

## **Bob Crouch**



Bob Crouch knew that war was coming, and so, in 1940 he joined the U.S. Navy. The U.S.S. Sacramento left Michigan City, Indiana, and traveled through the Great Lakes and down the St. Lawrence River to the Atlantic Ocean. Along the way there was a major overhaul at Norfolk Naval Station in Virginia, a brief visit to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and then a trip through the Panama Canal, as he made his way west. He first thought of this as a glorious adventure, a nice little pleasure cruise to see the world. Little did he imagine what was to come. The Sacramento was in dry-dock in Pearl Harbor on December 7, when the Japanese attacked.

Bob says that a huge dry-dock crane was a shelter for the Sacramento and crew—they were “parked” on battleship row. The attack was chilling and relentless. Those who survived considered themselves lucky, and were forever marked by that day of infamy. There was no glamor to what happened next either. Clean-up and burial duty drove home the awful savagery of war.

From Pearl Harbor the Sacramento moved to Hilo Hawaii to assume submarine patrol duty, and saw no further action during the war. Bob returned home and mustered out from the same ship upon which he had embarked, throwing his sea-bag off the Oakland Bay Bridge, and leaving at least some of his terrible memories of war in Oakland Bay.

Bob was born with the help of a midwife in a house on New York Street on November 25, 1918. He attended public school #44, Manual High School in Indianapolis, and then night school at Butler University. He entered the Navy at age 22. During his early service years he married Gertrude, the love of his life. They were together for 70 years, until she passed in 2012. Bob and Gertrude adopted two children, and there are now 14 grandchildren, who call him "Pap".

Before the war Bob worked at Diamond Chain & Manufacturing Company. After the war, he was co-owner of a Riverside Cleaners and Tailors, Assistant Manager for Mogen David Wine Corporation, and finally, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer for Olinger Distributing Co.

Because he was so active and civically engaged, Bob was awarded "Sagamore of the Wabash" by Governor Frank O'Bannon, and recognized as a "Distinguished Hoosier of Indiana" by Governor Evan Bayh.

Bob's true passion was golf. In meticulous fashion he kept a list of notable persons he played golf with or simply met. Outstanding names on the list include Elvis Presley, President George H.W. Bush, Gary Player and Frank Sinatra to name a few. By his count he won 14 local club championships, and has the mementos to prove it.

At 98<sup>1/2</sup> Bob lives alone, although he admits that his daughter in law helps with the meals and cleaning. His eyesight is good, and he enjoys reading stories by James Patterson. When the War ended, Bob's life proceeded apace, and he never looked back. Bad memories were left at the bridge in Oakland.