

# Basic Detail Report

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## Wayne J. Mehl Oral History

**Date**

June 29, 2017

**Primary Maker**

Wayne J. Mehl

**Medium**

MTS, PDF

**Description**

Wayne Mehl served aboard the submarine USS Growler (SSG-577) as the engineering officer and the nuclear

weapons officer from 1961 to 1964. The Museum recorded his oral history interview on June 29, 2017. See transcript for complete interview. Below is a summary: Mehl began his interview by discussing his childhood growing up on a naval base in San Francisco during World War II and noting how his father, a lieutenant during World War I, heavily influenced his decision to join the Navy. He then discussed his education at Stanford University and explained his decision to join the NROTC program. Mehl also stated that his engineering degree, along with the help of an admiral, enabled him to join the submarine service. As the interview continued, Mehl recalled his experiences in submarine school and nuclear weapons school, before discussing the Regulus I missile, how the Regulus missile functioned and how Growler tested the missile. He then recounted the first time he saw Growler and explained how he acclimated to life aboard a submarine, which led to a discussion on the different foods that were served to the crew. Mehl also noted the crew's lack of communication with family back home and how this caused difficulties for some crew members. As Mehl continued, he discussed duties on board the submarine, explained the importance of qualifying, recalled eventful dives and spoke about Growler's deterrence mission. He also discussed how Growler's mission had changed his mindset toward nuclear weapons for the rest of his life and eventually led to his involvement with the group Beyond War. This conversation then led to an explanation of the process for launching the Regulus missile and Mehl's role as the nuclear weapons officer. Mehl also discussed his role as the engineering officer, recalling the maintenance required for the three diesel engines, the challenges of keeping the submarine balanced and the different problems that had to be addressed both in port and at sea. The next topic that Mehl covered was day to day life aboard Growler. Mehl noted some of the activities that the crew enjoyed while off duty, such as watching movies, playing pranks on one another, reading and eating. As the interview came to end, Mehl recalled both his last day aboard Growler and the boat's decommissioning. He also stated that, after leaving the Navy, he moved to Stanford with his wife, Helen. Mehl then reflected on his time aboard Growler, noting the importance that those experiences had on the rest of his life, and ended his interview by discussing his opinions regarding war and nuclear weapons and stating that he hopes people will learn from their visit aboard Growler. Extents: 40 media files, 47 page transcript

**Dimensions**

177 minutes