



**By Carolyn Lee**

### ***The Imperial Republican***

Like most World War II veterans, Arthur (Bill) Silvester didn't talk to his family about his war experiences. He wanted to put the war behind him and get on with his life as a farmer in Chase County.

Almost 65 years later, his daughter Kaylene applied to the government to receive Silvester's medals. He now displays them at his home.

Silvester was a Navy Boatswain's Mate First Class, 2nd Division on the USS Heywood. The ship delivered supplies and troops to battle sites in the South Pacific and the Aleutian Islands "with a minimum of cost in human lives" and to return the wounded from the beaches to the ship.

The USS Heywood was built in 1919 for the Merchant Marine. It was converted to one of the pioneer attack transports and commissioned in 1940.

During the war the Heywood sailed to Saipan, New Zealand, Alaska, the Philippines, American Samoa, the Tonga Islands and Eniwetok, to name a few destinations.

Silvester began his Navy career at age 17, when he quit high school following the attack on Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, and enlisted. Silvester served his entire tour on the Heywood after completing basic training.

He was in the service from Jan. 21, 1942 to November, 1945.

His starting pay was \$21 per month, minus insurance. As he advanced in rank, that increased. While on the USS Heywood, Silvester landed Marines and supplies on every island but one in the South Pacific. The ship was fired upon numerous times, earning seven stars for battles in the South Pacific.

After Japan surrendered, the Heywood served as the flag ship, carrying the commander into Tokyo Bay on Sept. 8, 1945.

Silvester wasn't the only one of his family in the military during WWII. Oldest brother Lee was drafted in the Army, but five other brothers and one sister enlisted in the Navy. All returned home.

"Mother, when she wrote, would have to write six, seven letters. It was pretty hard on her," he said.

Silvester enjoyed his time on the U.S.S. Heywood. "It was a lot better than out in the mud someplace like the soldiers were," he commented.

"It was an honor to serve. I'm glad I made it through," he said of WWII. "I was pretty lucky, I guess."

Silvester attended a reunion of his shipmates in Columbus, Ohio in September. From about 500 crew members, there are only about 20 left.

But Silvester remained in close contact with many of them.

Over the last few years Kaylene said her dad had been mentioning the medals and that he wanted them. That's when she petitioned the government. "Unless you asked for them, the

government did not give them out,” she explained.

Silvester was awarded the Navy Good Conduct Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with one silver and three bronze stars, the Navy/USCG Unit Commendation Ribbon and the Combat Action Ribbon from the US Navy.

From the Philippines he received the Philippine Liberation Medal with one bronze star and the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (Navy).

He is still hoping to receive the Navy Occupation Service Medal. Silvester also hopes to take an Honor Flight to the WWII Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. next year.