

## PORTER COUNTY

TRIP OF HONOR: WORLD WAR II VETERANS TO VISIT MEMORIAL

## 'These men became your life'

Veteran describes the day he saw a Japanese sub torpedo sink a U.S. ship.

*Editor's note: This is another in a series of profiles looking at some Porter County veterans who will travel to Washington, D.C. in October to honor comrades who didn't return home.*

By DIANE KRIEGER SPIVAK  
Post-Tribune staff writer

JACKSON TWP. — Bob Carr came back from World War II in 1946.

On a gurney.

He met his future wife Shirley two years later. The next year she walked — he rolled — down the aisle.

"She was only 18 when we got married," Carr said. "She took an old beat-up soldier in a wheelchair. It took me seven years after we were married to learn to walk again."

He caught meningitis while serving in the Pacific. Then he came down with encephalitis, diphtheria and pneumonia.

"They told my mom they'd probably be shipping me home in a body bag," said Carr from his home office in Jackson Township.

By the time the Army finally sent him home to Hines VA Hospital in Illinois, his weight had dropped, from 145 pounds to 80 pounds. And a 108-degree fever had destroyed a portion of the motor nerves in his brain.

"I had to teach another part of my brain to take over," he said.

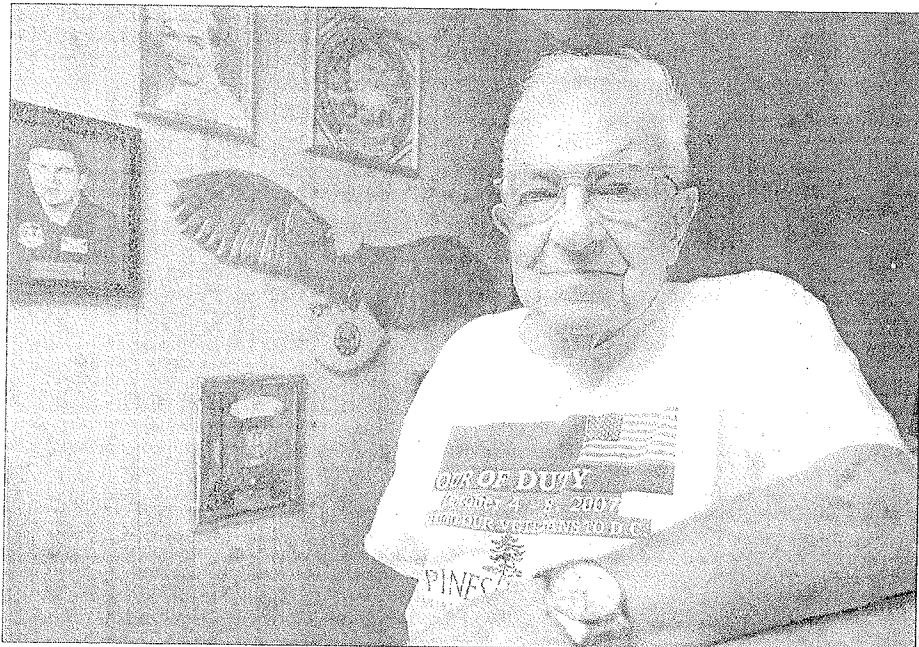
Carr was drafted into the United States Army at the age of 20. He'd tried to enlist in the Navy, but they wouldn't take him, he said.

"None of us wanted to be in the infantry," he said. "That's the last place you wanted to be because you knew you'd be shot at. But once I got into my outfit, I didn't want to be anywhere else."

Carr remembers landing on the beach in a cargo ship at the Gilbert Islands.

But the ship couldn't reach the beach because of the coral reef, so the soldiers had to walk through neck-deep water, to get to the beach.

"We did everything we could



World War II Army veteran Bob Carr is seen in his Valparaiso home near photographs of himself and other family members who served in the military.

LISA SCHREIBER/POST-TRIBUNE

### Tour of Duty, Taking our Veterans to D.C.

So far, Pines village has raised \$72,000 toward its \$115,000 goal to send 40 veterans and support personnel on the Tour of Duty, Taking our Veterans to D.C. trip. The group is looking for more volunteers to assist in the following events to raise the remaining \$43,000. To volunteer, contact Lisa Huber at 465-1591.

- Cookie sales, Fifth Third Bank parking lot, adjacent to Chesterton European Market
- Cookie sales, 17th annual Valparaiso Kiwanis Hot Air Balloon-Fest, Porter County Fairgrounds. 4:30 to 10 p.m. Sept. 7, 8.
- Cookie Sales, Popcorn Festival, downtown Valparaiso, 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Sept. 8.

to keep our rifles from getting wet," Carr said. "I didn't swim. I still don't swim."

When Carr's head went under water, his buddy Alfred Louis Laube, a guy from Long Island, picked him up by the scruff of the neck and set him on a coral reef.

"You ate, slept and drank with these men," Carr said. "These men became your life, and your life depended on them."

Carr found out in a hurry that you couldn't dig a foxhole in a coral reef in the Pacific.

"There was nothing to dig," he said. "We couldn't get ourselves flat enough to the ground. We slept with our head on the other guy's shoulder, back to back, so we could see all around us."

Carr pulls a photograph off a shelf stacked with World War II photos.

The picture, dated Nov. 34, 1943, shows a transport ship, the USS Neville, getting ready to ship out to Tarawa in the Pacific Ocean.

Carr points out two flag-draped coffins on the main deck about to be dropped into the ocean. His fingers move across the picture to the face of a young soldier in a sea of young soldiers standing on the deck above, watching the ceremony. The soldier is Carr.

From the Neville, he had a clear view of the Liscombe Bay a new anti-aircraft carrier in its first run, about a half mile away. It exploded in half before his eyes, sinking into the ocean in 11 minutes. A Japanese sub had

### Robert Carr

**Birthplace:** Iowa City, Iowa.

Raised in Gary.

**Birthday:** July 22, 1922

**Military service:** U.S. Army, 1942 to 1946. Two sons, son-in-law, and grandson in military service.

**Married to** Shirley 57 years.

6 children, 30-plus foster children.

**Education:** Tolleston High School, Gary, class of 1939.

**Employment:** Owns Carr's Service Center and Carr's Real Estate, Westville.

torpedoed the ship, killing 800 sailors on the spot.

"We were a half-mile away," Carr said. "We went into battle stations and they started putting boats over the side to pick up sailors."

The Neville took on 200 survivors. They buried the dead at sea.

"I can still never forget," Carr said. "I can see it just as plain as anything."

Contact Diane Krieger Spivak at 477-6019 or [dspivak@post-trib.com](mailto:dspivak@post-trib.com)