

# U. S. NAVY

VETERAN: HOWARD GARLAND JOHNSON  
HIGHEST RANK/GRADE: RADIOMAN 2ND CLASS  
INTERVIEWED BY: LOVETTE MCKENZIE

Q: Previous occupation? How useful was it to you in the Navy, if at all?

A: I didn't have a job. I was in school, and this did not help me at all.

Q: How and why did you join the service?

A: There was really no reason, I just had to register.

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

A: Yes, I felt the draft was necessary and it was very fair.

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

A: It was a Sunday and I had went hunting, because we had to hunt for our food. Later that evening, my family told me what happend.

Q: What were your initial reactions to entering military service?

A: You grow up fast and learn alot of responsibilities. I had never been away from home except for on scout trips and it was different.

Q: Where did you train as a recruit?

A: North Oak, Virginia. I went back and everything was different.

Q: In what specialties were you trained?

A: Not really anything there. I was only there for 21 days.

Q: Were you trained in first aid, signalling, radio, or the use of any special equipment?

A: I was trained in first aid and in firefighting in case of an emergency.

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

A: Well, I wanted to be a radioman so I could listen to stateside music.

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

A: San Francisco, California, and Detroit, Michigan.

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

A: They were great. The one's we had, they are obsolete today.

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

A: We had great food, very nice equipment, and clothing. I was just grateful for all this and a nice place to sleep.

Q: How adequate were they for the climate and weather conditions you encountered?

A: Good.

Q: How responsive were the supply services to your unit's needs?

A: We really had trouble once. Our refrigerator system broke down. It was aboard ship, so we had steak three times a day because everything ruined so fast.

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

A: As young as I was, I really couldn't tell the difference between good and bad leaders. As far as I could tell, we had good leaders--mainly it just depended on who could yell the most and the loudest and who could curse the most.

Q: Who were the "real" leaders--officers, noncoms, or enlisted men?

A: Mostly officers. They made that very clear to us.

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

A: The discipline was fair, although I never got into trouble. I was a good boy.

Q: Please recount any particular punishments for breaches of discipline.

A: Some sailors got into trouble and had deck court punishment.

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

A: We had beer parties and played sports such as baseball, volleyball, and basketball.

Q: How adequate was medical care?

A: It was real good for me. I had my tonsils taken out.

Q: Describe the health of your unit.

A: Everything was good except the common cold.

Q: Was drinking a problem in your unit?

A: Drinking was not a problem. We only had about 3-5 beers each.

Q: Was drug use a problem in your unit?

A: Drugs were not a problem at all.

Q: What songs were popular during your military service?

A: A lot of Glenn Miller, Dinah Shore, and Big Band music.

Q: What military slang words or phrases were popular during your military service?

A: "Gizmo"--which could mean anything you could think of the name of and "Jo" which is a cup of coffee.

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

A: Yes, it was racial period. Everything was just accepted--such as no black officers.

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

A: I thought it would be great. I was going to whip them all by myself.

Q: At what point in your movement overseas did you learn your real destination?

A: Sometimes we never knew and sometimes we did not care.

Q: Please identify your port of embarkation.

A: Mostly in-between San Francisco and the Hawaiian islands in 1942.

Q: Please identify the name of your transport.

A: USS *Shasta* and USS *Crownblock*.

Q: Please describe your travel experiences.

A: We traveled by ship, but while on land I used a jeep.

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

A: The Japanese in Hawaii were treated poorly.

Q: How were local civilians treated by the Allied military administrations?

A: They were treated like kings and treated very well.

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**Q:** What awards and decorations did you receive?

**A:** Good Conduct Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign, World War II Award, and the American Campaign Award.

**Q:** In your opinion, were awards and decorations distributed fairly?

**A:** Yes, I believe they were.

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

**A:** Anyone who feels like talking about it.