

Alvin Schow

as interviewed by Judy Hansen

Alvin Schow was born to Archie Randall Schow and Vera Victoria Stewart in their home located at 323 South 100 West in Lehi, Utah. Randall and Vera were married in 1918 and Alvin was born in 1927. He was born and raised in the Latter Day Saint Lehi 5th ward and his membership has never been out of the 5th ward his whole life. Not many people can say they lived in the same ward their whole life. He had four brothers, Russell born in 1919, Wesley a year younger, Dee, Morris, and twin sisters that died before birth. His mother only had the five sons to raise. Alvin was the youngest.



When his oldest brother Russell came home from his LDS mission in December of 1941, the week

Pearl Harbor was attacked, he knew he was going in the service. Wesley was 21 years old and knew he was going in. Dee was about 18 and he worked at Hill Air Force base in Ogden as a parachute rigger, folding and preparing the parachutes so the troops could jump out of the airplanes. When he turned 20 he joined the Navy as a parachute rigger and was sent on the USS Ticonderoga, an aircraft carrier. All the aircraft carriers were named after battles and the Ticonderoga was named for the capture of Fort Ticonderoga in the American Revolutionary War. His brother Morris was 16 when the World War broke out and was graduating High School so he also joined the Navy. All the brothers were in the service at the same time. His mother had to write a lot of letters.

His mother was very concerned about her boys. Russell and Wesley were over in India. They were helping fly the supplies to the army in China that was resisting the Japanese. They were both drafted in the Air Force. Dee, who was on the Ticonderoga got into a lot of the battles of WW II because of the nature of the mission of the aircraft carrier. Morris was assigned to the USS West Virginia which was a battleship. All the battleships were named after a State.

Alvin was 14 years old when Pearl Harbor was attacked. It was a Sunday morning and they had all gone to church. The word came in that the US had been attacked so everyone was anxious to get home and hear the news about the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Alvin grew up with two, three, and then four brothers in the service so when he became 16 or 17 he decided he didn't want to be part of the ground troops in the Army. He joined the Navy before he turned 18 so they wouldn't draft him. Just like all of his brothers he graduated Lehi High School in the class of 1945 but he wasn't home for the graduation ceremony.

The military came around to all the High Schools giving various types of tests to the seniors to know what they would be qualified for. Alvin took the Eddy Test, an examination given throughout WWII as a means of identifying men with the capability and aptitude for being trained as electronics maintenance technicians in the Navy and Marine Corps. The official name was Radio Technician Selection Test (RTST, Nav Pers 16578), but this designation was rarely used. Passing the Eddy Test served as the passport to the Electronics Training Program, possibly the best technical training program then available in the Armed Services. Alvin passed the test and they told him he could join the navy because he was qualified to operate and run the radar systems that were just being developed during WW II.

The family didn't have a car so in the latter part of February 1945 he paid about \$1.50 for a one way ticket on the interurban to the Salt Lake Post Office where the recruiter was. He earned the money for his train ticket working in the beet fields and on the farm.

They assigned Alvin to Great Lakes Navel Training Station north of Chicago on the shores of Lake Michigan. He was sent there for his boot camp training which lasted for three months. While he was there Germany surrendered. They had invaded Europe and surrendered in May 1945. They went to Alvin and the other servicemen that were scheduled to go to radar school and said they would have to enlist for four years in order to go to the school. When he joined the Navy he joined for the duration of the war plus six months. Now the war was ending. He wouldn't join up for four years so they took him out of school and sent him overseas as a seaman 1st class.

At 4:00 in the afternoon, they put him on a Union Pacific railroad train and sent him to San Francisco. It took two nights and two days to get there. He got to San Francisco and they put him on a ferry and sent him to Treasure Island, a military island out in the bay of San Francisco. From there they sent him up passed the Aleutian Islands and then down to Guam. All the men were taken off the troop ship and assigned to regular sea ships. He was assigned to the USS St. George a seaplane tender. This means their airplanes landed in the water of the ocean instead of on the carrier or the ship like the aircraft carriers. The seaplane tenders were named after cities and Alvin thought it was interesting that he was assigned to a ship with the name of a city from his home State of Utah.

Guam had been bombed by Japanese in 1941 and was occupied for 2 ½ years but the US took it back in 1944 and it was a military base. The mission of the USS St. George was to find the ship movement of the enemy. Its planes would fly above the ocean and find the submarines and navy ships of the enemy. They could see the submarines submerged 40 feet below the surface from the airplanes. Their sea planes would spot them and then radio back to the ship and tell them where they were, who in turn radioed to the other ships so they could either avoid them or torpedo them.

There were about 50 ships assigned to a fleet and the USS St. George was assigned to the 8th fleet. In the fleet there were aircraft carriers, destroyers, a few cruisers, four battleships, and several seaplane ships. The fleet wasn't always concentrated together.

When a Japanese pilot knew he was going to get killed he would target a US ship, dive toward it, and hit it. They did a lot of destruction when they did that and the ships had to be taken back to Guam to be repaired. The USS St. George had been hit with a suicide plane. It had a flight deck which was the part of the boat that picked up the seaplanes from the water by a crane, loaded them to the ship's deck, and repaired them. The flight deck was completely destroyed when the suicide plane hit it. Alvin had only been in Guam for about a week when they put him on the repaired USS St. George and sent him to Iwo Jima.

Alvin was the deck hand. He would swab the decks and during the battles his duty was to be down in the ammunition room below the decks. During a battle he had to put the bombs, torpedoes, and ammunition in an elevator and send it up to the deck where it was put on the airplanes or used by the gunnery crews. He would use a two-wheeled hand truck to put the ammunition on, roll it to the elevator, and then unload it onto the elevator to send it up. His biggest concern was being hit by a torpedo because he was below the deck and didn't know if he would be able to get out of the ammunition room because it was at the very bottom of the ship. There were about 1,200 crew assignments and the additional aviation squadron assignments (pilots, navigators, bombardiers, all the guys that went up in the airplanes) on board the USS St. George.

The USS St. George went up to Iwo Jima where its planes flew over and dropped bombs. If they saw a submarine on the surface they could try to destroy it by dropping a bomb on it while it was in the water. The USS St. George was lying off the island of Iwo Jima.

After Japan surrendered at Iwo Jima the next battle was at Formosa. It was an island off the China coast that the US had invaded. They were assigned to Formosa for that engagement. After the atomic bomb was dropped and the Japanese surrendered Alvin's ship was still in Formosa. They were then assigned as occupation forces to go up into Kobe, Japan where they spent four or five weeks then they went down to Sasebo, Japan. Alvin spent the rest of his time in Sasebo until they were relieved to come home in July 1946.

Even after the Japanese surrendered, they had Japanese snipers on the land shooting at them while they sat out in the bay. They lost six sailors that were shot by the snipers who were aboard ship. Even more damaging than the snipers, the Japanese would leave things lying in the bay so when the airplanes came into land in the water next to the US ships they would hit a log or something and it would rip the bottoms of the airplanes open. Alvin could sit on the ship and watch the planes come in and then they would start shaking. Soon they would just sink down to their wings. The pilots were OK, they were above the wing level which would keep the planes afloat. Then the sailors would have to go out and drag the airplanes back up onto the ship deck, repair them, and then set them back in the water again. The war didn't end after the surrender because the Japanese were still causing damage. Alvin was fortunate because he didn't have to see the effects of the war and wasn't in any place that caused him any harm during his military service.

Alvin played the piano and organ a little bit before he went into the Navy. So when he got on board ship he went to the Chaplin and volunteered to play the organ for religious services. So the Chaplin had him be the organist. When Christmas of 1945 came the Chaplin had a special service where he served sacrament to the sailors. Alvin didn't partake of the sacrament that was served and the Chaplin wondered why and thought that Alvin had been sinning and wasn't worthy of the sacrament. Alvin asked the Chaplin what authority he had to administer the sacrament. He told the Chaplin that he believed a man must be called of God to administer the sacrament by prophecy and the laying on of hands. The Chaplin told him he wanted to be a Chaplin and went to Chaplin school. Alvin told the Chaplin that Paul stated man would not take this honor unto himself save he was called of God as Aaron. Then they turned to the book of Exodus and read where Aaron was called by Moses who laid his hands on his head and that Moses was called by God. Alvin asked the Chaplin if hands were laid on his head by someone that had authority. The Chaplin said, "no." So Alvin again asked him how he got his authority. They weren't quite as close after that but he still got to play the organ. He often thought of that experience with the Chaplin and thought maybe he shouldn't have acted that way.

The Chaplin would hold a service every Sunday morning. There were three other LDS sailors on ship with Alvin, one from California, one from Layton, and one from Southern Utah. They use to meet to have an LDS church service in the afternoon after the Chaplin's regular service. They had to read the sacrament prayer from the *Doctrine and Covenants* because they didn't have the card for the sacrament prayer. They would bless the sacrament and pass it between the four of them.

When the regular barber on ship had enough time that he was release and sent home Alvin worked his way to the barber shop cutting hair for the sailors. He didn't have any experience cutting hair but his mother had cut his hair all his life so he figured if she could do it he could do it. When they got ready to go home all the sailors wanted a haircut and would give him a dollar or two in tips if he styled their hair really good and not give them the standard military haircut. He accumulated several hundred dollars in tip money. One of the crewmen knew that he was getting tip money so before they got to Pearl Harbor this man broke into his locker. Alvin exchanged all his tip money into \$1 and \$5 bills and put them between the pages of his Book of Mormon to store it. They fellow that broke into the locker saw the Book of Mormon and just threw it on the floor. He never did find the tip money.

When they got to Pearl Harbor the Captain had an inspection and reviewed all the sailors. They had to show up on the deck of the ship and he saw that some of the haircuts weren't military so he ordered that every person had to have a military haircut between Pearl Harbor and San Diego. All the fellows who tipped Alvin lost their tip money and lost their hair too.

When they got to San Diego they had to de-commission the ship. Most of the crew members had enough time that they were discharged but they still had to remove all the military equipment such as the bombs, ammunition, etc. There were about 50-or 60 men left and it took Alvin and this small crew about a month to get that done. It was a big job to de-commission the ship.

Alvin was sent to Shoemaker, California and was discharged the 7th of September 1946. He served about a year and a half in the military. He came home on a Greyhound bus arriving on a

Wednesday and his dad had him in the bishop's office on Sunday to send him off for a mission. He was only home for 30 days from the time he was discharged from the Navy until he went on his mission. His dad didn't want him to get involved with a girl and not go on a mission.

He entered the Salt Lake Missionary training center and then served his LDS mission in the New England states. He spent all his time in the State of Maine so they called themselves, "Maine-i-acs." He traveled for two summers without 'purse or script.' This means that they could only carry \$20.00 maximum to satisfy vagrancy laws. They left their apartments and traveled in the country where they depended upon the people they met for food and lodging. The two summers he did that he only slept without a bed for four nights. It was a miracle. They left the first of June and came back the end of September each summer. Some of their beds were in a barn in the hay loft but it was shelter. The four nights he didn't have a place to sleep he would stay under a pine tree and doze off.

One time Alvin went to the home of a man that ran a dairy farm. He was a man that was injured from his WW II military service and was suffering. Alvin had experience milking cows and working on the farm. When the man had to go to the hospital for ten days Alvin and his companion stayed in his barn, sleeping in the hay loft, and their meals were given to them. They made sure the cows were milked and also brought a crop of hay into the barn for the man. He doesn't know if they ever became Mormons but it opened the door to a lot of their neighbors who invited Alvin and his companion into their home so they were able to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

June Elaine Norman was raised on a dairy farm out west of Lehi on the Saratoga Road south of Evansville. We called it Evansville because there were several Evans families living there. She lived about ½ mile down a lane towards the river in the 1st ward. When Alvin got home from his mission his mother was working as a cook at the Lehi Hospital and Elaine was working for Dr. Eddington running his office which was also located in the Hospital building. When Alvin would go to the hospital to pick his mother up after work, Elaine would be in the kitchen returning a drinking glass. She looked pretty good to Alvin so he asked his mother if she had a boyfriend. When he found out she didn't Alvin asked her to go out with him. He took her to a missionary Halloween party and from there they just kept dating. Elaine was the only girl Alvin dated after he returned from his mission (he had asked her to go to the open air Latona Ballroom in American Fork during the month between his discharge from the Navy and his mission but was turned down because she already had a date). They were married June 1950.

Being in the military they gave Alvin all the "G.I. Bill of Rights" when he got home. He was able to attend school at BYU and studied accounting, finance, and banking. The G.I. Bill paid for his tuition, books, and gave him \$105.00 per month to live on. He received his Bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, and banking in 1951. Elaine continued to work for Dr. Eddington until their first baby was born

After he graduated BYU he went to work as a public accountant for Smith & Smith in Provo for a few months. They were the auditors for Wasden Oldsmobile Company. Smith recommended that Alvin take the office manager job at Wasden's so he changed jobs and went to work there. George Tribe bought Wasden out so he continued to work for George Tribe for a couple of years.

Alvin was working as the ward Clerk in the Bishopric with Rex Zimmerman and Calvin Swenson. They told him one of the officers at the State Bank of Lehi was moving to another location and there was going to be an opening there. He applied and went to work in the State Bank of Lehi in 1961 or 1962. The State Bank of Lehi was originally organized in 1890. After a few years the Mountain View Bank, Bank of Pleasant Grove, and State Bank of Lehi merged and formed the Deseret Bank. He worked for Deseret bank until he retired on December 31, 1990.

Alvin has lived in Lehi all his life. He and Elaine rented an apartment in a Lehi home on Center Street and First South. It later came up for sale so they bought it and lived there about eleven years. In 1961 they built the home they live in on 225 E 100 S in Lehi.

Alvin and Elaine are the parents of five children, two boys and three girls. Norman the oldest (he was named after the Norman family) who lives in Pleasant Grove, Kenneth living in Traverse Mountain in Northern Lehi, Linda living in Seattle whose husband (Douglas Hall) was killed in an automobile accident, Anita who lives in Pleasant Grove married to John Freeman and Lynette (who married William Nielsen) who lives two blocks south of Alvin. They are the grandparents of 25 grandchildren, most of them are married. They have Forty great-grand children with five more expected after the first of the year. The joy of family never ending.