



**Ward
Rudolph**
Navy

Ward Rudolph

May 16, 1918 - Mar 14, 1995

BIRTHPLACE: Lone Oak, Kentucky

SOLDIER DETAILS

DIVISION: Navy, LTA, Elizabeth City, North Carolina

THEATER OF OPERATION: American

SERVED: May 22, 1944 - Apr 2, 1946

HONORED BY: Daughter, Dr. Mary Kay Rudolph

BIOGRAPHY

Ward Walker Rudolph, Jr., or 'Rudy,' enlisted in the Navy in hopes of traveling to the Pacific theatre. Unfortunately, after enlistment, he discovered he was color blind and was relegated to service in the United States. He was sent to North Carolina to work on dirigibles or blimps and his wife joined him as soon as possible to stay with him throughout the war. Rudy didn't talk about the service much until shortly before his death in 1995. He did, however, tell this story that year: 'I moved up north to Peoria, Illinois, from Paducah, Kentucky, after a flood in Paducah had wiped out my family's savings. My father was dead and I was responsible for taking care of my mother and sister back home. After several years, I was accepted into the apprenticeship program at Caterpillar Tractor Company, where I worked my entire life. When I enlisted, I had completed only one year as an apprentice machinist. One day in North Carolina, my superior officer called me in. The officer told me that they had a big Cat machine out in the yard that just wouldn't start. The officer knew that I had worked at Caterpillar and asked me to take a look at the machine. I was afraid to tell the officer that I really didn't have much experience on actual big Cats, so I agreed to take a look. I went out to the yard where the Cat was parked. I walked around the Cat, climbed into the cab, checked out the instrument panel, and then walked around the Cat another three or four times. Finally, I crawled under the Cat and regarded the undercarriage where I promptly fell asleep. After a very satisfying nap, I crawled back out and reported to my superior, with absolutely no idea of what was wrong with the Cat. 'Well?' asked the officer, 'what do you recommend?' 'Scrap it,' I said. And so they hooked the Cat up to an air carrier, flew out over the Atlantic and dumped it at sea. For all I knew, it could have just been out of gas!'