

Carter,W.A.-11-11-00

[Speaker 2]

You're free to talk about what you want to talk about, too, what you think is important, but we should kind of start off with how you came to be in the war, how you came to be in the military.

[Speaker 1]

Okay, I was in the North Carolina National Guard in 1939 and 40 and Congress back then voted that the American National Guard would enter federal service and September the 15th 1940 and I was a member of the 105th engineers of the 30th Infantry Division in Lincolnton, North Carolina. And we took the first step forward on the 15th of September 1940 and then within 10 days we left before Jackson the 3rd Division and I stayed down there for some over two years. Then I got shipped out on a Cadre to form a new engineer outfit at Camp Buttener, North Carolina.

[Speaker 2]

By what year was that?

[Speaker 1]

1940. At the end of 1942. And then I stayed there as a mess sergeant for what, three thirty-nineteen years.

They left for New Guinea, but I had to have some more servicemen. So that limited my service. So I left there and I went to Camp Sutton, North Carolina, which was at Monroe, North Carolina.

Stayed there a few months and then I got shipped to Fort Benning, Georgia with the ASTP program.

[Speaker 2]

ASTP?

[Speaker 1]

It was the Army Specialized Training Program. Stayed there a few months then they transferred me to the Army Transportation Corps in New York City. The Army Transportation Corps there, they shipped me into all of the mail that was coming from America from servicemen's wives' families to all the mail that was going to Europe.

To veterans in Europe. And I stayed there a year or so. Sometimes I would go in the van with the V-Mail.

The V-Mail was popular then. And the Kodak company in Long Island would take the letter from, say, the soldier's wife and they would reduce it down into a small just one-page letter. And they put it in small envelopes.

And they put it in wooden trays that held thousands of those letters. And sometimes I would ride with the van out there with the escort. And we'd go right to the cockpit of the plane at LaGuardia Field.

It was LaGuardia Field back then. We'd go right to the right to the front of the plane and we would take it and give to whoever was there to take it after the cockpit. Perhaps we'd take it and send it back in there somewhere.

Anyhow, they was going right straight overseas with that V-Mail. Then Congress or where somewhere around 1943 that a soldier could write his letter back home and up in the right-hand corner of the letter where a stamp's supposed to be to give us the right to write free up there.

[Speaker 2]

So you didn't have to pay for postage. That's a small benefit, isn't it?

[Speaker 1]

I have some of those letters at my house.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, nice.

[Speaker 1]

And I have some I have some more Do you remember those photo things you could buy when you unraveled? There'd be about six or seven of them.

[Speaker 2]

Kind of accordion style kind of thing?

[Speaker 1]

We bought some in Washington and sent them back home. Didn't cost us a penny.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, geez.

[Speaker 1]

I got some of them. And then I stayed there in New York working overseas in the Navy. And on October or around they wanted the soldiers people, the wives and so on, they were sending partial post packages to Europe where the war was going on.

They wanted them to send them in early November for Christmas. So I stayed up there and I don't know how many thousands of mail bags full of partial post. Man, it was just something awful to see.

They'd put it on barges and they'd take it over to Staten Island and put it on the ships what they called the ships back then I don't know Liberty ships. And they'd take them to Europe. So it seemed like World War II was beginning to calm down a little bit after they won the Battle of the Bulge and all that stuff.

I got transferred out to Camp Lee, Virginia. It might be Fort Lee now at Petersburg. So I stayed there and they put us in a postal unit army postal unit and we stayed there a couple weeks and then they shipped us back to New York.

I don't know why.

[Speaker 2]

It's not yours to know why when you're in the military, is it?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, and then we stayed there and then they shipped me back to Camp Lee, Virginia for the second time.

[Speaker 2]

You don't know why you're here?

[Speaker 1]

Then they sent me out to got a furlough 15 day furlough sent me to Alaska and the Aleutians. Well I went out there stayed in Anchorage 30 days sent us out to Cheney called the Little Islands to Chimney About what year is this? 45 and stayed out there That's not a place to go for a vacation.

[Speaker 2]

Why is that?

[Speaker 1]

There's nothing there.

[Speaker 2]

So Nothing in terms of no towns? It was just like an army?

[Speaker 1]

Just an army base? And the 11th Air Force was out there. And then the Japanese surrendered and the base where I was at they had to be 25 bombers and the P-38s and the day that Truman announced that the war was over that was 7 o'clock here and about 1 o'clock out there.

[Speaker 2]

What did you guys do when you heard the news?

[Speaker 1]

We were just jumping up and down. And the 11th Air Force put up some P-38s they put us on a ship.

[Speaker 2]

So you got to go home pretty fast?

[Speaker 1]

Well after that that was in August September, October we came on back came into Seattle and rode on to Fort Bragg and they gave me my discharge number.

[Speaker 2]

All the way across the United States across the Pacific and back again.

[Speaker 1]

From Charlotte, North Carolina to Attu and the Lucins Shimya was back this side about 25 it was 9,000 miles from Charlotte.

[Speaker 2]

That's a long ways away from home, isn't it?

[Speaker 1]

So I got my discharge and went back to Lincolnton which is 30 miles west of Charlotte.

[Speaker 2]

Just a couple of things here. You were in the National Guard. Why did you join the National Guard?

Well I was 39.

[Speaker 1]

One sergeant came in one day I was working dead carefully He said, how about joining the National Guard? I said, okay. So I joined it.

[Speaker 2]

Kids today may say 1939 and not understand this is the Depression.

[Speaker 1]

So we went on maneuvers back in 1939. What's your question?

[Speaker 2]

You're getting it up for me. The military was away from home and she was just saying your father died while you were in the service.

[Speaker 1]

Well, when I was in the military in August, daddy died. That was right before the war was over in Japan So, of course my wife got a red cross but it was hard to come home that many miles away. They wouldn't let me come because they would just have to delay the funeral.

[Speaker 2]

That must have been very difficult for you. So you were married when you went into service?

[Speaker 1]

No, I wasn't married but I went into service in 1940 in September and got married the next April.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, okay. So you got married on leave.

[Speaker 1]

No On Easter Eve we got married. It was about 25 miles from where we live now in New York, South Carolina.

[Speaker 2]

So you remember well that you were in the service already from Pearl Harbor at the time.

[Speaker 1]

Yeah.

[Speaker 2]

Everybody remembers when you heard the news.

[Speaker 1]

That Sunday, Mary, my wife had come down to visit with me and she was getting ready to go home that afternoon and there were 37 children and there was a drug store there on the street near the capital of Columbia, South Carolina she said, I wonder how come all of them people see them running towards up there in front of that drug store? I said, let's stop and see. So we stopped and found out what had happened.

[Speaker 2]

What was the reaction that you got?

[Speaker 1]

Well, I don't know. It's been so long ago.

[Speaker 2]

But you were surprised? Oh, yes. It's a sad thing to hear, too, isn't it?

[Speaker 1]

We have two men in Lincolnton that were shot from a bomb. They're still a little bit older than I am. I'm 80.

[Speaker 2]

You know, one of the reasons we're trying to start gathering oral histories more is so we can preserve the stories for younger generations. And so I was wondering what you would most want younger generations to know about World War II or about the time period of World War II.

[Speaker 1]

World War II was a different war than Vietnam, Korean War, or Desert Storm. It was a different war because four or five nations were involved in it. And Hitler, he had made big gains in the late 30s.

he was cremating and killing so many Jewish people, you know, in the Holocaust. And countries didn't like that. And they really aimed on getting them.

And I had friends that were in World War II. One of them was over in Morocco where I'm trying to think of the last name to call them, but Fox.

[Speaker 2]

Rommel, Desert Fox.

[Speaker 1]

And he was over there. He got out of there. They ran the Fox out of there all the way back to Germany.

But I had some friends that they didn't come back. They went to fight for their country. They weren't a draft puncher.

And they loved their country. And it seems like now they don't care about their country anymore. And prosperity has cost some of us.

Prosperity. See, back then we didn't make much of money as far as money was concerned. And now private, I mean, his pay is between \$700 and \$800 a month.

But America is a different place now.

[Speaker 2]

Do you think the sacrifice of World War II was worth it?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah. We knew what we were fighting for. We were fighting for peace.

And one of the things that after the war was over, when we got on the ship to come back to Seattle, they gave everybody aboard the ship a paper. And the first thing it said on that paper was You have served your country well now that the war is over. Uncle Sam does not know you.

[Speaker 2]

Really?

[Speaker 1]

That's what it said. You have to get out and make your living yourself because you're living in freedom. You love your country.

[Speaker 2]

Did you take advantage of the GI Bill?

[Speaker 1]

Yeah, I went to barber college in 1950. Man, I mean, I really mocked it.

[Speaker 2]

Yeah. My husband's older was a barber, too.

[Speaker 1]

I'm a fan of my barber shop. We were waiting to see. He said, You're going to be refunded if we're not satisfied.

[Speaker 2]

That's the best part.

[Speaker 1]

And the guy goes to the barber shop and says, Harry, are you following that? Yes, it's a barber. He says, stop following it.

He says, sure.

[Speaker 2]

Oh, gosh. Is there anything that we haven't touched on? You know, this is such a short, short period of time, but is there anything that you would like to, that you think is really important for people to remember, understand the short time we have?

[Speaker 1]

I don't know, but I don't know hardly anything they'll say.

[Speaker 2]

You hit the big points, I think. This concludes the interview.