

U. S. ARMY

VETERAN: BERNARD J. REIS
HIGHEST RANK/GRADE: CORPORAL
INTERVIEWED BY: BARON CLIFFORD

I chose to interview Bernard Reis because he participated in two major combat landings in the Philippines. He served for two years and did his job to completion. He is also my grandfather. After serving under General MacArthur he returned home to Illinois and attended Bradley University. Upon completion of school he married a successful jewelry buyer and had four children.

During the interview, Mr. Reis was consistently bothered and irritated by the liberal nature of the questions, resulting in brief answers. His basic explanation of the experience of war and doing his job was, "you did what you had to to keep out of trouble." He worked during the day setting up camp and ground works. They didn't give the soldiers time to think about getting shot or morale. The troops were overseas to do a job, and they did it with no hesitation or questions asked. Discipline is the foundation of the military. "When you got drafted, you reported--no questions or dodging. When your country asked for you in the 40s you went, unlike the 60s and 70s. Despite Mr. Reis's personal opinions, the interview went well.

Q: Describe the local draft process?

A: I was sent a letter of draft, reported on the given date to Chicago, Illinois, and went through the lines, physical, boot camp, then to the Pacific.

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

A: I never thought about it. It was the law, and I went.

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

A: I was home on December 7 and was told about it by my brother in Pontiac, Illinois. I thought, 'here we go.'

Q: Where did you train as a recruit?

A: Camp Grant (Rockford, Ill.).

Q: What were you trained in?

A: They said I was a rifleman, so I was.

Q: What further training did you receive overseas?

A: Combat and survival!

Q: What posts were you stationed at during stateside service?

A: South Pacific Theater, landed in Philippines; Zamboanga, Sanga Sanga.

Q: Why did you fight?

A: TO LIVE!

Q: Your opinion of the weapons you saw or used in the service?

A: State of the art.

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

A: In combat operations, opinions of individual soldiers were neither solicited nor desired. Army is not a democracy.

Q: Opinion of the quality of leadership while you were in the service?

A: Excellent; MacArthur was the greatest soldier of the time. Better than Eisenhower.

- Q: Please describe instances of particularly good or bad leadership.
A: Good example--We won. That's what war is about--win or lose.
- Q: Who were the "real" leaders--officers, noncoms, or enlisted men?
A: It's called the chain of command. Officers issue orders--noncoms direct--enlisted men execute.
- Q: What did you think of discipline at the time?
A: Reasonable and necessary; discipline served its purpose.
- Q: What songs were popular at the time?
A: "Paper Doll," "Long Ago Far Away," "White Cliffs of Dover," "Coming In On a Wing and a Prayer."
- Q: What military slang words or phrases were popular during your military service?
A: Snafu--screw up (putting it nicely), Kilroy was here, Americans were here.
- Q: Did you note any instances of ethnic, racial, or religious discrimination?
A: Blacks--not lined up or on combat outfits. They were segregated.
- Q: When you first learned you would go overseas, what was your reaction?
A: Far better to have the war grounds overseas than in our own country.
- Q: At what point in your movement overseas did you learn your real destination?
A: 24 hours before landing.
- Q: How did you and your comrades get along with civilians overseas before, during, and after hostilities?
A: We got along well. All the civilians did as they were told. Soldiers were the conquerors and heroes and we made the rules.
- Q: Did you receive and read Army publications such as *Stars and Stripes* or unit newspapers?
A: Occasionally available, they were interesting and humorous.
- Q: How was morale in your unit?
A: Not discussed.
- Q: What effect did combat have on morale?
A: It was good for morale; they knew they were going to win.
- Q: What was your reaction to battle?
A: I didn't think--I reacted.
- Q: What was a typical day like?
A: Eat, go on patrol, do your job.
- Q: Were you ever injured?
A: Never injured--went into Sanga Sanga with 3 regiments. One-half of one regiment survived--no Japanese survived.
- Q: Were you ever a prisoner of war?
A: No, the Tokyo Road never took many prisoners, purpose of war is to destroy.
- Q: Did you capture any enemy prisoners?
A: Sanga Sanga, three starving men surrendered and they were treated very well.