



# WOMPATUCK NEWS

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Ron Meade as a sailor in World War II.



Ron Meade holding up a fuse and four inch shell warhead that was recently recovered from the Back River in Hingham.

## Last, but Definitely not Least

By Jim Rose, FOW News Editor and Historian

"And then there was one." No, I'm not talking about the line from Agatha Christie's novel "Ten Little Indians." Instead, it's about former Annex (now Wompatuck State Park) employee Ron Meade of Weymouth. He is the only former worker still alive today that I'm aware of. The rest passed on. (Probably to Chief Wompatuck's Happy Hunting Ground for their service).

Meade was born on September 8, 1926 in Boston and grew up in Weymouth.

In World War II, he served in the Pacific as an armed guard for the U.S. Navy. He fired a 20 millimeter machine gun.

One of the most noteworthy events of the war, his gun crew had the honor of sinking General MacArthur's private yacht. It swamped while in tow to Australia and was beyond repair, at

least not while at war.

When the atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945, Meade was on the transport ship *USAT Nebraskan* preparing for the invasion of Japan. Tokyo signed the peace treaty ending the war on September 2, 1945.

After the war, Meade worked at the Hingham Naval Ammunition Depot as a truck driver from 1950 to 1958. He transported ordnance such as missiles, rockets, bombs, mines, shells, and depth charges from the Hingham depot to naval installations based in Brunswick, Maine; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Newport and Quonset Point, Rhode Island; New London, Connecticut and Earl, New Jersey.

His experiences at the ammunition depot can be considered as off-the-wall, hum-drum, humorous, and dangerous.

His most memorable day was hauling ASROC nuclear depth charges from Quonset Point to the Annex. The trip consisted of a convoy of seven vehicles protected by Marine guards and supervised by a lieutenant in a staff car. The speed was limited to 35 miles per hour for safety sake.

While rolling along at such a snail's pace, a rookie Rhode Island police officer stopped the convoy because of the slow speed. Little did the cop realize the contingent was on a secret mission to pick up a nuclear weapon. After a top brass complaint, the cop was set straight by his chief.

Meade's most dangerous trip occurred transporting 20 tons of high explosive depth charges through Providence, Rhode Island. His truck's battery exploded and caught fire on

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*Ron Meade's award and photo for "Worker of the Month" on display at Bare Cove Park. continued from page one*



*Ron Meade (top row, second from left) graduating from "Ammunition Handling" class.*



*Ron Meade, his daughter Linda and son Mike at South Field scout encampment.*

the highway. Fortunately, his friend was following him in his Navy truck and managed to separate the cab and put the fire out.

Meade had other duties besides transporting ordnance. In 1956, when the South Shore was clobbered by a blizzard, he was put into action by the Navy plowing out local neighborhoods like Hingham and Holbrook. Normally, whenever there was snow, his first order of business was plowing out the Captain's house (now a conservatory next to Bare Cove Park in Hingham). This time he had an additional duty...the public roadside. For his service with the snowplow, he was awarded "Worker of the Month" by the U.S. Navy.

Besides Meade's hazardous duty, his most rewarding and tastiest trip, or errand, was picking up a dozen lobsters for the Captain. For his efforts, he was also given a dozen lobsters. After all,

Meade had a large family to feed.

Meade became an electrician after leaving the depot in 1958. He retired in 1990.

He and his late wife Claire were married 68 years and had eight children; two girls and six boys. Five of the six boys are veterans and electricians, just like their dad.

Since retirement, Meade has always managed to participate in Wompatuck State Park's activities. In 2013, he gave an Annex history lecture to the Boy Scouts in South Field. He talked about his job duties, nuclear depth charges in Bunker N9 and the Marine guard tower that once overlooked it. His friends, the late George Dwyer of Weymouth and the late Clarence Vaughan of Rockland (my neighbor) were in charge of Bunker N9.

Today, the nuclear ASROC bunker has been preserved by the Eagle Scouts and can be seen in the park at

N9, not too far from the visitor's center. The park hosted a dedication of the refurbished bunker in 2008 with Meade and four other former ammunition depot employees in attendance.

Meade was always present during past Annex employee reunions and a valuable source of information concerning the ammunition depot and World War II history.

Last month, he helped identify ordnance that was recovered from the Back River. Currently, Bare Cove Park is being searched and excavated for old ordnance and propellants by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Wompatuck State Park has also experienced a similar clean up in the past.

It was a pleasure and honor interviewing Ron Meade. Our country needs more individuals like him for his service and sacrifice. ■



*Ron Meade during Bunker N9 dedication.*



*ASROC RUR-5 nuclear depthcharge.*



*Bunker N9 supervisor (Snapper) George Dwyer.*



*Bunker N9 supervisor (Leadingman) Clarence Vaughan.*