

VETERAN: *M. T. HEBEL*
HIGHEST RANK/GRADE: *PHARMACIST'S MATE 1ST CLASS*
INTERVIEWED BY: *MONICA BOUDREAUX*

Q: Company or battery you served in?

A: U.S. Navy; later assigned to Marine Corps.

Q: Enlistment date?

A: January 13, 1942, at 22 years of age, in Houston, Texas.

Q: What was your previous occupation? Was it useful to you?

A: I was enrolled in college, taking medical classes, and yes it was useful to me.

Q: How and why did you join the service?

A: I joined the service because the Japanese attacked us and war broke out.

Q: Please describe the local enlistment or draft process with which you were involved.

A: The recruiting officer in Houston signed me up.

Q: At the time, did you feel that the 1940 draft was necessary and fair?

A: Yes, I felt it was very fair.

Q: Describe the circumstances in which you first heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

A: December 7 is my birthday. My friends were all down from Baylor. I went to Baylor. They were down for my birthday party on Sunday. We were all just sitting around waiting to go back to Waco, and we heard the news on the radio.

Q: Where did you train as a recruit?

A: San Diego.

Q: In what specialties were you trained?

A: Medical.

Q: What further training, if any, did you receive overseas?

A: I learned to be a combat soldier.

Q: At what posts were you stationed during your stateside service?

A: San Diego's naval hospital; recruit depot, USMC.

Q: Why did you fight?

A: Why did I fight? Because I was mad at the Japanese!

Q: What was your opinion of the weapons you saw or used in the service?

A: I felt they were the best.

Q: What were your opinions of the equipment, clothing, and rations you were issued?

A: The equipment and the clothing were great. But the rations--most of the time all we had to eat were dehydrated eggs, dehydrated potatoes, vienna sausage, and beets. The rations were sorry, sorry. The food rations at the first of the war were terrible. I went from 155 pounds down to 135 pounds.

U. S. NAVY

Q: What did you think of the quality of leadership while you were in the service?

A: I am debating between the words superb and great.

Q: Please describe instances of particularly good or bad leadership?

A: In one instance, each of our companies had three tanks with them. The only communication was through an antenna on top of the tank. And what the Japanese would do was come up to the antenna and attach a hand grenade, then they would pull the pin and blow it up. Well that is the end of the communication. You can understand that. O.K., in our A company, Captain Martin would get out in front of these tanks with his back to the Japanese and pull them forward.

Q: Who were the real leaders?

A: I felt everyone I served with was dedicated.

Q: What did you think of the discipline at the time?

A: Strict.

Q: What forms of off-duty recreation were common?

A: Drinking beer.

Q: What songs were popular during your military service?

A: That is one I was not prepared for--I really do not know. Can we come back to that one?

Q: Did you note any instances of ethnic, racial, or religious discrimination?

A: Some.

Q: When you first learned you would go overseas, what was your reaction?

A: I am debating between the words elated and happy.

Q: What did you think of the wartime civilian newspaper, magazine or radio coverage of the war and your unit?

A: Poor.

Q: Please describe a "typical" day when your unit was committed to the front lines.

A: How much time do we have? No, I mean how much time do you have? In the Marine Corps, in combat was a matter of taking over an island or beach head. I do not know whether you can visualize a place you have to take away from someone, and you have to take it away from them by going over water. I was always in the third wave. It was a matter of fire power, overcoming your enemy. It was just fighting, fighting, fighting. The island that I was on was always full of craters or bomb holes. So, you would dive over land in a hole, and somehow get your nerve up and dive again. We would set up our sick bay in these holes to protect us from being sunk. One of my jobs was to decide what to do with the men, whether to patch him up and send him to the front line, or I am going to patch him up, put a tag on him, and send him back to the ship. That was a typical day for me.

Q: Did you ever participate in cooperative operations with a sister service?

A: Yes--the Army.

Q: Please describe a typical day in reserve when your unit was not committed to the front lines.

A: After I had been in the Navy awhile, I was transferred to the Marines. In the Marine Corps you were always training (25 mile hikes, running, etc.).

Q: How did you and your comrades regard enemy troops as fighters?

A: Great, just great.

Q: How were local civilians treated by American and other allied soldiers?

A: They felt superior to everyone. (They shouldn't have put that question on here.)

Q: What does the G.I. Bill mean to you?

A: It enabled me to buy a home.

Q: What were your expectations of civilian life upon leaving the service?

A: I was scared to death.

Q: With whom do you feel most comfortable discussing your wartime experiences?

A: Anyone. I tell the funny things that happened to me, and my grandchildren cannot understand why I do not tell the sad things. I have seen a lot of blood, guts, and gory things that I do not relate to them. I try to erase from my mind.

I learned many interesting things about the war during this interview with Mr. Hebel. I never could understand what would provoke someone to want to fight in a war, but I think I understand a little better now. I understand that most of the people that fought did so to uphold the honor and name of our country. I cannot imagine what it would be like to carry around a gun fighting for my life and the lives of the people of this country.