

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Nimitz Education and Research Center*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Mr. Vincent Wayne**

Date of Interview: June 9, 2019

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**Interviewer: Joel Keefer**

Mr. Keefer: This is Joel Keefer. Today is June 9, 2019. I'm in Fredericksburg, Texas, at the National Museum of the Pacific War, and I am interviewing Mr. Vincent Wayne. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission, for the preservation of historical information related to this site. Vincent, let me start off by thanking you for taking time today on this hot Sunday afternoon to tell us about your World War II experiences. If you'll start by stating your full name and when and where you were born, we'll take it from there.

Mr. Wayne: My name is Vincent Wayne. My date of birth is 6/29/22. I'll be 97 in a few days. I was born in New York City, on the Lower East Side.

Mr. Keefer: What were your parents' names?

Mr. Wayne: My father's name was James, and my mother's name was Concetta.

Mr. Keefer: What did your father do for a living?

Mr. Wayne: My father was a truck driver.

Mr. Keefer: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Wayne: I had one brother and one sister, and both of them passed away.

Mr. Keefer: Where did you go to school, in New York City?

Mr. Wayne: No, in Brooklyn.

Mr. Keefer: Brooklyn.

Mr. Wayne: Brooklyn, New York.

Mr. Keefer: Okay. Name of the school? What was the name of the school?

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, Number 129. It was a public school, and the high school was, I don't remember, John Evans Hughes.

Mr. Keefer: Okay, and you graduated in what year?

Mr. Wayne: 1939.

Mr. Keefer: Okay, so you had graduated high school when the war started, already.

Mr. Wayne: Right.

Mr. Keefer: What did you do right after high school?

Mr. Wayne: I was working in a machine shop, a helper.

Mr. Keefer: Do you remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Mr. Wayne: We were on vacation in New Jersey with my family, and it came over the radio on that day that the war started. Of course, my brother's a year older than I am, or was, and we knew then that we were going to end up in the service.

Mr. Keefer: Do you remember how you felt when you heard about the attack?

Mr. Wayne: Oh, first we were stunned. We, you know, being young we were; I was 17, okay? It didn't strike us as much as I guess if we were older, you know.

Mr. Keefer: Right, right; okay. Did you end up being drafted into the Army or did you volunteer?

Mr. Wayne: Well, what happened was, they drafted my brother first, and he went into the Air Force, okay? Because he went into the Air Force, I went down to volunteer for the Air Force, and they refused to take me, because they said there's no other brothers home with my family. He says, "You wait another year, and we'll take you." So, a year later, they called me, and I ended up in a construction company. We were putting up telephone poles and telephone wires and all. The first place we went to was

Mississippi, for training. Well, I shouldn't say that; we went to Fort Dix for training, and then we went to Mississippi, okay?

Mr. Keefer: You did your basic at Fort Dix.

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, at Fort Dix, yeah, and then we went to Mississippi, and this is what we were doing; learning how to climb telephone poles, 80 feet, and putting up wires and all that kind of stuff. After a while, I decided this isn't where I wanted, so I volunteered for the paratroopers, and the captain agreed to send me. I went down to Fort Benning and went to the 82<sup>nd</sup> paratroopers. I was there two weeks in training when the 82<sup>nd</sup> was sent to Europe. We didn't go, because we weren't trained. We were only two weeks trained. The next thing I know, they put us on a train and were sending us cross-country. Where we were going, we had no idea. Halfway across the country, the train stopped, and they split the train in half. Half of us went into the infantry, and the other half went into the medics. I went into the infantry. We continued on and we went to--I'm jumping the gun--before I went into the paratroopers, I did some more maneuvers in Louisiana, but that was only a short time, anyhow. Well, anyhow, I ended up in Seattle, Washington, okay?

Mr. Keefer: Okay.

Mr. Wayne: We were there only three days, and then they put us on a boat to go somewhere, okay?

Mr. Keefer: Did they tell you where you were going?

Mr. Wayne: No, no. We got on the boat, and while we were on the boat, they gave us wool hats, wool clothing, wool this, and we all were told we were going to the Aleutians.

Mr. Keefer: Ah!

Mr. Wayne: We take off; one day out to sea, they came and collected all our wool clothing, and changed us into summer clothing, and we ended up going to Hawaii. We were on a converted luxury liner; they didn't have an escort, so we had to make a run for it, and that ship

was going this way, that way, and we got more sick men aboard than you could shake a stick at!

Mr. Keefer: Were you one of them?

Mr. Wayne: No, I was able to hold. I did pretty good. We ended up in Hawaii, and the first day where we were just pulling into Hawaii, all of a sudden guns were going off, cannons were going off. What had happened was a Japanese spy plane came over and was taking pictures of our ship. They got some word that we were coming, and they were shooting at this thing. That was the first time we had (laughs)--I knew about the war.

Mr. Keefer: You were very in it then, yeah.

Mr. Wayne: Then we were sent from the mainland to Oahu, and the reason was, at that time the rumor was that the Japs were going to invade Hawaii, coming in Oahu. So we were stationed up at the Pali Pass, and we were protecting the Oahu coast. We were there for a couple of months, and it didn't happen; they never came, okay? The next thing I know, we're on the ship again, and we went to--while we were in Hawaii, let me say this, while we were in Hawaii, the Marines took over the airports in Saipan. Then the Japanese sent 35,000 troops and they overwhelmed the Marines, and they had very heavy casualties. They called for help, and they sent us. We went in there to help the Marines, and we took back those airfields, In O'Reilly's book, he mentions that. It's like one of the turning points of the war, because those airfields, B-29s didn't have enough gas to go from other airports to Tokyo to bomb and come back, so the airports in Saipan were very (unclear), and they could go to Japan, bomb, and come back. We took the airports back. We held them, and they sent in the Seabees to repair the airports, and then of course, the Air Force used them. Like O'Reilly says in his book, that's one of the turning points of the

war. And we're very proud, and I was awarded the Bronze Star for action on Saipan. Then from Saipan—

Mr. Keefer: Let's go back a little bit. (Unclear, both speaking together).

Mr. Wayne: Okay.

Mr. Keefer: When you were in Seattle, is that when you joined the 98<sup>th</sup> Division?

Mr. Wayne: Yeah.

Mr. Keefer: Okay, okay. What time frame are we talking about, '43, '42?

Mr. Wayne: '42.

Mr. Keefer: '42. Okay, okay. So you went from Seattle to Hawaii. You were in Hawaii several months, and you shipped out to Saipan.

Mr. Wayne: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Keefer: Okay, just wanted to get the timeline right.

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, yeah. Then from Saipan--

Mr. Keefer: Let's talk about Saipan a little bit. You said you won the Bronze Star. Can you tell me a little more about that?

Mr. Wayne: Well, it was a terrible thing. What had happened was, we were on a ship going into Saipan. It was a dreadful storm, dreadful storm. The ship was rocking like you wouldn't believe. We had to come down the rope ladders into the LSTs. Well, if you didn't hold onto those rope ladders real hard, you went into the water. But the Navy was smart enough to realize that was going to happen, and they had boats down there waiting, and some of the guys that fell in the water, they were able to rescue. Some of the guys they never got to rescue, because we had full backpacks, and once you hit the water you sunk; some of those guys never came back up again. Anyhow, I got into the LSTs, and there were several of us circling around for almost an hour, before hitting the beach. On the way into the beach, the LST on our left was blown up, okay? The boatswain's mate that was driving our LST got a little bit frightened, I guess, so he dropped the ramp way out. We had to

jump into the water. As soon as that ramp went down, we got the order to go. We jumped in the water; we were in water up to our necks. We had to hold our rifles over our heads and wade in, okay? We got in, got into the beaches, and crawled up to safety areas, whatever you want to call it, and we finally got inland, but we didn't have any food. The Japanese cut off our food and clothing, nothing for three weeks. So they had somebody come and teach us how to eat the berries off the trees, and little bugs, and that's what we ate to stay alive, okay?

Mr. Keefer: Made Army rations sound pretty good after that, I'm sure.

Mr. Wayne: (Laughs). Yeah. Yeah, the C-rations and K-rations were pretty good after that, that's right. Now what had happened in between, I have no idea. All I know is, one day, I was standing next to the Catholic priest, and I said, "Father, why is this happening?" The first day we get there, one of my best buddies was killed. I said to him, "Why? Why is God allowing this to happen?" I think this is important to say. He put his arm around my shoulder, and he said, I mean, I'm 18 years old, he said, "Son, I don't know what to tell you." From that day on, I don't remember what had happened. I don't remember what happened; the next thing I remember, we were on this thousand-man ship to invade Japan. There were a thousand ships; we were number one to land in Japan, on Honshu. We were going in the South to land at Honshu. The Marines were going into the North. So from what we were told, the Japs sent their troops, whatever troops they had left, north to meet the Marines in the north, and down south, what we were going against were women and children with sharp sticks and pitchforks and things like that. Once we landed, and landing, when they gave up, when they gave up, and we never had any resistance with our landing. So we landed and we took over an airport, and again, we were in that same--stormy like you wouldn't believe. We couldn't

even put up tents, because the wind and the storm was so bad, the tents were blowing away. So we had to sleep on the ground in our ponchos, with snorkels on so that we could breathe. When the storm let up, we marched from there to Osaka, and we took over the Osaka College, and that's where we stayed, at Osaka College.

Mr. Keefer: Now this is when the war is at its end.

Mr. Wayne: The war had ended.

Mr. Keefer: You're in the Army of Occupation.

Mr. Wayne: We were in the Army of Occupation.

Mr. Keefer: Let's go back a little bit. So you went from Saipan, and you were on Saipan for how long? Do you remember how long you were on Saipan?

Mr. Wayne: I don't remember. I don't remember. It was warm and--a few weeks, that I know. Once we took over those airports and we held them, okay, then they sent in the Seabees. Once they came in and start building the airport, then we were sent out.

Mr. Keefer: Where were you sent to? Do you remember?

Mr. Wayne: We were put on those ships to go to Japan. Right from Saipan, we were put on those ships. A thousand ships were going to go in to invade Japan.

Mr. Keefer: Ah, okay. Now, I think Chris had told me you were on Okinawa as well.

Mr. Wayne: I don't remember Okinawa. I don't remember at all. I really don't.

Mr. Keefer: That's understandable. That was one of the ugliest, bloodiest battles of the war, so I'm sure that's something that would be--

Mr. Wayne: I just don't remember.

Mr. Keefer: Okay, okay. So you landed on Honshu.

Mr. Wayne: We landed on Honshu. We didn't get any resistance because the troops were sent to the north to meet the, what they said, the main force was coming. And there, okay, and meanwhile we were



coming in the others. So, by the time we were ready to land, they gave up, so we got no resistance when we landed there.

Mr. Keefer: Do you remember hearing about the atomic bomb being dropped?

Mr. Wayne: Yeah.

Mr. Keefer: Do you remember where you were?

Mr. Wayne: When the atomic bomb was dropped--

Mr. Keefer: It was August of '45.

Mr. Wayne: '45. Well, we were probably on Saipan; no, Saipan was '44. Yeah, '44 to '45, we were probably on Saipan when the bomb was dropped.

Mr. Keefer: Okay. Do you remember your reaction when you heard about that? What did you think?

Mr. Wayne: Well, we were very happy about it (laughs). I saw the devastation. I went there and I saw that whole thing. I've got pictures of the devastation that they caused. I mean, it was absolutely unbelievable what those bombs could do.

Mr. Keefer: But on the other hand, it was that notion invading Japan would have been a long and ugly fight, I'm sure.

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Keefer: When you were overseas, did you make any really close friends in the unit?

Mr. Wayne: Well, when we were in Japan, when we were in Osaka College, okay, the only people that were allowed to go into town were officers and the first three grades. I was staff sergeant, so I was allowed to go into town. But you had to bring in your own food and your own water, because we got word that they were poisoning our guys with the food, who were eating their food. So you weren't allowed to eat any of their food. So when you were ready to go into town, they inspected your backpack, to see if you had food and water of your own. I did; I went into town, and I want to tell you this, because it was very interesting. I was walking around

town, and I saw this jewelry store, so I decided to go in there and buy my wife some kind of jewelry. So, I went in this store and there was a husband and wife. They called them mama-san and papa-san, okay? They didn't speak any English; they didn't understand me, but I was walking around. So while I was there, I took out a half a sandwich, and I was eating a half a sandwich. These people were watching every bite I was taking. I realized they were hungry, so I took out the rest of my sandwich and I gave it to the mana-san. They were just--anything I wanted in the store was mine. They just said, "Take anything you want." So I took a pearl necklace and I sent it back to my wife. They wouldn't take any money. Also, while I was there, I met a lawyer who spoke English, and we became very friendly. I would go right to his house when I'd get a pass, and drink some sake and talk about, you know, things from America, things in Japan. He was a very, very nice man. So then, we were there for a few months, and I was ready, the rotation, my time was up. They said to me, because I was in charge of--we were putting up telephone poles for the Japs and telephone lines and all that; I had a whole squad. It was like a regular job. We would get up in the morning with my whole squad, and we'd go to work. We worked eight hours out there, and then we'd come home, and you know, it was just like a regular job. They made an offer that, if I could stay there with my squad, for another four years, they would pay me \$4,000 a year; I could live in the barracks and get food, three meals a day while I was there, okay? I had spent four years away from home. I said, "No, I'm going home." But some of the guys in the squad decided they were going to stay there, because I had a very good friend from down south, from Louisiana, he and I were very good friends. He said he's going to stay because there's \$4,000 he could just keep

saving. That'd be, for four years that's \$12,000. He says, "I'm going to save that, go home, and open up a gas station. (Laughs). But I wanted to come home. They sent me on a tramp steamer, and it took us almost a month to get home on that thing, you know. It was just terrible. So anyhow, when I did get home, they flew the first three graders to Chicago. We changed planes in Chicago, and then they flew me to LaGuardia Airport. From LaGuardia Airport, I went back to Fort--ah, New Jersey--

Mr. Keefer: Fort Dix?

Mr. Wayne: Fort Dix in New Jersey. I was there three days, and then they released me, on Lincoln's birthday. I'll never forget it. February 12.

Mr. Keefer: '46.

Mr. Wayne: '46.

Mr. Keefer: '46, so you were in from the end of the war until February of '46. Wow!

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, and then I went home.

Mr. Keefer: And you went home. And you were married before the war?

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, I was married before the war.

Mr. Keefer: Okay.

Mr. Wayne: No children, but we were married. Well, my theory, I was only 18, 19 years old, but I was smart enough to say, "Look. We're not going to have any children, because I didn't know what was going to happen, and I didn't want to leave you with children.." My wife agreed to that, okay? And we didn't have children until after I got home and I got a job, and then we decided to raise a family. Then I was a New York City police officer and I retired as a police lieutenant in New York City, a little over 20 years in there.

Mr. Keefer: From one combat zone to another.

Mr. Wayne: Exactly! I worked most of my times in places like Harlem or Bedford-Stuyvesant, which was a war zone in those days. But

police were much more respected than they are today. I mean, we were really respected, you know? I got along good with the Hispanics, the Blacks and all. I got along very well with them because we were well respected in those days, but not today, unfortunately.

Mr. Keefer: Let's go back a little bit in time. I want to take you back to Saipan. I'm intrigued by your Bronze Star, because that's pretty impressive, and we don't see a lot of them.

Mr. Wayne: I never expected it. I didn't know why. I don't remember doing anything exceptional, you know?

Mr. Keefer: You must have done something.

Mr. Wayne: That's what surprised me, you know? When I got the thing, I didn't understand why. I really don't remember. I mean, it seemed (unclear) was getting there and doing all that, and talking to that priest and all, but everything else was a blank, was a blank. So whatever happened...maybe I'm grateful in a way that I don't remember, you know?

Mr. Keefer: You were married before the war. Did you get a lot of mail from home? Were you able to get mail off to home?

Mr. Wayne: My wife was wonderful. I got mail. In those days, they had those little records; you'd go to the five and ten cent store and make a little record. She sent me records. All those things were put in our barracks bags, because when we were going to invade Saipan, we didn't have to have anything that identified ourselves. So they were all put in barracks bags, and they were on that LST that was sunk, and I lost my marriage ring and everything. All my personal stuff was lost.

Mr. Keefer: When you were not engaged in combat operations, did you have any changes to go on R&R anywhere?

Mr. Wayne: When we were in Japan, yeah/

Mr. Keefer: I mean before that.

Mr. Wayne: Before, no, no. In those days we didn't have that.

Mr. Keefer: Okay, because some people we've talked to have talked about going various places for R&R, and others didn't. So you were one of those who didn't, I guess. So you got back to the states on this tramp steamer. You came in, what, to the west coast?

Mr. Wayne: No, Seattle--yeah, the west coast, yeah.

Mr., Keefer: Seattle. And they flew you; that's interesting.

Mr. Wayne: Then they flew us from Seattle to Chicago. We changed planes, and then we went from Chicago to LaGuardia Airport. We got there at like four o'clock in the morning, you know? I wasn't about to--some of the guys went right home, you know? It was funny--not a funny story--this buddy of mine, he went right home. Unfortunately, he caught his wife sleeping with--

Mr. Keefer: Oh, no!

Mr. Wayne: So I didn't go home. I don't know whether my wife did anything or not, and I never questioned her about it, didn't, you know? I mean, you know, we were 18, 19, we did a lot of things over there, to be honest with you, and I'm sure 18 or 19 year old women, have their desires, too. You never can tell, you know? So I just never questioned it. You know, another thing I want to tell you. When I first got home, looking for a job, the company that I worked for, they said, "Well your job will be waiting for you." Well, when I got home, the job I had was a small factory. There were only two guys working fixing the machinery, okay? It was a very small outfit. He got contracts, Army contracts, war contracts, and he moved from there out to Long Island, a block-long brick building, hundreds of employees. He became a multi-millionaire. So when I came home and I called them to go back to work, they said, "Oh, we don't want to fire anybody. These guys have been with us all during the war, and blah-blah-blah." They didn't have room for me, okay? So I tried to get a job with the PG&E, which in New

York was the telephone company, but if you weren't Irish, you didn't work for PG&E, you know? So, being an Italian, I didn't get the job, okay? So I decided to go for civil service. I took the police test, the fire test, the sanitation test, the correction test; I took them all. I wrote a very good paper on the police test; I wrote an 88 paper. So they called me pretty soon, and I ended up, and in the Police Department, you can't get promoted unless you're in rank two years. Then you can take the sergeant's test, and in rank two years, then you can take the lieutenant's test. That's what I did, and I retired as a lieutenant.

Mr. Keefer: Did you stay in the reserves or anything after the war or you just totally got out?

Mr. Wayne: No.

Mr. Keefer: Just totally done with it. After the war, did you stay in touch with anybody, any of your friends from the unit, or your buddies?

Mr. Wayne: Not really, no, because we were all scattered, guys from all over the country. In fact, our sergeants were old-time sergeants from the south (laughs). I didn't keep in touch. One man, the guy that found his wife, he was a Spanish guy; in fact, he was a very famous guy. He used to sing in night clubs. "Ba-Ba-Baloo" was his famous song. I did go and see him when I was a sergeant. He was doing a show in one of the--in New York, and I went to see him. I talked to him, you know, and that's the only time I had any contact with any of the guys from the war. He and his wife owned a night club, and I went there, brought my wife to the night club, and I met him again, but that was the only contact I had after that.

Mr. Keefer: Have you ever attended any reunions or anything like that?

Mr. Wayne: No, no.

Mr. Keefer: When the war was over, you were done with it.

Mr. Wayne: I was (laughs); enough was enough.

Mr. Keefer: You entered the war; you were a young man, 18, 19. When you came back, do you think you were a different person than the person you were when you went in? How did the war change you?

Mr. Wayne: Maybe I'm a strange guy. I can easily leave things behind. It's just like when I left the police department, I left everything behind. I just went ahead, did what I had to do, you know? I don't procrastinate as to what happened or what would have happened or what should have happened. I don't do that. I just do what I have to do now. That's the way I live.

Mr. Keefer: All the experiences you had; all the things you saw, like you mentioned the destruction from the atomic bomb and things, did that have any effect on you?

Mr. Wayne: Well at the time, I saw the devastation, that really made me feel, you know, my theory is, why take on these poor people? You're mad at the politicians; one politician--kill the politicians but not the poor innocent women and children walking in the streets. What do they got to do with this? They didn't start the war. They didn't have anything to do with it. I still have that feeling. In any war, why pick on the poor people, you know? But that's the way the thing is; it still is like that, you know?

Mr. Keefer: Well, Vincent, how do you feel about the Japanese today?

Mr. Wayne: I have no feeling; in fact, on one of the jobs I did have for a short time, when I came home, the manager was a Japanese. My manager was a Jap. We didn't get along 100 per cent, you know, and the boss saw that. It was a woman boss, and she saw that, and she said to me, "I appreciate how you're handling things," because I just did what had to be done. I didn't become real friendly with him, and I didn't want to become real friendly with him, you know?

Mr. Keefer: Yeah. Sure, sure.

Mr. Wayne: I didn't like his attitude to begin with, so that was it.

Mr. Keefer: That was more about him than his being Japanese, maybe.

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Keefer: Okay. But you mentioned that you got along--you had the experiences in the Army of Occupation, with the lawyer that you'd met, and the couple in jewelry store. Did you have any other contacts with the Japanese people?

Mr. Wayne: I became friendly with one of their MPs. He was walking the street, and I was going someplace, you know, wandering around, and I got to talking to him. I wanted to know where something was, I remember, and he was, didn't speak English but could understand what I was trying to tell him. He gave me directions, and he took his pistol out and gave it to me. He took his pistol out and gave it to me. I gave it to my brother.

Mr. Keefer: I was going to ask you if you still had it.

Mr. Wayne: My brother was in the Air Force in England, and he was part of D-Day. He was part of D-Day, yeah. He came out okay, and he died last year. He was a year older than I was. I'll be 97 next--

Mr. Keefer: A couple of weeks--couple of days!

Mr. Wayne: A couple of days, yeah.

Mr. Keefer: Well, congratulations!

Mr. Wayne: I'm a lucky guy so far. I'm a little crickety, but as you can see, I'm not the way I used to be, of course, but I get along.

Mr. Keefer: Well, none of us are, and you're doing all right for 97.

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, yeah. At least this thing is working pretty good.

Mr. Keefer: There you go. Is there anything that maybe you could think of that I haven't asked, that you might want to talk about? Any unusual experiences or particularly funny--you don't think of wartime as being funny, but there's always humorous things that happen to people sometimes during the events of a war.

Mr. Wayne: Well, (chuckles) I went out on a pass one night and got drunk, okay? On the way home, it was way past, what do they call that?



My pass was up; I should have been back. I'm walking back home, and as I say, I'm drunk. I'm walking back home, and all of a sudden I see these headlights, the MPs. So I jump into this farm, a sugar cane field, and they had just burnt the sugar cane. When I came out of there, I was black from head to foot. But they went by, and I got back into the barracks, and I was very noisy coming back. The guys picked me up and threw me out of the barracks (both laugh). I was a real (unclear); I was real noisy, you know?

Mr. Keefer: But you weren't caught by the MPs.

Mr. Wayne: No, no. I got away. I got away.

Mr. Keefer: All right. Okay. Gosh, I think we've pretty much covered your time.

Mr. Wayne: When we were in Hawaii, it was pretty nice. We used to go to the USO, you know. I'm a dancer; I love to dance. I was a dancer, I should say. We used to go to all the dances and the ladies were all very nice and, you know, that was an enjoyable time, you know.

Mr. Keefer: Did you ever see any other USO shows anywhere while you were out there?

Mr. Wayne: Yeah. Bob Hope.

Mr. Keefer: Ah! You saw Bob Hope?

Mr. Wayne: Bob Hope and, oh, some of the famous singers. I don't remember all their names now. I saw a couple of shows, yeah.

Mr. Keefer: Was that on Saipan or, do you remember?

Mr. Wayne: It was--no, it was in Oahu.

Mr. Keefer: Oh, back in Oahu, okay.

Mr. Wayne: In Oahu, yeah. They didn't come to the war zones, you know. They wouldn't allow those famous people to come to the war zones.

Mr. Keefer: Okay. So, you were discharged in February of '46, on Lincoln's birthday, and you became a New York City police officer, retired from that after 20 years.

Mr. Wayne: And then I moved to California.

Mr. Keefer: Ah! Okay.

Mr. Wayne: I moved to California, and I opened up my own antique business. I didn't know a thing about antiques. My wife did, so I took books out of the library, and I studied and became, and learned about antiques, and I was in the antique business for 22 years, okay? She had diabetes, and she went blind, and I took care of her for 12 years, and she passed away. She had a terrible time, the poor thing, you know? Then I went back to New Jersey to visit my brother, and while I was there, he lived in the same park as my present wife, and he introduced me to her. Then things began to develop. I had to go back home to business, but I used to call her and talk to her. And then one day I said to her, "I'm going to send you tickets to come to California. See how you like it." She came to California; never went home. So we got married, and we've been married, it'll be 20 years on the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month.

Mr. Keefer: Ah, congratulations! Good for you!

Mr. Wayne: She has serious, serious dementia; she's on the brink of Alzheimer's.

Mr. Keefer: I'm sorry.

Mr. Wayne: But I've been taking care of her. But even now, it's getting real hard for me to do that, you know? I don't want to put her away, you know? Unfortunately, her daughter is very nice, but her daughter don't want to take care of her, so I maybe end up putting her away, because it's going to be very difficult for me to take care of her. I just got over this foot. I got an infection; I don't know how, but it was pretty tough for a while.

Mr. Keefer: So, now you're living in Rockwall, Texas.

Mr. Wayne: Yeah, well, things began to get tough for me to handle my wife, and so my son, he's such a wonderful guy. He's a prince; there's no way I can mention. Him and his wife, they said to me, "Well,

look. It's getting tough for you to handle; why don't you come here, and we'll get you into these assisted living places. I live in an assisted living place now. It's three meals a day. I have a nice apartment, one bedroom apartment, you know. It's expensive, \$4,000 a month, you know, but I was able to be smart enough to have investments. I started investing a long time ago, and so I'm well off enough. I started investing when I was, oh, 50, 60 years ago, when I got out of the Army, and the investments worked.

Mr. Keefer: Well, unless you have anything else you want to tell me about that you've been holding out on me, (Mr. Wayne laughs),

Mr. Wayne: I wish I could know--no, I don't wish that I could remember what went on. I just want to forget it. Whatever happened was probably bad enough for me to just get it out of my mind.

Mr. Keefer: Okay. Well Vincent, I want to thank you for the time you spent today, describing your experiences.

Mr. Wayne: I want to thank you for having me.

Mr. Keefer: And I also want to thank you from our generation and those who are following us, for what you and your generation did for our country. We don't thank you guys enough.

Mr. Wayne: Let me tell you just a quick little story.

Mr. Keefer: Please.

Mr. Wayne: We went to a restaurant about a month ago, and we're sitting in a restaurant, and across the restaurant there was a husband and wife and two children about eight or ten years old, okay? I was wearing this cap, so they knew I was a veteran. While we were eating, these two little youngsters and their father came over to thank me, okay? They had made a drawing; all it was was scribbling, you know? And they gave me that; they said, "This is for you." It is so precious; I'm going to keep it for the rest of my life. Isn't that a nice thing for them to do?

Mr. Keefer: It is very nice; it's good to hear that people still do that.

Mr. Wayne: I don't even know what it is; it was just a lot of scribbling, but it's children scribbling and to them, it was a present to me, the best present that I ever got.

Mr. Keefer: Ah, great. Great story; thank you very much. Well, thank you again, and again thank you for your time with us and we'll close the interview now. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne: Not very many World War II guys left, I guess.

Mr. Keefer: There aren't; no, there aren't.

Mr. Wayne: I remember four years ago; I was invited to New York. One of my buddies from Long Island wanted to go to New York, and I couldn't leave my wife, so he went. While he was there, they made an announcement. There's only four guys still alive from New York that had the Bronze Star, only four of us. And that's four years ago. I don't know how many of them are still alive. I may be the only one left.

Mr. Keefer: Entirely possible, yeah.

Mr. Wayne: Isn't that amazing?

Mr. Keefer: It is; it is.

Mr. Wayne: He was in Europe, and he was in D-Day. He was hit five times. He still had shrapnel with him, after all these years.

Mr. Keefer: Yeah.

Mr. Wayne: But he wan never well, you know? Never well, and then his (unclear) and he's gone. So, that's it. So I appreciate you taking the time.

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