

**Cornelius Lewis in "Those Who Served" 2009.20.01**

**Key Words**

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**Cornelius Lewis**

**Enlistment**

**Life Aboard**

**Later Life**

**Cornelius Lewis**

Interviewed along with Sam Underhill and Bama J. Rowen for the program "Those Who Served"  
Born July 9, 1924, active in navy from 1/1942 to 10/1945, BM/3C rank  
Served on Liberty ships in the Armed Guard branch of the Navy during World War 2  
Liberty ships were cargo ships built on the West Coast in thirty days

**Enlistment**

**Born and raised in Vanderbilt**

Registered for the draft and signed up for the navy because he didn't like marching in the army  
Signed up in Alpena then immediately sent down to Detroit  
Shipped off to Chicago for gunnery training at the Great Lakes Naval Center  
Unassigned in boot camp, so he volunteered for the Armed Guard when asked  
Armed Guard only active in both World Wars to help guard convoys  
First assignment was on a 28 ship convoy from New Orleans to New York  
Close call on 2<sup>nd</sup> trip from New York to Casablanca (42 ship convoy was the largest he was in)

Ships were going into port single file because of the port design, Cornelius standing at the bow when the ammo ship next to his exploded. The torpedo went under his ship's fantail and hit the ammo ship by accident. The convoy left port in a zigzag pattern, while the escort ships screened out and caught the submarine with a depth charge.

Armed Guard could do nothing against submarines unless they surfaced  
Went next to England, V2 missile exploded nearby while docked  
He kept some shrapnel from it as souvenirs after the war  
Next traveled from England to the Persian Gulf  
Was in hospital (he didn't say why) when A-Bomb dropped

**Life Aboard**

Good food aboard the ships, steak and fresh produce were highlights  
One ship had a hotel chef aboard as the head cook so everyone ate well  
Duty entailed 4 hours on, 8 hours off in peaceful areas and 4 hours on, 4 hours off in dangerous areas  
His position as petty officer gave him the midnight to 4 a.m. shift  
Atlantic storms often created waves that rose above the ship  
Thankful that he had wool socks for the cold nights  
Destinations kept secret from the crew to prevent information slipping  
Gambling a popular pastime aboard the ship

**Later Life**

Used the GI Bill to go to college after the war  
Studied hormonal agriculture then worked at customs in ports of entries inspecting incoming produce  
In Puerto Rico for 2 years, Baltimore, Maryland for 7 years and Toledo, Ohio for 17 years

Proud to have served in the Navy, meant something special to him