

Iona has always been grateful for the opportunity to serve her country, and for the memorable experiences she had during those years. She is proud of the important role and contributions that women have made in the military services. On June 22, ground-breaking ceremonies will be held for the Women in the Military Service Memorial in Arlington. Iona is a charter member of the association, and proudly wears the commemorative medallion issued by them. She also hopes to attend dedication ceremonies when the memorial is completed.

Many letters were exchanged by Creed and Iona following their first meeting in Tucson, and working together in the same office in Washington soon led to their marriage. The ceremony took place at the Lawrenceville Presbyterian Church on Dec. 22, 1945, while both were on leave from the Navy. The wedding party consisted of military friends, all in uniform, including the bride and groom, and was a momentous occasion for the small village of Lawrenceville. After a honeymoon in Cuba and return to Navy duties, the dilemma of whether to live in Iowa or Lawrence was settled once and for all and it would be Lawrence. Since they were both lieutenants, it might have been a problem of who would actually be in charge, but Creed gracefully yielded to Iona as her date of rank was earlier. They settled down in the old family homestead in 1947 and would continue to operate the family farm and Creed would also be a sales representative for several manufacturers.

The couple have four children, Howard, of Main Street, Lawrenceville, Jean Smith of Richmond, Va., Holly Crayton, of Moorestown, Frances Furlong, of Evergreen, Colo., and eight grandchildren. Howard continues to operate the family farm and additional land, and has served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army in Europe and as company commander in the N.J. National Guard.

Iona was honored by the citation

from Trenton State College in 1967, the college's most prestigious award. She has served on the college alumni board for 52 years, and has been distinguished with the Alumni Emerita tribute. In 1988, the Lawrence Township Office on Aging honored her as Senior Citizen of the Year, and in 1994, Lawrence Township Council issued a proclamation recognizing her outstanding commitment and dedication to the community. In their rustic yet modern old home they are surrounded by many mementos and memories of the past, antique furniture, farm implements, a photograph of her grandfather in Civil War uniform, a large box of letters written by Creed in the war years, and their Navy uniforms that still make them look dashing after 50 years. Creed's favorite is a photograph of President Ronald Reagan that he received from the President after Creed sent Reagan a rollicking 12-stanza poem entitled "Days and Games and Reagan," which he wrote about their days together at University of Iowa. The photograph is signed, "To Creed Myers with very best wishes and happy memories, (signed) Ronald Reagan, Dutch to You."

On Dec. 22, Creed and Iona will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. Their lives have been blessed in many ways and they look forward to many more years together with their children and grandchildren. Creed has learned to love New Jersey, and admits, "It's hard to tell where I'd be today if I hadn't missed the draft in 1941."