

## George Harper

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**Question:** I just need to get something on tape first, I need to get your first and last name and the proper spelling of it...

**Answer:** Um hm.

**Question:** So if I could get that please.

**Answer:** Yes, ah when you're ready.

**Question:** I'm ready.

**Answer:** Ok my name is George Harper, H-A-R-P-E-R.

**Question:** Um hm. And what's your address?

**Answer:** Ah 1208 South 27th Street, Apartment C-2, Tacoma

**Answer:**

**Question:** All right.

**Question:** So you started telling me, not in the history books.

**Answer:** Yes. Ah they had a peculiar organization in World War II, and most people today have no idea

**Answer:** And because it doesn't show up in history books. But we all had Army serial numbers. Now, officers had their serial numbers all begin with an O, warrant officers would begin with a W, now just ordinary peons, enlisted personnel so-called, if their serial numbers began with a one, they were regular Army, they belonged to the United States Army. If their serial numbers began with a number two they were members of the National Guard or Reserves. And serial number three was the Army of the United States, not the United States Army, and it was AUS, rather than USA, and that began with a three, and those were draftees. Now immediately after Pearl Harbor the government closed all enlistings, enlistment stations and ah, everybody had to go through the draft board. So anybody that came in ah, about the first, starting someplace around the first of January, 1942. I'm not sure if it was that date, but it was in that vicinity, but anybody that came in after that time automatically got a serial number that began with a three. My own for instance was 36940333, ah, for whatever (laughs) that's worth. But ah, the point is that they didn't, so many people were trying to get into the Air Force or whatever that nobody seemed to want to go into the infantry. In order, the task of expanding the Army, the Armed Forces, was horrendous. Before the war we had an Army around 250,000. The time the war was wrapping up we had an Army of over eight million. You didn't have the barracks facilities, we didn't have the training facilities, we didn't have the uniforms, we didn't have the weapons. So what they were doing is they established an orderly draft system, where you go through a draft ward and you have a call number, and when got ready to call up the next contingent, they would go to the draft boards, and with an eight-week cycle ah, basic training and then advanced training. About every eight weeks they'd call up another batch. But there were some problems that came up with that. In the case of my father, for instance, he was 43 at the time, they had eight or nine draft boards scattered around the country for transients. And my father and mother and I made city directories going from one community to the other around the country. So we had no fixed abode. And the registration there, you had to register in one of those nine transient ah, draft boards. Well the problem was that, in general, they would draw the youngest available ones

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first, the 18, 19, 20-year-olds. But when you're dealing with transients like traveling sales men and detail men for drug, you know pharmaceutical companies and things like that, you're dealing with older men. So the draft board, my father's draft board was a draft board number nine in Detroit, Michigan. And ah, they consisted of men in their late 30's and early 40's and they're supposed to contribute also. So they were drawing the older men and ah, so dad got drafted in World War II after having served in World War I.

**Answer:** I was at the, attending the University of Chicago when I turned 17 and I went and volunteered for the draft. You could do that after reaching age 17 if you volunteered for the draft you were in (laughs), providing you pass the physical, of course. But at that time I was just terrified that they'd run out of war before I could get in it. Ah, believe me, back then that was a popular war. And with my dad in the Army, I figured that, yeah I've gotta get in too. And besides I'd had two years in military academy, Missouri Military Academy in Mexico, Missouri, I don't even know if it's still in existence now. But ah, dad and mom and I had gotten together ah, right after the fall of France and we said no matter what the politicians say -- you know you can never trust a politician, any of them -- ah they will tell you the truth only when there is no lie available. Ah, sorry about that cynicism but, it's true anyhow. Ah, so at any rate we agreed that we were going to be in the war, that there was no way we could stay out of it. And in our family running was never an option -- it just wasn't even thought of. Ah so the idea was that I would go to military academy and learn as much as I could that would be of help when I got, when I did go in. So I did and I did and I did (laughs). Ah which was rather stupid of me, but you gotta admit, remember I was 17 and 18, and at that age, I guess everybody's more than a little stupid. Ah so I went in and I insisted that I wanted to join the Rangers and I did and so now here I am about 57 years later feeling like an old dinosaur, you know, feeling like I've been exhumed and I'm up here kinda giving a talk (laughs) about things that happened back then, and ah. It amazes me when kids come up, and I've had 'em, I've had it asked of me, my own daughter, who's studying it in school and she had never talked too much about it when, at the time because I hadn't. It's only been in the past few years that I've started to talk about it because I do want some of it to be remembered. But she came in and asked, dad I can't get it straight, which war came first? The German, war against Germany or the war against Japan. It seemed as how the school devoted one part of one afternoon about talking about World War II, and yet, you know, this was not considered politically correct -- talk about war. We were supposed to talk about peace. And ah, yet here was World War II, one of the most stupendous war, the most stupendous war in all of history, and the ah, PC type personnel, the people out there, were trying to obliterate it. Ah, just treat it as something which never happened.

**Question:** Do you think there's a message from World War II for future generations that you would see?

**Answer:** Ah yes. That I think we have to be able to look at the world realistically. This idea of deciding what your ideal is, our ideal is peace. That's a guarantee of war. Ah, it's a, it's strange because you could get a Ted Bundy type ah, out here, and everybody agrees that he went out there and he killed dozens of young women. And I'm sure that there were those of them that pleaded with him, please, please do whatever you want, just don't kill me. Ah, but he did anyhow because he felt like it. Now we're willing to concede that the Ted Bundy's exist in this world, but there are also another type of Ted Bundy. These are the guys that go into politics because they love war. And you can say please, please, please ah, don't make war and they're going to smile at you and say yeah. So the best way to convert a militarist to passivism is to leave him with a very shrewd idea that if he goes to war he's the one that'll regret it most. Ah otherwise we're gonna have it and we're gonna have it and have it and have it. And this next century is going to be far worse than the last century. Um, this is personal knowledge of history and so forth, but I think that if you project yourself ahead in time maybe

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500 years or so and look back and read the history of this period they will be referring to it as the period of the 300 year war. The first shot was fired with the American Declaration of Independence and that set something fresh and new into the world. Before that the church owned your soul and the state owned your body. And the Declaration of Independence made it, for the first time, on a national level, that the individual owned his soul and his body, and that we were entitled to certain fundamental rights. Well you know these revolutionary war ended with our victory. The French that helped up went back and took their revolution right with them, and that went to all the excesses and we got Napoleon. But ah Napoleon spread the virus around Europe and Russia and right after the Napoleonic wars the Russians freed the Serfs before we ever got around to freeing the slaves. Ah, then Germany picked up on it, then Italy under Giribaldi, then Spain, ah, by the 1840's the virus had spread completely around the world. And you can go to China and Sun Yat-sen, ah the King of Siam sending Abraham Lincoln to, group of war elephants, to help him free the slaves, and outlawing slavery in Siam or Thailand. Ah, by the time of uh, well during this entire period all of Spain's colonies rebelled and one after the other they declared independence, ended it up republic, most of them modeled it right after this country. Then came World War I, when World War I started the whole world, virtually every country, with a few exceptions, was ruled by a monarchy. The end of the war you could count monarchies on fingers with two hands. And those were mostly the monarchies who adapted so they were mainly heads of state with a parliamentary system and elective and so on and so forth. Ah now, the problem is that the Declaration of Independence never set limits. And every little splinter group feels it's its sovereign right to declare independence and do unto others. And we're seeing this fracturing and splintering all over the world. Hutus against Tutsis and so on and so forth. You murder each other off, Jews against Arabs, Bosnia, Croatia, um Serbia, um all of these are groups that say well it's our sovereign right to be independent and to kill our, those that don't go along with us. So I think that this next century is going to be the one where eventually, it's going to be very messy, neighborhood wars and when it's all done I think that we'll have learned, arrived at some sort of a consensus of the limitations of freedom. That implies responsibility, we've lost track of that in this country so it's gonna hit us just about as hard. It'll take a while but I think we're in for that for the next century. I'm sure any number of people would scoff and say well this guy is completely stupid or he doesn't know what he's talking about or whatever but I think it'll happen. The logic is there.