

Milford Moments in Time

By Joyce M. Clark

Now that prom season is upon us, it is not unusual to see limousines motoring through town. But back in the 1930's, a limo chauffeuring an 8-year-old farm boy would have been a sight to behold. David Murray Burley (goes by Murray), a long-time Milford resident, was the 8-year old boy to take a ride in a Limo with none other than Mr. Ernest E. Wilson, Director of the GM Proving Grounds.

Back in the 1930's, Murray and his family lived on his great-grandpa Asa Prior's farm near the GM Proving Grounds. One Sunday afternoon Murray took his usual stroll through a gulley under a 10 foot fence that surrounded the Proving Grounds. While perched at the top of one of the test track's most dangerous steep turns, Mr. Wilson's limo happened to be driving through the grounds and Mr. Wilson spotted Murray.

Needless to say, Murray was promptly escorted to the Limo and chauffeured to the location where he showed Mr. Wilson how he entered the property. After a firm lecture from Mr. Wilson, which focused on how dangerous it was for a boy to play near the test track, Murray was free to walk home. At that point, a maintenance crew arrived and Mr. Wilson supervised the men as they extended the fence through the gulley.

As most children would do, Murray chose to share this special event in his life with his parents long after the fact (many years later). And Murray never did visit the GM Proving Grounds unannounced again.

Ten years later, with World War II in full swing, Murray joined the Navy in the middle of his junior year at Milford High School. He was part of the Navy Air Corps from 1944 to 1946 stationed in Guam, supporting air and sea rescues, after completing boot camp and service school. After the war, he returned to Milford High School to complete his education, graduating with 65 other classmates, a dozen of which were veterans who had also returned from the war.

Murray's brother, Harold Clark Burley, served in the Army as a Hump Flyer flying B25's. The Hump was a high altitude military aerial supply route over China, Burma, and India, known as the CBI operation. CBI was necessary since China lost their 425 mile Burma Road to the Japanese. This road was the last remaining supply line to the outside world.

The CBI operation was the first sustained long range, 24-hour around the clock, all weather military aerial supply line in history.

In 1948, after the war, Great Grandpa Asa's farm was sold but Murray, Harold, and their nine other siblings often looked back fondly on the short years they spent on the farm. Most siblings remained in the Milford area to raise their families, and they often joke about being careful what you say regarding one another as there could be a family member within ear-shot.

2007 is the 175th Anniversary of Milford and in celebration of this major milestone, we are asking you to share some of your stories with the rest of the community. If you have a little Milford history to pass along,

please contact Sue Bullard, Milford Historical Society President, 248.685.7308 or milfordhistory@yahoo.com. The Milford Historical Society is happy to document your story and share it with others.

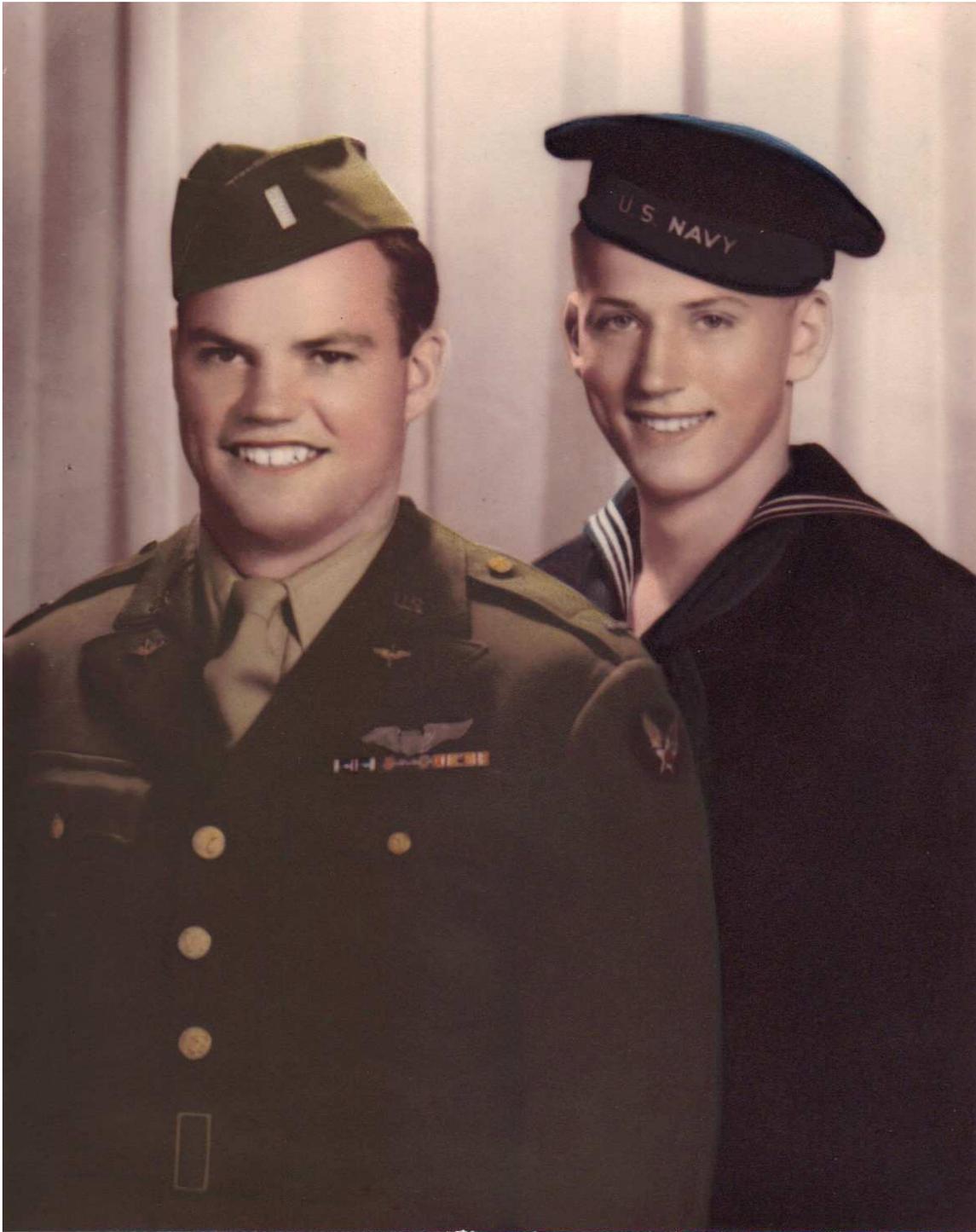


Photo Caption: Harold Burley (front) and Murray Burley (back) during World War II.