

He fought the enemy under water

EDITOR'S NOTE: In recognition of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, The Lawrence Township Memorial Committee, in cooperation with The Ledger, will feature a column each week during the anniversary year profiling a Lawrence resident.

The "Silent Service" took only volunteers and the secret of their success was keeping their operations secret.

Submarines were the Navy's deadliest weapon in the Pacific during World War II, and the men that served on them were, and still are, a very special breed. After serving 14 months in combat with an underwater demolition team, Ray Mount became one of those men aboard the USS Razorback.

Raymond B. Mount was born in Lawrenceville on January 18, 1926. He attended Lawrenceville Elementary School and graduated from Trenton Catholic High School in 1943.

Immediately after graduation, at age 17, Ray enlisted in the U.S. Navy. On completion of recruit training, he volunteered for submarine duty and was assigned to the USSR-11, a World War I sub at Philadelphia. It was taken for a short shake-down cruise and then turned over to the British as part of the Lend-Lease program. He was then reassigned to the USS Kete, which was still under construction at Manitowoc, Wis. In the meantime, Ray received training in diver's school, and was sent to Brisbane, Australia, in December, 1943. He became part of Underwater

Demolition Team III aboard the USS Kailua. The team consisted of 12 men, and were the forerunners of present day Navy SEALs, but did not receive the extensive training of the present day SEALs.

On Christmas Day, 1943, Ray and his team sank two army barges at New Britain to serve as a breakwater for a third barge to be used as a floating dock to supply troops in the invasion of New Guinea. They then returned to Darwin, Australia to demolish docks and pilings to make room for a landing craft repair center. In June, 1944, the team boarded a Navy sub-chaser for the invasion of Guam in the Mariana Islands.

Ray recalls, 'Whenever we would make a dive, we would be dropped off about 1,000 yards offshore and be

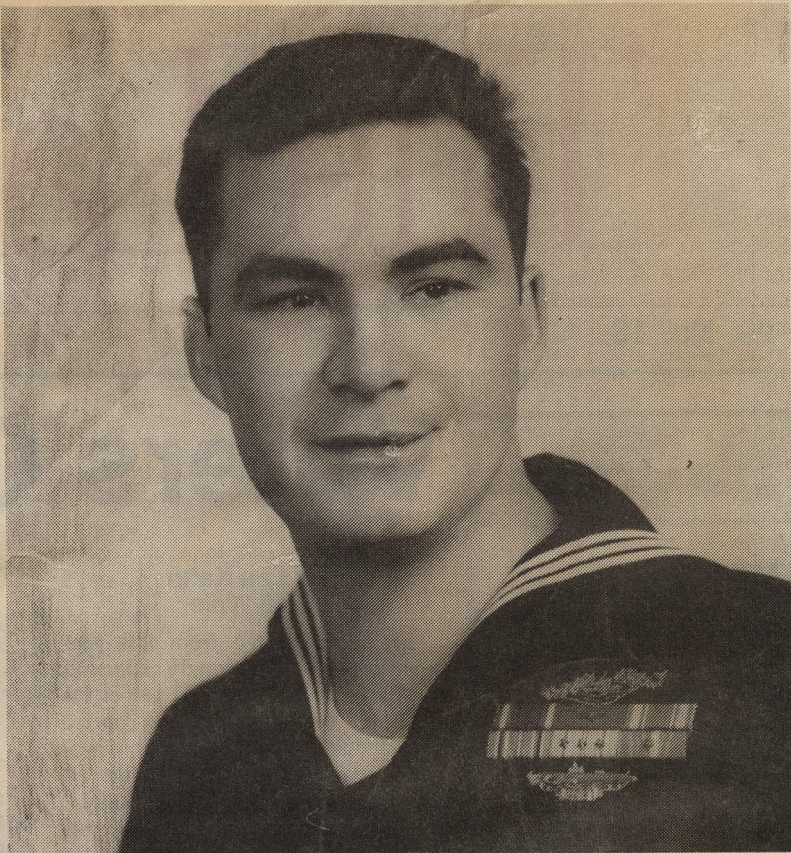
VETERAN PROFILE

Nicholas Loveless

in the water six to eight hours. Our job was to clear away mines, debris, sunken concrete and other obstacles so the landing barges could get to the beaches during the invasions. We were always under fire and we dove both during the daytime and at night. The Japanese either knew or suspected that we were out there. Our team made three dives at Guam and we lost one of our team. On one of the dives, our ship was hit by shore batteries while we were in the water, and another smaller ship was sent to pick us up. After that we went to Pearl Harbor for two weeks R&R.'

After R&R in Hawaii, Ray returned to the USS Kailua to form Team VIII, and by October, 1944, arrived off Leyte in preparation for the invasion of the Philippines. His team made two dives, blowing up mines and concrete obstructions to clear the way for the landing barges. By now they were using newer and more efficient equipment.

'In January, 1945,' Ray continues, team VIII made four dives at Iwo Jima on the 15th, 16th, and 17th, prior to the invasion. Again we cleared mines and other obstructions so the landing barges could make it to the beaches. We lost four team members at Iwo and all the team members were awarded the Navy commendation Medal. The team was split up after that and I was finally transferred to a submarine, the USS Razorback. The Razorback had already sunk a number of Japanese warships, troop transports and merchant ships, and we managed to sink more merchant ships before the war ended.'



Raymond B. Mount undertook some of the most dangerous and crucial missions during the war in the Pacific as a member of an underwater demolition team. He later transferred to submarine duty.

"The close quarters in the sub never bothered me or the rest of the crew," Ray continues. "I never went to sub school, but they eliminate anyone with claustrophobia there. On patrols we would usually surface at

night and open the forward hatch to let fresh air circulate through, and take turns on watch to have a chance to be on deck. When the Japanese formally surrendered on Sept. 2, 1945, in Tokyo Bay, we were there with 11 other submarines. After that we were on patrols all over the Pacific, and in November, 1946, were present at the war crimes trials at Osaka in support of the submariners that had been executed by the Japanese as pirates.

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The Lawrence Ledger

THURSDAY
April 20, 1995

On Dec. 13, 1946, Ray was discharged from the Navy with the rank of Sonarman Third Class. He had been in action for almost two years and had not as yet reached his 21st birthday. His missed assignment with the USS Kete was a blessing in disguise, as it was lost with all hands on March 20, 1945. A lump comes to Ray's throat as he speaks of the 52 submarines of a total of 218 lost in

World War Two. Submariners are a close-knit group, just as when they serve as shipmates, their honor roll tells a grim tale — Shark I, all hands lost; Argonaut, all hands lost; Grampus, all hands lost — and the list goes on and on, 3,050 men in all.

In January, 1947, Ray was employed by Public Service Electric and Gas, and retired in 1987 after 40 years of service with them. He also married Dorothy Reuter of Hamilton in 1947, and they presently live at 62 Titus Avenue, just up the street from where Ray was born and raised. When the Korean War broke out, Ray was recalled into the Navy and served as an instructor at New London Submarine Base, then sent to Pusan, Korea, to install new sonar equipment on the USS SK 1. He learned years later that future president Jimmy Carter had been aboard as the gunnery officer at the time.

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Veteran

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Ray's hobbies include hunting, boating and fishing. He has been a member of the Lawrenceville Fire Co. for 48 years, a life member of Submarine Veterans of WWII, American Legion Post 414 and DAV Post 41. Ray's father, Herbert Mount, served in France in World War I, was wounded, and was called in WWII service with the National Guard as an engineer stationed in Kiska, Alaska, where he was wounded again. The day that Ray left for overseas duty, the elder Mount enrolled him as a member of VFW Post 3022, one of the first WWII veterans to join the post.

On Ray and Dorothy's 25th wedding anniversary trip to Hawaii in 1972, Ray had an opportunity to go aboard the nuclear submarine 'Tautog' at Pearl Harbor. He was also invited to go along on a short cruise in the ocean, where it made one dive. It was a nostalgic experience for an old submariner, and the one thing that stood out in Ray's mind was the fact that so many of the sailors appeared to be so very, very young!

The Veterans Memorial Committee is asking veterans from World War II and other conflicts to provide a photograph in uniform, along with their name, present address, branch of service and unit, where and when they served, their principal assignment and summary of their service. Their individual experiences or unusual stories are also welcomed. All photographs will be returned. Families of deceased veterans are also encouraged to submit articles.

All material should be sent to The

Lawrence Township Veterans Memorial Committee, P.O. Box 55966, Trenton, N.J. 08638. Inquires may be made by calling 882-9108.

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