

Walter Sobel Oral History Interview

March 27, 2013

Interviewed by Aaron Pylinski
Transcribed by Aaron Pylinski, May, 2013
Proofread by Aaron Pylinski, June 5, 2013

- Pylinski: My name is Aaron Pylinski. I am here with Mr. Sobel from Wilmette and I'm with the Pritzker Military Library. It is Wednesday, March 27th, 2013 and we're going to do your stories of service. Sir, thank you so much for taking the time to sit down and have this interview with us.
- Sobel: I appreciate yours and Pritzker's participation in this. There are so many of the veterans that would be interested and we'll go into that separately. Thank you for coming, thank you for the time and preparation. The questions are very relevant.
- Pylinski: Just to start from the beginning, sir, when and where were you born?
- Sobel: Chicago. I lived in Chicago all my life, except for when I was in the Navy.
- Pylinski: When were you born?
- Sobel: July 25th, 1913.
- Pylinski: What was it like growing up in Chicago?
- Sobel: I have very good memories of it. I don't remember things before maybe five or six years old but at that time, we lived on Lakewood Avenue just a block north of Devon. When I began to go to school, we moved to the very north end of Chicago and then to Elmdale Avenue. On Lakewood, I went to grammar school at Hayt [Elementary] which was on Granville, just east of Clark Street. What is very interesting is that a neighbor who lived across the street became a very good friend of mine. We went to school together. His name was Herman Goldstine. He was a very astute mathematician in high school, he worked with Einstein and I kept in touch with him. He helped develop the computer. I visited with him and I keep in touch with his wife. His daughter is also an architect. She's been here and I keep in touch with her.
- Pylinski: Growing up, did you have any siblings; brothers or sisters?

Sobel: I had one brother. He was also... he went to grade school and then went to Northwestern University and was in the Naval ROTC.

Pylinski: It seemed to be a family thing.

Sobel: Our family has many connections with the Navy. I thought that we got along very well but he was six years younger than I was. I can remember the day he was born. My mother and father, I lived on Lakewood and I sat on the step in front of the house waiting for them to come home. That's one of the first memories that I have.

Pylinski: Would you say you and your brother were close?

Sobel: I would say not as close as I would have liked. I have that same feeling that my wife and I had six children; five children. I thought my primary responsibility was to earn a living for us. I did a lot of traveling and we lived nicely. Having Abigail [my granddaughter] here and my youngest son, [Bob], and his wife, [Nora]; [it] is just absolutely amazing.

Pylinski: It feels good?

Sobel: There were things that I learned and [Abigail] is maturing very rapidly.

Pylinski: Your granddaughter?

Sobel: My granddaughter.

Pylinski: Kids grow up fast, right? Growing up, what kind of work did your parents do; your father and your mother when you were a child?

Sobel: My father had a manufacturing business. He made inexpensive women's clothing. His factory was on the corner of Van Buren and Franklin Street. In those days, the elevated [train] turned on Franklin. I remember seeing a sign in the window. His firm was Newman and Sobel. Around the Depression, he lost the business and he became an insurance broker; worked for Mutual Life of New York and did well. I'm absolutely amazed, growing up through the Depression, that it didn't seem to touch us; the children. We went and I graduated from high school in 1929-30 and there was no question I was going to go to college. I at first always wanted to be an architect. I had a cousin that lived in Winnetka, [actually] in Glencoe; Jerry Sobel. He had built a house for his mother and father in Glencoe and my mother and my father took me there and he would be at a board in the living room doing some drawings. I got the feel for it. When I graduated from Senn High School I got a scholarship in the engineering school at Northwestern.

I wanted to make sure that the credits that I got for that were good for the credits that I would have had at the Armour Institute that is now the Illinois Institute of Technology. I went to the dean of the college of architecture, showed him the work that I did. Senn High School was one of the four in Chicago that had a four-year course in architecture and architectural drawing. I showed him some of my work and he said, "I'm not sure we can give you credit but when you come, take the first, what is called a project and see how you do." The first project was to draw - we used pens in those days that you filled with India ink - the project was a Doric column which has flutes in the column. I got an "A". I took that to the dean. The dean was Earl Reed. He said, "That's very nice, but that's such an easy project, I suggest you take a second one." In reflection, you recognize that in 1931, the economy wasn't very good and even though tuition at the Armour Institute was \$125 a semester, he probably didn't want to lose that income for the school. At that time it seemed like a bad deal but as many things as I've learned [it] turned out what seemed to be a difficult hurdle, turns out to be the best thing for you.

Pylinski: A step in the right direction.

Sobel: In my fifth year when I only had to take design, at that time, this is 1934-35; Armour Institute took two professors from Northwestern University and brought them to Armour to teach Social Science. One professor [Blough] was interested in historic buildings and apparently had a house, large property, in Virginia and he thought that would make a good historic preservation project and I did it. The other professor was building a house in Evanston and he invited me to come out some Saturday and he would invite the architect to come and show me around and we'd have a chance to talk. As I said, good fortune comes from some things.

I met that architect on a Saturday, his name is Ernst Benkert and after he showed me around and I was ready to walk out he said, "What do you think you'll do after you graduate." I said, "I think I better look for a job." He said, "That's a good idea. I can't promise anything but I suggest you call me and I'll see how things are and we'll maybe invite you to the office." I called him and his normal modus operandi was surprised. He invited me to come out to his office; it's in Winnetka on Elm Street, just east of Lincoln, just east of the railroad tracks on the second floor. I went there, he had a very small office, [and] I don't think it was a big as this room. He had a receptionist and one architect working and three or four boards. After we talked a bit, he said, "Talk this over with your parents because we don't pay interns and if you think it is okay, we start at nine o'clock."

Pylinski: Do you remember right about the date, what year it was that he was offering you this job?

Sobel: This was 1935, probably in June.

Pylinski: How aware were you of everything that was going on in Europe at that time, so far as the Imperialism?

Sobel: Not yet.

Pylinski: Nothing yet?

Sobel: No. It was more like 1939-40.

Pylinski: That's when Nazi Germany was starting to impose their will on a lot of countries.

Sobel: I don't know when Hitler came to grab everything but that didn't seem to rev up until after my brother was in the Naval ROTC. In 1940, they called him up. He had a summer cruise every year while he was there. He was in his senior year [at Northwestern].

Pylinski: Were you working as an architect at this time?

Sobel: I started with Mr. Benkert, worked for him until 1937, in the last couple months in his office he decided to go back to Germany to see his parents and to bring his children. He had two children; one five [years old—Kyle] and one seven [Ernst]. He put me in charge of the office and we had some nice houses going. When he came back about a month later, he said, "I'm sorry but we haven't gotten any new work so I'm going to have to let you go in a couple of weeks." He owed me money and he said, "You'll get paid for sure." In a couple of weeks, he came and I had to leave and I can tell you the rest of that story again but we're now up to the point where I then... A contractor that was doing work with us—when I was with Mr. Benkert and also working for John Van Bergen—told us that Mr. Van Bergen had just got four projects and it might be a good idea to go and talk to him. I did get an interview and was put in charge of three remodeling projects.

Pylinski: Was this in 1937?

Sobel: This was 1937, late 1937 and work began in 1938. Mr. Van Bergen was the original architect of the Braeside Elementary School [in Highland Park]. I added two wings to that building. It's prairie style. Mr. Van Bergen worked for Frank Lloyd Wright for many years before he started his own practice. He worked in Oak Park and he came to Highland Park. I also remodeled the Ravinia School and that was done by Pond and Pond who were very well known architects in those days and the Lincoln

school, which was not very handsome or attractive. The thing about that Braeside School is that it is one story except part of it is in a ravine so there is a lower level. It was close to it. This was a wonderful location. That makes this building special because the children see all the things that go on in a ravine; birds and trees and whatnot. Another interesting thing is that maybe six or seven years ago my youngest son [, Bob,] and his wife [, Nora,] and I went to visit a friend of theirs in West Chicago, on the way back we came through Palatine and on the sign it said, "Development by Kyle Benkert." Kyle was the five year old son when I worked for Mr. Benkert. I looked him up and we've become very well acquainted.

Pylinski: Small world?

Sobel: His wife [, Adrienne,] is not an architect. He did several developments in Palatine. We're up to 1938. When I finished with Mr. Van Bergen, he didn't have any other work. We lived downtown in Chicago and I never worked in an office in Chicago, so I began to canvas.

Pylinski: Looking for work?

Sobel: I happened to have a cousin who was an architect also, Herbert Sobel. He had a firm, *Sobel and Drielsma*. They did a lot of commercial work. I've visited with them and I was looking for various offices for possible jobs. One day I came back and told him what I was doing, he said, "I suggest you can have a board here. You can do your own work. Instead of looking for a job, look for a project."

Pylinski: Freelance?

Sobel: I didn't have any alternatives. That's what happened.

Pylinski: Did it work out well for you?

Sobel: This was 1938-39 and in, I think, about 1940, the war was heating up in Europe. I went to the Great Lakes [Naval Station] and applied for a position in the Navy.

Pylinski: What got you to that point? What made you want to join? Was it because the war was heating up or was it the fighting in Europe? Why did you decide to go to the Navy?

Sobel: There was no question, no other consideration. Robert Sobel's family, as I have told you, quite a few are Navy people. I have a cousin who now lives in Santé Fe; his office was in New York City. I've visited with him, his mother and his father as he was growing up. Later, he worked for a firm—

[Emery Roth]—that was one of the best architectural firms for apartment buildings down on Fifth Avenue.

Pylinski: In 1940, you went to Great Lakes?

Sobel: Yes. In 1940 I went and I filled out an application and when I brought it back, there was a captain in charge of the Naval Officer procurement. I turned it in, he said, "This looks real good but you know you have to be ready in 30 days." I had an office that was going and I did have some work so I didn't expect I would be drafted very soon. He said, "No problem, when you're ready, just come in." In 1940, I had an uncle—[Maurice Klein]—who was a bachelor and he would take me with him on his trips. One trip was to Miami and I met the grandson of the then-very well-known industrial architect, Albert Kahn, from Detroit. This fella and I were very friendly and I would go on vacation, he came to Chicago once and it was a very strange thing. I went to Detroit to meet with him at the time of the World Series and Detroit was one of the teams and he said, "Let's go down to the airport and look at those little planes." We walked around and he picked out a single-engine plane and said, "How would you like to take a ride?" I didn't think anything of it. He got in one side, I got in the other and we flew around the stadium.

Pylinski: Did you know whose plane it was?

Sobel: In those days there were no restrictions. When we got back at the airport, he got out of his side, I got out of mine, and he came around and said, "Congratulations." I said, "What for?" He said, "You're my first passenger." Going back from there, I was a project manager for a project in Lima, Ohio. This building was being built to provide the Navy with 14" and 16" guns. That's another coincidence; the battleship that I was assigned to had 14" guns as you see in the living room. They cast gun barrels which are maybe 25 feet long in a pit, a big concrete pit, and it's centrifugal. They take the barrel and cast it.

I'm sure many times, the Navy didn't need anymore. They weren't going to build any more battleships, but they need a lot of anti-aircraft guns because as the war heated up that was the main defense. As is usual change, they issue a change order to the contractor and the contractor submits his proposal and in this case the contractor didn't give credit for what he didn't have to do: excavate extra concrete and reinforcing steel.

When I got that proposal, I showed it to my boss, Mr. Linton and he said, "Don't worry about it, just give them an estimate and they'll take care of it." Which I did. The estimate, I didn't think much about it. I went to Lima on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I was down there on a Thursday and I got a call from our secretary that Mr. Louis Kahn, who was the brother of

Albert, wanted to see me first thing in the morning. I asked her, "Do you know what it's about?" She said, "No I don't but the boss will tell you." I went down to his office, a big office like this room, his desk over there. I walk in and he comes toward me and I said, "Mr. Kahn, I'm Walter Sobel and I understand you want to see me." He said, "Yes, Sobel. Why haven't you signed that change order?" I said, "Mr. Kahn I have to explain to you what the problem is." He said, "I don't want any explanation, I want it signed." I said, "I can't sign it unless I explain to you what the problems are." He said, "I don't want to hear anything." I said, "Here, Mr. Kahn. If you want to sign it, you can, but not me." He said, "You're right." Another wonderful coincidence, one of our clients of Mr. Albert Kahn's was Thomas White. Tom was in the business of tuck pointing and things related.

Pylinski: Masonry work?

Sobel: Yes. He did some work for us and then he had a piece of property in Evanston; on the corner of [Simpson] and Ridge Road. He said, "I want a simple building, one story." That building is now [called] Hecky's, which I go to occasionally. They have BBQ and all kinds of things. Where do you live?

Pylinski: I live right in the city. I live in Pilsen on Cermak and Western.

Sobel: Tom White had been in the Navy in World War I. He was now a Lieutenant Commander, second in command of Naval Officer Recruitment. He'd been after me to join the Navy and I explained to him that I had this job and I had exemption. After a while I resigned from Albert Kahn, we went back and forth on the train. We went to Detroit on a Sunday night and we'd come back on a Friday night. We were on the train and I said, "Tom, I'm ready to go." He said, "Great!" I always thought I should be in the Civil Engineering Corps. That's where an architect has some sense. The Civil Engineering Corps didn't want architects, they wanted engineers. I said to him, "I'm ready to go but I would like to be in that." This was Friday night, on Monday morning before noon; he called and said, "I got you a commission. You are to be in Princeton on Sunday night." In order to be ready, you have to get uniforms; you have to get an examination. I was on a train on Sunday night. When I got this commission, or offer, I talked it over with my mother [Blanche] and father [Karl]. We lived on Melrose and my mother was not happy to have two sons in the service. My father said, "If you think you have to do it, well then do it." I went to Princeton and we had three months of rigorous training.

Pylinski: When did this happen? What time frame was this?

Sobel: This was [December] 1942, [through 1943] .

Pylinski: Before that, though. When did you hear about Pearl Harbor? Where were you when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

Sobel: On Pearl Harbor Day, I was in my office in what was then the Diana Court Building on the corner of Michigan and Ohio. My office window looked out on to the street. It looked out onto the street and I got a phone call from my mother. I remember standing in the window holding the phone and looking out and she told me about Pearl Harbor. I didn't know how we could take it. What was the date of Pearl Harbor?

Pylinski: December 7th, 1941. It was probably snowing out. If it wasn't it was probably pretty cold here, that's for sure. You went to Princeton and instead of getting 30-days' notice, or getting 30 days to get there, they told you to be there within a week?

Sobel: I had [lots of] work to do but as I said, I applied to Great Lakes probably even before Pearl Harbor because my brother [Burton] was in and he had a sense about how things were going. I was probably early 1942 that I went back to Great Lakes. I was in a class that graduated from Princeton and interestingly, [my eldest son] Richard is a graduate of Princeton. I wasn't really sensitive to this. Princeton was training for small craft, like PT boats and torpedo boats, minesweepers and minelayers.

Pylinski: What job did you train for when you joined the service?

Sobel: I didn't think about where I would end up. But again, fate got two dozen of us and we were sent to Ohio State University to learn how to teach the personnel on top of a ship to recognize the enemy ships and planes. We spent two or three months there at Ohio State and when we graduated, they sent us to San Francisco to board our ship, the *USS New Mexico* in Pearl Harbor. It had been in the Atlantic and of course they brought a lot of the ships into the Pacific. I go to a World War II round table here in Wilmette at the library. They meet once a month on Thursday and one of the people [David Yablong] that's there was on a destroyer that escorted the *New Mexico* through the Panama Canal and he only lives a block away; we've been good friends. He lives in Florida right now, but when he gets back, I'm going to tell him about this. The *USS New Mexico* was coming to Pearl Harbor and we were to go and board here there. We took our things and put them on a transport ship. It was to leave in the morning and we got orders to get off, that our ships were not going to be in Pearl Harbor by the time we got there.

Pylinski: When was this?

Sobel: We had to wait until we could get transportation to Adak, Alaska.

Pylinski: Was this in 1942?

Sobel: This was [...July 1943]. We were there a couple of weeks; they put us on the heavy cruiser *USS Salt Lake City*. It had been in a battle in Adak and the Japanese occupied Kiska and Attu Islands, which are not more than 500 miles east of the northern tip of Japan. You don't realize how close they are. The Japanese occupied that island. We did get up to Adak and went ashore and the ships were on patrol in that area to make sure no Japanese got back in there again. The ship came in and we went aboard and we went on patrol for three weeks. When we came back, I had orders... While we were waiting for the ship to come back, I went to the Civil Engineering Corps officer [on Adak] and asked him if he could use someone who could draw. I told him I was an architect. He said, "Boy, can I. I just have carpenters and plumbers and I have a great job for you?"

Pylinski: Were you on the *USS Salt Lake City* at this time?

Sobel: No, the *USS Salt Lake City* took us to Adak. We went ashore and waited for the ship (the *USS New Mexico*) to come in. While I was there, I went to the Civil Engineer Corps officer and he gave me this great job [for an officers' club]. I have a picture which you will see. He said, "I have a great site for it. It's going to be on the promontory overlooking the harbor." Adak Harbor is a very big one. He said, "The only restriction, you have to use a Quonset hut." He said, "I've got a good one for you." A Quonset hut is sheet metal, maybe 25 feet wide and this was maybe 60-70 feet long. I put dormers on the side of this [hut] and a fire place at one end and so on. The weather is moderate in Adak, but it's still Alaska. This took maybe a week and a half or two. When I finished, the ship was back in port and we went aboard. I was in a room with two other officers. My job, as I told you, on the ship was to train all the top-side people that are the gunners, anti-aircraft and so on, to recognize ships and also planes. I have a picture of one of the Japanese planes that was called a Betty. My wife's name was Betty. I have a picture someplace with a blackboard with "Betty" on it. I showed my wife.

Pylinski: Did she like it?

Sobel: Sure.

Pylinski: It's got her name on it.

Sobel: One of the questions is, "Did you correspond with your family?"

Pylinski: Yes.

Sobel: I wrote tons of letters.

Pylinski: I was talking to your son [Richard] about that, yes.

Sobel: You have a four-hour watch every 12 hours. In the meantime, you do some studying, some writing and I wrote letters to my mom and dad. At that time, my future wife and I... this is an interesting situation. When I was working at Albert Kahn's, I roomed with two other people, both working at Albert Kahn. One was an architect and the other was an ex-mechanical engineer. The architect was Bud Schinderman. One weekend we both came back to Chicago (he was from Chicago) and his date was Betty Debs and I had a young lady [a neighbor] that lived on the same block and we went to the *Chez Paris*. I don't think you've ever heard of it.

Pylinski: I can probably imagine what it was like, though with a name like that.

Sobel: It's about a block east of Michigan Avenue and it was just about at the corner of Ohio. We enjoyed a very pleasant evening and, I'd worked for Albert Kahn for about eight or nine months and this was the only time we came back together and had a couple of dates. As I was winding up, Bud Schinderman said to me, "I'd like you to call Betty and tell her that I'm dating a young lady here in Detroit and that I likely won't be seeing her." I said, "You've got to be crazy to think that I would do such a thing."

Pylinski: Why couldn't he deliver the bad news himself?

Sobel: I argued with him and finally I said, "Alright, I'll do it." I didn't know if I was going to call. This was maybe Friday night or Saturday. I called her and explained who I was. She said, "I remember [Bud]." She lived on the South Side, 5000 East End and I explained what Bud had told me to tell her and I said... I explained it all to her. She didn't seem too surprised or unhappy and I said - I remember standing in my bedroom - and I said, "I'm going into the Navy, but when I come back could I call you and maybe we could have a date?" She said, "I'll think about it." I went to Princeton and I explained that at Princeton we had a very intensive but very well organized program. It's amazing how much you can learn in three months, but you're in school from nine o'clock in the morning until six o'clock at night. In the morning, six o'clock is reveille. You get up, you get out and fall in line and you go back and get dressed and then you come back and the whole group marches to the dining room and maybe from eight to eight forty-five and then you go to class. At five o'clock, you go to formation and you march and do other things. You have dinner at six o'clock and at seven o'clock you go back to your room and you have to study. Lights are out at ten o'clock. If you're not sure that you know what's ready for tomorrow, you get under the covers with a flashlight to finish up.

Pylinski: How often did you write to Betty when you were at Princeton, San Francisco and Adak?

Sobel: I didn't write to her at all.

Pylinski: You didn't write to her at all?

Sobel: No. It wasn't until I got back from Princeton [in March 1943] that I called her and asked her if she had thought about it. She said, "Yes, let's get together." We had two weeks leave between Princeton and going to Ohio State. She said I should come to pick her up. I told you she lived at 5000 East End. Her mother [Rose Novey Debs] was not very well but her father [Louis Herman Debs] was a very dynamic person. Our first date, we went to a bar that had a game; I guess it was called 23, or something. I won a game and we dated for the two weeks pretty consistently. When she said, "Okay, come and pick me up," she said, "But you have to come to my aunt's [Sadie Anixter] apartment." They lived on a higher floor, so I went there, knocked on the door - I had my uniform, white cap under my arm...

Pylinski: Looking spit and polished.

Sobel: I knocked on the door. Her sister [Gladys Debs Seeqman] was also visiting. Her sister lived in Pittsburgh. She opens the door and looks at me, turns around, calls in to Betty, she said, "He's not as bad as you told me." As I said, we dated and then after I finished at Ohio State, we again had leave so I continued to date with her and we got along very well. After the operation in Adak, the Aleutians, one of the last things we did was to plan to get the Japanese off of Kiska and Attu. It was decided to have it as a night operation. At sun-down, the whole group - maybe 50 ships - with their seaborne artillery to support the troops that would be landing, we fired. Our job was to see if we could see anything. We couldn't see anything but the radar was at that time and had been operating. Some indication that there was movement on the island, but what was strange is that we never saw any troops. When they landed, there were no Japanese on that island. Many years later, after my service, my wife and I took a trip on a ship up the inland passage from probably Vancouver and we saw the glaciers, we saw... we got up to Juneau, which is the capitol [of Alaska]. What we had been doing before this was some courthouses, so I was interested in seeing the Federal Courthouse in Juneau.

Pylinski: You were helping build those? You were doing the architecture work for those?

Sobel: No. The chief judge [Brian Garfield], it turned out, also had written a book, *The Thousand Mile War*, and that referred to our operations in the

Aleutians. Another couple of things I should tell you about when I was in Adak. The Executive Officer selected me to go to Dutch Harbor to learn how to use the LORAN System—that's L-O-R-A-N—Long Range Navigation. That's about a week's course. I had a trip on a PBY, that's a sea plane where it can go on the sea or on the land.

Pylinski: Like a boat plane, almost?

Sobel: After I finished at Dutch Harbor, [I] came back; the ships were again on patrol. I went back and the engineering officer gave me a job to design a non-denominational chapel. I had some pictures of it, but I somehow misplaced them. Here is another interesting thing. I had to go to physical rehab at the Mather Pavilion. There was a fellow who came to see his father who lives in Alaska. I asked him about this Adak and so on. He sent me some pictures but don't have a good recollection of the chapel that I designed. I'm not sure whether that's still there. Adak has become a forward air base, so it's still very much a part of the US.

Pylinski: Absolutely. Can we talk about the *USS New Mexico* for a minute? I do have a few questions about it because it was such an interesting ship and you were one of the lucky gentlemen that had the opportunity to work on it.

Sobel: I was very fortunate for the executive officer. I was probably the oldest ensign so I had the duty of being Officer of the Deck for General Quarters.

Pylinski: Was that your primary duty on the ship?

Sobel: No, you have a watch station and you have my other project was to teach all these people and you did it every day because the only way you learn recognition is it has to become imprinted on your brain.

Pylinski: Recognition is repetition.

Sobel: Recognition is repetition, you're right. The professor who was our teacher at Ohio State had worked with some organization to develop a camera that would project a picture and you could adjust the timing originally from fifth of a second to a thousandth of a second. All you saw was a flash, but you knew immediately what it was. You saw the planes in various positions; and the ships and so on. We were teaching when we were off duty, teaching and otherwise things to study. That went on; I was on the ship from July 1943 to January 1945. I have to tell you that when we finished in Adak, we came back to our home port, which was Bremerton, Washington. The ship was put into dry dock and they needed to get new guns and get refitted. I called Betty and asked her if she'd like to come out.

We were going to be there for a couple of weeks. We got further acquainted.

Pylinski: She came out to Washington to visit with you?

Sobel: She came out. It was easy in those days to get a train, but with the people in the service, they got a special permission; arrangement. I think it was summer 1943; we'd been dating since I went in to the Navy and got along very well. She had a way of explaining things that I understood. It was a very friendly relationship.

Pylinski: A good compliment.

Sobel: At the officers club, there was a bowling alley and we went bowling. One night, she said, "I think we should get engaged." I said, "You have to be crazy! I don't know what will happen to me." She said, "I don't care." We argued and argued and finally she said, "I've got a suggestion, we'll bowl three rounds and whoever wins two, makes the decision." I don't think she'd ever won before, but she did then.

Pylinski: She conned you.

Sobel: We got engaged. When I was back on leave... when the ship was refitted, we went back on duty. We went into the southern Pacific. Our ships were seaborne artillery. We were in battles where we supported the troops under General MacArthur to take the Japanese occupied islands. I have a medal, recognition of a number of islands. General MacArthur's theory was very sound. He would take one island, skip one, take the next one and isolate the one in between. We finally got to Guam, Saipan and Tinian. It was a very tough battle, but the Japanese at that time didn't seem to have or were putting their planes against us. Mainly we'd bombarded so the troops could go ashore. Guam was a very tough job. I was sure that we had put enough shells on that island that it would sink. When we're finished, the Navy, in good faith, decided to send our battleships with six destroyers to Australia on a goodwill tour and a little rest and recreation in Sydney, Australia. Our signal people, [who were] all male communicated with the signal people on shore; all female. By the time we landed, every topside person who wanted a date had one.

Sobel: You have a question of, "What did you write?"

Pylinski: Yes, sir.

Sobel: You'll find that I wrote but never explained where we were or what we did. I had no trouble communicating with her (Betty). Of course, my mother, my father and my brother - and when I would be ashore and

explain to my wife we visited the Aleutians. She said, "My God, I thought you were in the South Pacific." Everything was censored. There was no way that you would tell where you were. What's interesting is that we have a picture... I have to explain to you when we were in these operations after Guam, we went back to the ship and we were in... we went from Australia, we went up to Ulithi and then it was our... we then went to the Philippines. The first area was Leyte Gulf: L-E-Y-T-E.

Pylinski: When you were in Australia, do you remember what year and about what month you were there for R&R.

Sobel: [Early 1944] We went to Sydney. We had some pre-arranged dates. And then we went back to the ship and we went down to Brisbane to a place where we spent two days, just leave and recreation. We came back, we sailed from Australia up, Ulithi, which was a forward port where things could be adjusted on the ship and from there we went to Leyte Gulf.

Pylinski: What did you do on your two days in Brisbane?

Sobel: I don't really remember but I do remember is when I got back in the states, I said, "I have to tell you I had a date in Australia." My wife didn't think that was too bad.

Pylinski: Lucky.

Sobel: I don't even remember that person's name. In Leyte Gulf we began to get some very heavy resistance. There's a picture, a memorable picture of General MacArthur coming ashore in Leyte Gulf which says, "I am returning." I think that before he was taken out of the action he was in the Philippines. This is a couple of years later in Leyte Gulf the Japanese Kamikazes were much more active. We didn't get near it.

Pylinski: How many ships did you have with you at Leyte Gulf?

Sobel: It must have been 150 ships.

Pylinski: Did you have the 16" guns on them... on your ship? What size guns did you have on your ship?

Sobel: We had twelve 14" guns. They could shoot a shell 15-20 miles. We had 5" anti-aircraft guns; eight of them; we had maybe 15 anti-aircraft guns.

Pylinski: Would you say the ship and the crew was pretty well prepared?

Sobel: My responsibility, what I started to tell you, was Officer of the Deck for General Quarters. That meant I was in charge of operating the ship

whenever we were in General Quarters. The only other people on that bridge; the Captain and when we were in operation, he was on a wing; the wing on the port side. In the Chart House, I was there, the helmsman was there and two quartermasters. Behind us was a small room with a communication officer. Then, we were a flag ship; that meant that we had an Admiral - in charge of the whole operation - on the level below us. The bridge is 70 feet above the water.

All the other crew, operating the 14" guns - it takes about six or eight to load the shells, the powder - they were in charge of a gun; there were three guns on a turret - in charge of a turret inside with one of our ensigns. Then, there's the gunnery officer is on the starboard bridge. That gives you a picture of where my station was. When we were at sea, there was a pre-arranged travel. We traveled in one direction and it was a zigzag to hopefully avoid any Japanese submarines. We also had some operations in other islands, there were 19 islands that formed the Phillipines, we took care of Mindoro and then in January 1945 we had orders to go up north to Lingayen Gulf. This operation was to begin at dawn but for some reason they sent us past Lingayen, maybe it was the thought that the Japanese thought we were coming to Okinawa or something else. We then got orders to go back to Lingayen Gulf. As we were entering the gulf, at noon on January 5th in the Phillipines a kamikaze plane targeted us. I mentioned a photographer has a picture. That plane was on fire, couldn't have been more than a thousand yards away. Nevertheless, when communications told us that we were being targeted, I didn't know if I had authority to give an order to turn the ship in hopes that the plane would miss us. This is one of the examples that you train and you practice for everything but the thing that happens. I called the captain. I walked from my position on the starboard side of the Chart House to the captain out on the port wing and he was coming toward me. My recollection is that he couldn't have been more than a foot or two away just outside the door; and I was just inside the door when the kamikaze took off the rest of the wing,

I found out later the plane fell on the anti-aircraft emplacement where about 12 of the shipmates were killed. It landed on the deck with a 500-pound bomb, which had blown up. I was wounded, I had shrapnel and the captain was right close by; he was killed. I spent many years feeling guilty that if I had known what to do [about turning the ship] it wouldn't have happened; that the captain wouldn't get killed.

Pylinski: I think the one thing to understand about war - having been deployed to combat three times myself- there's so many things that happen on the battlefield.

Sobel: Were you in the service.

Pylinski: Yes, sir; 12 years.

Sobel: What years?

Pylinski: From 1996 to 2008.

Sobel: What branch?

Pylinski: US Army, I was a Paratrooper. I can tell you right now from experience, you can train for almost everything and there's just that one thing.

Sobel: Our ship has a USS New Mexico Association. We meet, they have an annual reunion. Richard and I have been to several of them. I was at one with my youngest daughter, [Dr. Nancy Sobel]. We reminisce. We also write cards to people that aren't there. We get a newsletter every month with a picture of the ship and Mount Fuji-Yama in the background. Maybe two or three years ago, Richard and I were there and we had a conversation with an officer who took over for me when I was wounded. He assured me that there was no way I could turn that ship. I still feel that if I'd known what to do, it might have been different. I don't think you can change that image. It's great to see some of these people. When we first began to go there, maybe seven or eight years ago, there might have been a hundred veterans, shipmates; we have an association so wives and children and our members; we might have had 200 people. Generally, we meet at the Crown Plaza just near the airport in St. Louis. One year, the reunion was in Mobile, Alabama. The *USS Alabama* is in port there. The program was the gold born [?—ed.], but that was just after the big storms [hurricanes] in the Gulf. The land around it was just soaked. I introduced... the quartermaster was there, too; David Baker. He came up to me and I introduced him to Nancy. He said, "Nancy, I'm glad to see your dad. Last time I saw him he was covered with blood."

Pylinski: He probably thought he'd never see you again. That's the beauty of these organizations, though. They bring people back together.

Sobel: We correspond. He's been to other reunions. I haven't been able to get a response recently. We have a log with the names and phone numbers of everyone we know which is one of the great things. One of the people, I don't know what... he was not an officer, he was an enlisted man, his name is Vern Dascher, he calls himself "Ole Vern" and we get correspondence from him. They had a reunion this year, what I was trying to explain, there were only 15 shipmates. There were some who couldn't come, like me and communication keeps us aware of what others are doing and when somebody passes away, he sends us... we can send a condolence card if it was somebody we knew. We're trying. After being

wounded, I was in sick bay, which is below the two turrets in front. This is another 15-20 feet below the bridge.

Pylinski: Still on the *USS New Mexico*?

Sobel: Yes, I was in sick bay. That's where you go if you are wounded. One thing I always remember, one of our sick bays, a lieutenant... by that time I was a lieutenant, too. He had a very bad wound in his leg and the doctor said, "We're going to have to operate and take it off." He asked me to help him, I couldn't convince the doctor, even if it might have been the right thing to do. He lost his leg. After they finished supporting the landing on Luzon, they transferred the wounded to a transport that took us from Lingayen Gulf down to Leyte where we went aboard the *USS Hope*, which was a hospital ship. It traveled with all the lights and it took us a week or two to get to the Admiralty Islands where we had a Naval Hospital. I was there for a long time.

Pylinski: How long were you in sick bay on the *USS New Mexico* before you were transferred?

Sobel: I was in sick bay for six or seven days which is the time it took to secure the island.

Pylinski: The fighting was still going on while you were in sick bay?

Sobel: It took another day to go from Lingayen to Leyte and from Leyte it took at least ten days to go from the Philippines to the Admiralty Islands. I must have been in the Admiralty Islands for three or four months. I met with a psychologist every day, Dr. Lewis Cohen. By another great coincidence, this was over Passover, which is what we are in now, and the Rabbi [Charles Shulman] from North Shore congregation, which is where we belong, had a service and maybe another month there, they sent us, we got orders to go back. We went to San Francisco.

Pylinski: Go back to the states?

Sobel: Yes.

Pylinski: Were you able to correspond with Betty at all during this time before you got back to the states?

Sobel: Yes. I could do everything, but I couldn't get out of my mind that I was guilty. An interesting thing, when we were told that we were going to go ashore in San Francisco, they said, "The uniform of the day is such-and-such." I didn't have any clothes, except what they gave me; my trousers and a shirt and a blouse. I had to get a jacket. The jacket was a little big

and I needed a belt; they gave me a rope. I arranged with my wife to meet, at that time we had been married when we were in port in Bremerton, married in Seattle. At this time, I arranged - she was living with her father in Los Angeles - she came up to San Francisco, we had been previously at the St. Francis Hotel and we'd arranged to meet there. St. Francis has an entrance on one side and side entrances; we were going to meet at the front entrance. She was talking to some other officers and when she saw me, she told me to come in the side door. I said, "Yes, I have to get a new set of uniforms." Treasure Island was the home base. I went there, saw the tailor, this was noon. He checked me out and so on. I said, "When can we expect to get the uniform?" He said, "Usually it takes a week. Sit down; you got one in three or four hours." Our orders were to go back to Great Lakes and I was there, I would be at the hospital for five days and at home on the weekends. My wife and I lived with my mother and father on Melrose. It wasn't an easy situation. My mother wanted to run the show. While my wife was somewhat agreeable, it wasn't a good relation. I remember one interesting thing. I have some pictures of it. She was used to getting interesting clothing. She got a big hat with a big brim and my mother said, "You have to return it, it's no good she can't afford that kind of money." We had a big discussion and I convinced her to send it back which was the wrong thing to do. We moved to the corner of Roscoe and Sheridan in an apartment overlooking Belmont Harbor. I can remember it was winter time, you'd look down on the lake and it was grey and the sky was grey and it made it made you feel kind of grey. We shortly thereafter got an apartment on Roscoe. The interesting thing about that is the apartment we had was previously a part of a bigger apartment. We had what used to be the kitchen, the dining room and some other space and the people who lived in the front had the whole apartment. One day, a man knocks on the door and introduces himself, he's Harry Rosenbaum. He's saying to these people, "I'd just like to show you the rest of our apartment." We became very good friends. I was still in the Navy, [we were] at her brother's apartment on 50th Street. Rabbi Jacob Weinstein lived in the same building; he and his family. When I got out of the service, we needed a lot of transition. There were many differences of opinion, differences of background and we went to Rabbi Weinstein. At that time, KAM was on Drexel Boulevard, it is now Operation Push [with] Reverend Jesse Jackson. When KAM was there, there was a first floor entrance on 50th Street and the rabbi wanted to have a chapel. He asked me to design it. I designed a nice chapel and we have folding doors at the back so you could expand the seating into what was the lobby. I have a little note what the rabbi said at the dedication. I was on the pulpit with the rabbi and I don't know who else and he introduced me as the architect and that I was the only lay person on that pulpit. We went to talk to Rabbi Weinstein once a week for a long time. He did help us transition. Going from the service and having that kind of a relationship with your wife as opposed to having 24-hour relationship; it took some adjustment. One

other thing, on July 4th, 1945, I sold my mother and father and my wife we're going to celebrate at the Edgewater Beach Hotel. At that time, the lake was right in front of the hotel. It had a big terrace and we had probably lunch or dinner; it was more likely lunch because I remember it was daylight. I ordered a steak and when I cut into it, I was in my white uniform; high collar. The blood splattered all over my blouse. My mother cried, my wife laughed and she took a napkin, put it in cold water and whipped it all off.

Pylinski: That's a good woman, quick on her feet. Can you tell me a little bit about the crew of the *USS New Mexico* when you were on the ship? What were they like; what was it like to be on that ship?

Sobel: There were 2,500 of us on the ship. Officers had a separate mess from the enlisted people. Which I understand is not true anymore. I have two distant cousins, married - husband and wife- that are in the Navy. They are on submarines. There is only one mess. At that time, also, cabin boys were Philippine and we also had Marines aboard. They were mainly the police officers. They protected the captain and so on. We also had two airplanes on the ship, you see on the model. They were our spotter planes; single engine. On the way back from Australia they flew what was called "air cover". We didn't have any problems. When they land, the ship makes a 180 degree turn and creates a swirl, where the water is flat; roughly flat. One time it wasn't quite appropriate, but nevertheless the plane tried to land and it sunk, but the pilot was rescued. You asked how we got along. We really only knew the fellow officers; ensigns originally, lieutenants later. There were a couple of other lieutenant commanders who were very supportive and friendly. I was very well acquainted with the captains because I was on the bridge with them. We had one unusual captain. Captain Zacharias. He had come to the ship from the Office of Naval Intelligence. He spoke fluent Japanese and he translated the woman who was American who was giving news with this Japanese slant, Tokyo Rose. The captain would interpret for us. He was there, captains were usually there for 10 or 11 months and they would change. All other personnel were pretty steady. We had some officers who transferred to other divisions. I remembered one who went to submarines. Otherwise it was a pretty stable group. We had routines, as I said I taught almost every day and knew all my crew. I was in charge of the, we were part of the navigation department; we were the lookout division. They were all top side. We got acquainted with them, but since going to the reunions we are more communicative.

Pylinski: Were you ever involved in the decommissioning of the *USS New Mexico*?

Sobel: No. I was taken off, maybe January 10th or 11th and the ship, after we were taken off at Lingayen Gulf. The ship went to Ulithi, which was had a

dry dock, to get repaired. Then they came back, this is another incident; they came back and they went to Iwo Jima and to Okinawa where the opposition was much more intense. There again, I have to thank the lord that I wasn't there, they got hit again. Nevertheless, they went back and were repaired and they were in Tokyo Bay when they surrendered.

Pylinski: That was a pretty resilient ship.

Sobel: At the reunions we hear about this. The ship, after that, went from the Phillipines through the Panama Canal up to their home port on the East Coast, I don't remember where, somewhere near New York. It was decommissioned.

Pylinski: It was Newark, New Jersey.

Sobel: They went through decommission. They arranged for a scrapping, and they auctioned it off. They took it apart. I'm sure they took all the important equipment off otherwise. Some of the fellows at the reunion tell us about that. We have some very nice talent at the reunions. The [daughter, Jackie Payne] of one of the officers who didn't make it through has a great voice and she has a minstrel group in Princeton, Texas. She hasn't been to the last couple, but we correspond.

Pylinski: Do you remember any USO shows on the ship while you were on there?

Sobel: Yes. We did have some, but I don't remember the specifics. I know there is one questions asking about one of the actresses.

Pylinski: Dorothy Lamour.

Sobel: Dorothy Lamour. I don't think we had her. We had some of the others and they were very interesting. What you do, you get everybody up on the deck and there's a stage and they do a show. We had comedians and so on. It was just a change of pace.

Pylinski: Good for the men.

Sobel: It's something that you have to learn. You can't be pushing them all the time.

Pylinski: You have to have that decompression time.

Sobel: That's right.

Pylinski: I saw some articles on your wall about a late promotion.

Sobel: After I was released [from Great Lakes in September 1945], I was released from the hospital with a full discharge and was assigned as a navigator on a supply ship.

Pylinski: You were still...

Sobel: In the Navy. Before I could go aboard, I was to be the navigator, the war ended [in August 1945]. I had plenty of points to get out. I applied then for my promotion. I was a lieutenant junior grade and I knew the officers in my group were promoted. I couldn't get anywhere with the authorities so about 1970 I became acquainted with Congressman Mark Kirk. His office got me the promotion. He came to a World War II round table and pinned my bars [in 2006]. I keep that jacket just as it is.

Pylinski: What was that experience like for you?

Sobel: We've been communicating and he's visited here.

Pylinski: Mr. Kirk has come to your house?

Sobel: Yes. I, in a sense, empathize with him with his problems [since he had his stroke]but apparently he's improved to the point where he's able to operate his position in the Dirksen Building downtown. He's an unusual person. It's that thing, "What goes around comes around." I think we have some more questions, let's see where we are.

Pylinski: Sure. After coming home, what was post-military life for you, after you were discharged out of the Navy? You and your wife were back in Chicago, right?

Sobel: Yes. I started my office at about 1946 after I looked for various positions and opened up a board in my cousin's office, *Sobel and Drielsma*. Art Drielsma's father was the office manager and as I began to get busy, he suggested I get an office. We got one on the same floor. If I needed somebody to answer the phone, he did it. Art had a sailboat in Monroe Harbor and I would crew for him and just got very friendly with a pretty good sail boating lot. It was 30 feet long. We invited various people to come and sail with us. I kind of kept in the Navy. I did belong to the Naval Officer Reserves in Evanston. At that time, I hadn't got my promotion. In a review, they said I wasn't eligible to stay there any longer, and that was the end of that. It was many years later that I got my promotion.

Pylinski: Did you get your back-pay from that?

Sobel: There was no back pay. The time that I was a lieutenant, a senior grade, was so short because it took so long to get it there was no extra. In that

regard, having been a wounded veteran, I get so many perks from the VA. I go to the VA at Jesse Brown with is on Ogden and Taylor. I see a number of people that require help and family members who, I also now go a couple of times to Hines; I have low vision. One of the pieces of shrapnel got my left eye and I have almost no vision in that eye. There again, they brought me [an enlarger]—pieces on the desk over there—is like a television set. You put what you want to read on the plate and it's enlarged. I can read any book; any magazine.

Pylinski: You got that from the VA?

Sobel: Yes.

Pylinski: Free?

Sobel: I get all my medication, it takes a little time. You have to make sure you order it in time, but my personal feeling is that if people knew how much it costs to take care of Veterans after the war; there'd never be another war. If anybody had sense, but you get people like Hitler and Mussolini and they didn't care about anybody but themselves.

Pylinski: How long have you been living in this house? This is a Frank Lloyd Wright house?

Sobel: Yes.

Pylinski: This is impressive, how long have you been living here?

Sobel: We moved here in 1957. Here's another evidence of faith. We lived before in houses like those across the street. All of those houses were here before this house was even built. You have to go up six or seven steps; it had high ceilings and a second floor. When my children, the two oldest, Sue and Richard, were ready to go to grade school or kindergarten, my wife said, "We either send them to Francis Parker or we move to the suburbs." We looked for houses and it didn't occur to me that this was the right thing to do, but we found this house; it's a very nice house. It's the second one west of 5th Street, it's 607. My wife had art galleries in the village. You saw some of the things that are still here from her art gallery. One of her customers was in the real estate business. She found this house but didn't tell us what it was. She tried to convince my wife that we should look at it. Finally, my wife said, "Okay, if you can find us a house that doesn't have as many steps; we have one child living on a third floor and is in the same school district, if it happens to be a Frank Lloyd Wright house, my husband might be interested." We never knew this house was here. We arranged to meet, we had a driveway there, too and her car was there and I started to get in, she said, "No, we're going to walk." We came over here,

pictures were up. There were drapes and curtains and shades on every window and it faced north. We couldn't contain ourselves in a sense. We were shown through the house by a house man. The garage was also a living quarters for servants. The reason this house was not really on the market was that the people that lived here were building a new house in Lake Forrest and it wasn't going to be done for nine months. We got out on the sidewalk and my wife asked, "What do you think we should do?" I said, "We should make them an offer." She poked me in the chest and she said, "You make them an offer, I'll give them what they ask for, it's a bargain." And it was.

Pylinski: What's it like living in a house that's on the National Register of Historic Places?

Sobel: We got it on the register. Did Richard show you the pamphlet that we get?

Pylinski: Yes.

Sobel: Richard knew somebody at Taliesin, which is the Middle West school of architecture that Frank Lloyd Wright had. He also had one in Arizona which was Taliesin West.

Pylinski: Do you get a lot of visitors that come through?

Sobel: Yes, we do. There is a red plaque on the fire place with Mr. Wright's initials, which is only on the houses that he designed and supervised the construction. There are stories that he used to come here and had some discussions with - this is the Frank Baker house - he had discussions with Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Gayle and Mrs. Baker about how the porches should be. I'm not sure whether Mr. Wright wanted the screens to go from floor to ceiling but you see the way they are. This is an amazing house, every time that I walk in or when I wake up in the morning and see out the windows, you have high windows here for furniture and you have those you see out. It's inspiring. We have it on the national register, we have it on the Wilmette roster, and we just got an award for our capability of sustaining it. My youngest son is a contractor and does most of the maintenance here and we also own a building on Wrigley and he takes care of some of those things. We really can appreciate; I only have one step up from the driveway. Those steps I can manage with a handrail on both sides.

Pylinski: Those are wide steps, too. That's a big landing on each step.

Sobel: Did Richard show you the water colors I did out in the hall?

Pylinski: Yes.

Sobel: In the beginning, in college, we did water color. It became a part of me. I love to do them, particularly things like old barns, which has such texture and such color.

Pylinski: Was your wife an artist as well?

Sobel: My wife was an embryo artist. She preferred oil. We went to some classes; she did better than I did.

Pylinski: You said she had a studio, right?

Sobel: A friend of ours had built a house in Lake Geneva, on the lake. They wanted to take a vacation and they gave us permission, they invited us to paint their house. We did some things over there. When we got back from service we took time to go to some place to relax. We went up to northern Wisconsin and it was, at the time, just after the war when you had to have points to get food. We had very good food. We went sailing almost every day, it was on a lake. I remember one thing, I had bought her a very nice wrist watch and somehow when she dipped her hand in the lake, it fell off. The water was so clear, you could see it down there but I couldn't get it.

Pylinski: Too deep?

Sobel: We enjoyed that, we had some classes and some other things and we kept in touch with some of them. An architect who was our chief of design, Edward Dean, was part of our team. We had Edward Dean, Don Murray and we had a behavior psychologist, Jill Nagy-Wright. Her dad, father or uncle was Moholy-Nagy a very well-known architect, came from a foreign country. We started doing court houses in about 1960. We also did over a dozen religious buildings, including Beth Emet here in Evanston and [work] in Cedar Rapids and Rockford. At the same time we were programming conceptual planning and design of court houses. In 1968, when I was president of AIE Chicago, I got a call from the national president, Robert Durham, telling me to organize a committee in Chicago to work with the Bar Association committee to develop good guidelines to make sufficient court houses. Up until that time there weren't many new ones being built but they were beginning to build some. I organized this committee; we then issued a RFP (request for proposal) from local universities, architectural colleges and schools of law. We chose the University of Michigan, we developed a format and we sent it out to see if we could get a brand. The Ford Foundation, it was a very opportune time, they had just finished this educational study. They gave money to the ABA, \$200,000, for the research and \$12,000 for travel; for members of the committee to see what we would then consider good court houses. In 1973, we published mainly an assistant and me, assembled the information and published *The American Courthouse*. In 1985, the ABA again

convened [with] members of the committee that were still there and other members, and decided it was time for a new addition. We were published in 1973, 20 years of court houses that I revisited. In that book, there are about 60 examples of good court houses. Of [those] 60 [examples], 28 are ones that we programmed and planned including there was a competition in New York for a new court house in Foley Square. We had known the district executive and worked with him in two other locations. We were told by the clerical court in Camden, New Jersey where we were doing work with him, about this upcoming project and we became the consultants and later the architects for both the court and the GSA. There's an addendum in the book with that court house as it finally resigns. I was at the dedication, at the groundbreaking, with Senator Moynihan, who I met there. He was the one who sponsored that project. It was at that time, the largest US court house. Subsequently, I was at the dedication where it became the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Courthouse.

Pylinski: Just to finish up our interview here, having been in the service and seeing some incredible combat and working on an amazing ship and having worked with a crew that were hands-down some of the best in the Navy at the time, what would be your definition of the Citizen Soldier; someone who takes time out of their normal life and decides to serve their country?

Sobel: I certainly filled the bill of a Citizen Soldier because, as you know, I had an architectural practice before I went in and in three months they gave us the background of service. Having got the commission was not usual. If I think about it in the past, I should have gotten a higher commission because of my age but that training was useful for everything. To recognize that you can learn to be on a ship and have responsibility for 20 to 30 people and have to train them and so on. When I got back from service, I belonged to the AIA. I reorganized the refresher course for every architect to take the state board exam. This program was four to six months at twice a week. We originally taught at Navy Pier. I belong to the Greater North Michigan Avenue Association and one of the other people was the real estate broker, Less Barrett. He came to a meeting one day; our office at that time was at 450 East Ohio in a building that was designed by a company that made radiators. He said, "Walter, I've got your new office, I'm going to show it to you when we leave here." I haven't even talked about a new office. He took me to the Daily News Building which had been vacated, they had moved up the river. The building is designed so that ships can come right at the front, there's a big terrace, a couple wings and maybe four or five stories. The building is 24 full floors and couple floors above. The above used to be, at that time, the headquarters of the radio station. He took me to the top floor, which was all vacant, and he said, "Take any part you want and we'll pay for the cost." We couldn't have a better deal. We took the north end because there was no chance of building a building beyond that. We had that office from about 1957,

about the same time we moved here. We moved here on October 2nd, 1957, which was our anniversary. The building sits back at the end, so we had a terrace. I had a wonderful administrative assistant who planted flowers around the parapet. We had these walls and we had an 18-hole putting green and a little platform that had a table for lunch or something. One very interesting experience, I belonged to an organization where the people who are the managers of courts would assemble and I belonged to that association and I invited those people that I knew to come to the office for a get-together. This happened to be in October and the Monarch Butterflies flew over the terrace and everybody accused me of setting it up.

Pyllinski: Lastly, I would like to know what you thought of your boots while you were in the service.

Sobel: We didn't wear anything but shoes. We were on board ship and the wonderful thing about a battleship; you get three meals a day. It might not be on time when you are in general quarters, you might get a cup of coffee but when it's secured, you get fed. We had a shower every night, we had clean sheets with somebody to take care of it and I was fortunate that the executive officer felt that I had the capability - probably because I was older than most of the others - and gave me assignments like going to the LORAN school. I can only be grateful that I've gone through this and I have great memories, I keep in touch with shipmates through the New Mexico Association. Some are not officers, but as I said, I wouldn't take a million to do it again, but I wouldn't take a million to not do it. You came through it and you have a valuable experience.

Pyllinski: Thank you for your time and thank you for your service. I appreciate you spending your time with me today and being able to share your story.