



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Lester Greim, 90, of Imperial holds fond memories of his Naval service during World War II.

Greim's Navy blues and white sailor uniform remain tucked away in the same wooden suitcase he made while stationed overseas.

But pictures of the Japanese surrender ceremony on the U.S.S. Missouri represent his most prized possession of his time in the service.

Greim served most of his time in Shop 51 on Pearl Harbor where he was a Second Class Electrician's Mate.

While he wasn't on the Missouri in Tokyo Bay on that memorable day in September, 1945, he worked on her many times at Pearl Harbor.

He remembers installing a radar unit at the top of the ship's mast, because he was one of the smallest guys and was able to crawl up there.

He also remembers changing the battle globes, which were large lights at the very ends of the ship's mast.

Greim knew a naval photo-grapher who was on the ship that ceremonious day. That acquaintance led to Greim getting a number of photographs shot that day.

If having the photos wasn't enough, Greim managed to get Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz to autograph one of the photos of Nimitz signing surrender documents.

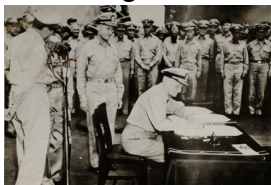
So just how did that happen?

In addition to his duties as an electrician, Greim worked at the officer's club at Pearl Harbor.

By working there, Greim was privy to information and stories shared only among officers.

After the fleet and its commander returned to Pearl Harbor, Nimitz visited the officer's club. It was there that Greim got him to sign the photo.

"He was a real nice guy. But he still didn't invite me out to dinner with him," Greim said, chuckling.



Shook Pres. Roosevelt's hand

There's not many people around here that shook the hand of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Greim said Monday after taking a group picture to honor veterans.

After enlisting in the Navy in 1942, Greim's first assignment put him on the destroyer base at San Diego. It was there that Greim got to meet FDR.

He had arrived by train and was touring the base and building morale. Roosevelt didn't like to be seen in his wheelchair but he was in his chair that day, Greim recalled.

A picture of Roosevelt hangs in Greim's apartment at Imperial Heights, along with a picture of

Greim's farm.

After his discharge in 1946, he came back to help his dad, Leonard, farm.

He eventually bought his own farm with his wife, Delores, or "Dee" as most people called her. They were married in 1946 after Lester came home from the service. She passed away in 2005.

Their two sons, Lonnie and Scott, live on the front range in Colorado. Lonnie is an architect while Scott is a civil engineer.



Submarine scare

Greim spent most of his naval career on land, working on ships that came into Pearl Harbor. On his first cruise at sea, leaving San Diego on the way to his new station in Pearl Harbor, Greim will never forget the event that occurred.

Several hours out of San Diego, his ship encountered a Japanese submarine.

Greim said they stoked up all four boilers on the ship, in an attempt to outrun the sub. In addition, they dropped a belevy of depth charges.

Those depth charges must have done the trick, Greim said, because the sub didn't bother them anymore.

However, the ship burned out three of its four boilers in the chase. A trip that would normally take four days took seven.

Greim said he enjoyed the role he played for the Navy and the life-long friends he made.

He left a good friend back home when he went to serve.

Greim remembers the day he got home. His dog ran across the yard to welcome his buddy back. "After four years, that dog remembered me and was really happy to see me come home," he said.