

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

Question: Okay the first thing I'll do is just get started so I'll have it on tape. Your name is George Normoyle, N-O-R-M-O-Y-L-E. Yes.

Answer: Yes, correct. You want me to say that or are you going to say that?

Question: I got it.

Answer: You got it, okay.

Question: I put it on the tape for you there.

Answer: Okay, we're in good shape.

Question: Where were you when the war started?

Answer: I was living -- the family lived at Black Lake in Olympia here. Out of Olympia

Answer: And we were -- when the war started we were -- we heard -- we were listening to the radio. It was Sunday morning. And we heard that -- the Japs had bombed Pearl Harbor. (crying) And of course, everybody -- I don't know why I'm getting so touched up here. But everybody was just glued to the radio. And people had a different attitude in those days about protecting themselves and their friends and their country. My dad was in World War I. He was overseas. And I was thinking today, between World War I and World War II, there was only 21 years in there, you know, really, and that's not -- well, to them, or young people, that's a lot of time. But now I'm -- we're 57 years since I entered war and so, you know, it's -- just didn't quite relate the two, but at the time, after World War I and as -- when we were raised -- we were raised. My dad was active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars; he was active in American Legion. And the kids -- we joined the Legionnaires -- Junior Legionnaires or junior members of the Legion and we had our own kind of little hats and stuff and we were in parades. And when the flag went by you saluted and -- you did the right thing. And what really bothers me at this stage of my life is to see the disrespect shown by young people. And whether it's ignorance or they just don't care, toward their flag and their country. I really don't care. They can tell me to go whoopee, but I don't want them to tell my country, you know. And that's -- maybe a lot of us are -- we get really, really hurt and upset because of some of these actions, but we realize they have the right to express their opinion. Even though we feel it's wrong. Like burning the flag and things like that. All right, now I'll quit.

Question: That's interesting that -- it kind of shows an interesting -- you know, irony, in the fact that you fought for the freedom to be able to do that.

Answer: Yes. And on the one hand, I'm proud that I did and on the other hand, why I'm upset at the way -- but let's back up a step. When we came home from the service, we, most of us or all of us, went back to work and we were going to have a better life for our family than what we had. And my dad wanted to have a better life for me than what he had, which he did. And so I wanted my kids to have more than what we had before. Even though some of my friends thought we were well off compared to them. My dad was a bookkeeper in a slaughter house -- packing plant, so we always had food. Well, now my wife's side of the family, she was raised on vegetables and polenta down in the coal mines, where we ate meat and potatoes. Not very many vegetables. We couldn't afford them. So where was I. Okay, we're talking about how the parents want more for their children. I always wanted more for my kids. I worked two jobs for years, and as I look back on it now I thought I was doing the right thing to give them more. And probably, a lot of times, we should have given the kids. Now the kids don't work for anything. They -- my grand kids, I love them, but, you know,

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

basically they're not go-go-getters. They get their money from Grandpa or Mom or Dad or somebody, and they don't -- they don't have that urge to go out and do their thing and make their money and -- they don't care, basically. And whose fault -- that's our fault. We -- as I look at my own grand kids now and great-grand kids -- well, not great-grand kids, they're still too little -- grand kids, you know, I say, well, they don't realize how lucky they are. They really don't. And as far as talking about World War II, we just -- we have never just talked about it. The kids never asked me. If they ever asked me I would have told them. They never asked me and I never discussed it. It's one of those things that -- that just kind of eventually goes in the background, you put it out of your mind and leave it alone. But now I'll let you ask me a question or two. (laughs) I'm as bad as my wife, yakking away.

Question: No, it's interesting -- I mean the perspective's interesting. Because you set up a real good kind of juxtaposition. Because your grand kids now are some of them, 17, 18, 19, 20 years old. When you were 17-1/2, was that when you snuck in under the --

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Tell me about enlisting now -- how did you decide --

Answer: Well, you could enlist when you were 17 then.

Question: Oh, you could.

Answer: If your parents would sign for you. Now, I had some friends of mine, they were only 16. In fact one guy was 15. And he -- his mother signed for him. He went in and he was 15. Of course when he stayed in and retired then after he retired, then he ended up problem with the government because they said he was two years older than what he really was, and -- but that's something else. But yeah, I had to have my parents' permission to go in, and I conned my dad into doing it. You know, everybody was -- was patriotic in those days and they were trying to do their thing. And I just kind of wanted to go. I wanted to be in the Navy because my dad was in the Navy.

So I get in the Navy and then I'm going to be -- I'm don't want to be a motor mac or machinist mate which is down below deck. I wanted to be up on that -- what you call them, the apes. Up on the deck. I wanted to be a gunner. So I ended up out of boot camp, and I went to Farragut, Idaho to boot camp. Of all places, right in the middle of winter, January. Colder than whoopee over there. And I left - they sent me from there. I didn't know, they asked for volunteers. Sure, I'll volunteer. So they sent me down to San Diego and to gunner school, and then that was in, I went 12 weeks to boot and then I went to gunner school for, in April, and picked -- I was assigned to a merchant ship in San Pedro called the SS Charles Crocker. Brand new, Liberty Ship. Beep-boop (gestures). Had these 20 millimeter guns on it, four-inch 50-bag gun in the back. They dug out of a warehouse someplace. You know, those little bag guns were terrible things to work. Anyway, we went out for a sea trial in this thing and I happened to be what they called -- they had the pointer and the setter. One of them turns the wheel one way and the other one turns the wheel the other way. So you got a pointer and a setter. Well, so we fired this thing. About tore up the whole deck. Had to go back in and had to refinish the --. They had to -- (laughs). I'll never forget this. That thing just raised up. They had to go in there and take it out and cut it and weld steel plates under it again. Next time we went out it worked fine. But you know it would only go up about 4-1/2 degrees, or down, and (laughs) you couldn't hit a sitting duck if you wanted to, basically, because the time you could crank this thing over to here, wherever you wanted to shoot at here is either under the water or moved ahead of you. And so it -- it was rather -- rather strange.

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

And then I went on 20 millimeters, which are anti-aircraft guns. And I much preferred those because I was a gunner on that one. Well, I was a gunner and a loader. So, but, I didn't really -- I didn't -- we didn't see any action the first trip on the Liberty Ship. We went to India with a load of tanks and ammunition and food for the China-Burma theatre. And then we loaded up a load of ore to bring back for the -- iron ore, to bring back. And then we left there and it took us 57 days to get to Panama, and should have taken us 17. We blew a boiler in what you call the Roarin' 40's off of South America

Answer: And you're standing on the bridge of a ship and you're looking at waves up above you. I mean, this is -- that's terrible country. The bow would go under water and it -- and you'd look and all you'd see is water. And you'd shutter and shake and you had to come back up. And then down you'd go again. And the back end would go up and the prop would come out of the water and my heavens, it was just horrible. And actually, that was -- of all this time, that was probably -- that was worse than the shooting part.

Now, see in the Pacific they sent a lot of ships out alone. They didn't send them, like out of New York and the East Coast, they sent convoys. But in the Pacific they sent some convoys but they sent a lot of ships out by themselves, and just, all over the place. You could probably go for a thousand miles and never see another ship. And the only time that we saw -- we didn't even see the ship, but we saw the explosion and the bright burning, the Japanese got a tanker off the lower part of India

Answer: They sank a tanker -- we could see her over there, and so we just -- everybody had -- we stood watch, four on and four off, and that gets old. I mean after about a week of four hours on, four hours off, it doesn't sound like much. You get real punchy. So we made it through there all right.

Then when we came back to the States, well, I was supposed to go on another -- another merchant ship and go to Murmansk, Russia

Answer: Murmansk. Now this is December when I'm back, and this is a bad time of year to go to Russia

Answer: So anyway, I had 30 days leave, and so -- my buddy and I, who was my best man, and I was, of course, his best man before we went overseas. And we said, well, we're in the Armed Guard Center in Brooklyn, New York, and we saw this poster about going to advanced gunners mate for gunners mates third class and up. Well, we were both third class gunners mates then. So we put in our applications for it and when we got home we got a memo from the Navy to report to San Francisco and go to advanced gunners mate -- electric hydraulic school. That kept us out of the war for about six weeks. So then we finished that and so well, now, here we are, we've been trained in 3-inch 50's, 5-inch 38, electric hydraulics, we're going to go on a destroyer or probably a light cruiser or something. Man, we're going to be in the fleet. Where do they assign us to? They assign us to amphibian forces. Biggest thing they had on the boat I got on was a 37-millimeter, two 37-millimeters, two 20-millimeters, two 15-millimeters, and a little 30-millimeter. And I'm a gunner in this thing. So here we are. We're in the amphibians. Now, the amphibians almost as bad as the Armed Guard. Regular Navy looked down their nose at anybody that wasn't on a ship. Over the years, oh, probably not -- over the months, in a port someplace, why we'd try to go up next to a regular Navy ship and say can we get some cigars or some candy or ice cream, and they'd say, "Cast off you bunch of renegades." Heck, we'd be down there with a hat on, no shirt, pair of shorts, GI boots with toes cut out of them and trying to go aboard a regular Navy ship that uniform of the day is not that, you know. They wouldn't let us aboard. Never forgive them for that.

Question: Now you're still full Navy --

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

Answer: I'm full Navy, but I'm --

Question: But you're the Armed Guard, which is --

Answer: Right. Okay. now, now we got out of the Armed Guard and went into the amphibious forces.

Question: Oh, okay.

Answer: So now I'm in the amphibious. So we'll drop the Armed Guard hat. Now I'm wearing another hat.

Question: So do they look down on the amphibious even more than they looked down at --

Answer: Well, they looked down at everybody that wasn't RN - regular Navy.

Question: Okay.

Answer: If you're not on a cruiser, a battle wagon or a tin can, you're just a -- but yet at the same token, the guy -- the few guys that we had from the regular Navy that were on said man, there's no comparison. We'd sooner be in the regular Navy.

Answer: And then from then on, the one ship I was attached to -- well, my first action was in Hollandia, New Guinea

Answer: And we come in there on LST No. 66. And we ran up on the beach, dropped the front down and started unloading the trucks and the men started leaving. And we had a Japanese air attack and there were snipers on the beach also. Anyway, we're not assigned to this ship. We're just -- we're going up the line and pick up another small, smaller boat. We're going to go to an LCT, which is a landing craft tank. This is a landing ship tank, which is 360 feet long against 110, about. So here we are. They were just raising whoopee at us, there was bombs dropping and shrapnel flying. And we got this 50 millimeter gun there and the dang thing won't work. So here you are, trying -- so we had to sit down, right there, tear that thing apart, break it down, put it back together and started using it. It wasn't any good anyway. Meanwhile, lead flying all over the place. (laughs)

Question: How old -- and now you're what --

Answer: I'm about 18.

Question: Oh, all of 18, okay.

Answer: Yeah, I'm grown up now. And I've been there. But anyway, and then we had one ship I was on, they had 1.1 pompoms, British pompoms.

Question: And what's a pompom?

Answer: Well, they're four barrels, and they go, doon, ding, ding, ding, (gestures), like this. And they threw out an awful lot of projectile, but it had a tendency to jam, and nobody really wanted to fool with the darn things, you know. And I'm standing on this ship and the guy says, you a gunner's mate and I says yeah, and he says, it was an officer, he says get down there and un-jam that 1.1 down there. All right, and I didn't know any different. I went

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

down there. You take the projectile out of it and you get it loose and you throw it over the side, you know. But (laughs) So then we got started going up to -- to New Guinea, up to Biak. Biak was a small island, kind of north New Guinea, off of, what is it Dutch New Guinea, yeah, I guess Dutch New Guinea, but they had -- it was -- it was -- the garrison was Japanese Marines -- Imperial Marines. And they were a tough, real tough bunch of troops. They didn't fool around. They were big men, they weren't little -- little small -- they were good size men. And every battle, you know, they say, well they had a minor skirmish there -- it only took them, you know, two, three weeks to mop up. Well, meanwhile, lot of guys got killed in that two or three weeks, that you know -- is that why they only had a thousand casualties or something. Maybe they had 5000 Japanese get killed, but maybe only a thousand Americans, or this, so it was a minor skirmish, as long -- a lot of people thought, compared to Iwo Jima, say, or something like that.

Then we went on up into the Philippines. Leyte, Lingayen Gulf, then we went down to Mindanao. Mindanao was -- was kind of a different situation. We were -- we were in Mendoro in the harbor there and this tanker came in. And the Japanese at that time were doing the suicide. And so this tanker hits this -- I mean this Jap hits this tanker right in front of the bridge, boom, boom. Blew guys off that thing and of course it just blew up. Then we're sitting there. We fired -- we pulled anchor, now I'm on an LCT radar boat at this time. That's a picture of that one boat that we had. Pretty soon we'll get to that. Well, we'll get to that in a second. But anyway, this we -- went and tried to get survivors. We just about got to one guy and he just went under and that was it. Didn't find anybody. And then about a week later, this troop ship come in and she -- she dropped her hook, just as she -- or her anchor, we call it hook. She dropped her hook and one of those guys hit her in the number four hatch and she blew. She was full of ammo, beside. Hit the ammo hatch. And she looked like an atomic bomb. Went straight up, big mushroom cloud, and you looked and there was nothing there. Just flat. That huge ship was gone. And then a few seconds later everything starts dropping and then the wave -- tidal wave hits you, raises you up and set us up on the beach high and dry for -- and just amazing. It was there one second and it was gone. It was absolutely just flat. And you look up at the sky and it was like a mushroom. It was like an A-bomb and you think all those people were gone, boom. That was the same -- we were still there when the Jap fleet went through and they had quite an aerial -- dog fights there. One of our planes got shot down. The pilot had bailed out. To this day I can still watch this guy -- this Japanese pilot come down and -- and blow him out of the sky in his parachute. And we couldn't reach them with our anti-aircraft guns. They were just too -- just too far out of range for them. I've never forgiven that. I mean, well, the idea is -- how can you forgive somebody that you -- (coughs) excuse me.

Question: Are you -- are you scared at this point?

Answer: No. No, at this point, I think when actually when the action started, like I was going to say, you're on -- you're on -- I was on a 20 millimeter -- I'm firing at this plane coming at me and I'm seeing flashes from him, and I'm hearing ricocheting behind me, in the steel. But I don't think about that. The only thing I'm thinking about is to get that guy shot down. And so, at the time I never was really scared during the action. Afterwards I'd think about it, holy smokes, he almost got us. But I wasn't -- like when the ships blew up right there with us I was angry and hurt because I hated to see that happen to our people. The same token, you know, we -- we went on the beach, and I went on the beach in Biak and went down where I shouldn't have been and I went into a cave and got a -- captured a Japanese officer. And actually I'm very fortunate he had an American Thompson Submachine gun, pre-World War II. He pointed that at me and I pointed my carbine at him and kind of for a second there I thought boy, I'm in trouble here. (laughs) And then he just dropped it and raised his hands and so I took him and the gun and the Japanese flag off of him. It was a -- the flag was full of bullet holes and had blood on it. And so somebody -- one of the -- one of

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

the Japanese officers or soldiers, or somebody had pulled this flag down and they'd been shot, and this guy had -- I have the flag someplace and I can't find it, you know. And I took it to a Japanese lady here after I got home. I said tell me what it says on the flag. One of the flag was Japanese Imperial Marines, and it had something like we have on our banners, you know, companies or whatever it was, division or whatever. And she wouldn't -- she wouldn't touch it, she wouldn't tell me. I don't know why she wouldn't, but she just -- she saw that blood on that flag and she would not touch it. She wouldn't tell me what it said, either. But, --

Question: So how did you end up down in this cave?

Answer: Well, the thing was, they were in a hopping up operation.

Question: Okay.

Answer: And we -- we went on the beach. On this LCT you could run onto the beach with it. It's flat bottom. And so we were on the beach and we were getting some supplies so this other guy -- I was -- let's go over the hill and see what's going on. So we went up there and we saw a bunch of dogs -- well, I shouldn't say this -- we used to call them dog faces -- soldiers. They called us Swabbies. Bunch of them laying around on top looking down in this cave down there. So I says what's going on. Well, we're waiting for that Jap to come out and then we're going to shoot him. Oh, okay. I think I'll go down and see what's going on over there. Well, all right, sailor. So we went down there, came back out with this guy, got back to the ship, got in big trouble. Turned him over to the Army there. And then I got back to the ship and about a few hours later we got a radio message and then I got -- I got in trouble. I shouldn't have been on the beach down there in that hole, blah, blah, blah. Well, it turned out all right, you know. (laughs). Anyway, but you think -- you know, you think about some of those things now. I wasn't scared at the time, even when he pointed a gun at me I wasn't scared. I look back at it now and I'm saying, George, you were stupid. (laughs) But when you're young, you don't think about things like that. When I went in, when I volunteered for this -- this duty with the Armed Guard, they said, well you can look at your fellow mates here, because four out of the five of you aren't going to come back. What are you talking about, you know, but at the start of the war they had a terrible -- they had a lot of casualties, tremendous amount of casualties. But, you know, I didn't think about it. You know, I'm thinking, hell, I'm -- not for me. And it wasn't, thank goodness. And then of course, we went from there up through the Philippines, the Lien Gang Gulf and Leyte and Tecloban, and I watched MacArthur land. You know, couple days later he shows up. In fact they landed twice so they could -- made sure they had good pictures, good photos.

Question: Seriously?

Answer: Seriously, yes, they did. They didn't land -- they came off -- they were right up there on the beach and that area was secured. There wasn't any -- there wasn't any snipers hanging up in the palm tree over here, 500 feet away. That whole area was secured before he came ashore. Which is all right.

But then we went to down to -- when we went to Manila, there was -- the town, they were still fighting. You know, it was, it was, it was, you know, block by block. Japanese were hanging in there and we were blowing up buildings apart and shooting everybody up. And at that time that's when we rescued -- I wasn't part of the rescue, I just happened to be there when they -- when they came out of the prison gates there in Manila

Answer: And they were -- those (crying)

Question: That's okay, go ahead and stop.

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

Answer: Yeah, I'll stop for a second here. And that probably was the saddest time, besides the guy that got killed, that I saw. Was seeing these prisoners -- how terrible -- terrible shape they were in. It was just, just unbelievable. And they were so happy, yet they looked so terrible that you thought my God, how could they be living. Skin and bones, they could hardly walk. Some of them couldn't walk, you know. And I thought, man, and of course that just fires up a guy. A young guy, getting in a war, he wants to go out and kill some more people. Which, -- we -- now I look back on it and I suppose if I had to do it over again, I'd do the same thing. But I wouldn't want to do it over again, in that respect. I'd want to serve my country but not me -- I'm not anxious to go out and start killing people again.

Question: Did -- so when you saw that, did that increase -- I mean, well, when you went into the war, did you start out -- were you fighting against a country or against a people or --

Answer: I was -- well, I was against the Japanese people and the country both. Because you know at that time propaganda was -- was -- we had saw the atrocities in the paper and news reels that they did in -- in Singapore and before they bombed us. You know they made a run down through Asia before we got into the war. And so you knew that they were -- and then during the war, the first year of the war, they showed these atrocities, you know, what the Japanese would do. Propaganda pictures of them killing Americans, or what not, and the Bataan Death March and all of those things. No, I -- I -- well, I felt I was fighting for my country. And now if you -- now it's politically incorrect if I say "Jap" and at that time everybody called them Japs. Before the war you called them Japs. And you called a German a Kraut. And you called an Italian a WOP. Nobody thought anything about it. Nowadays everybody gets upset. Oh, you can't call them a Jap. Well, Japanese then, we'll say. But I -- I don't know. As I get older I kind of mellow out a little bit. I'm not sorry for what I did but on the other hand I wished they'd never happened. I know that my family, my grand kids and everybody, are so much better off, thank heavens. I -- I guess we got through the war then and we came back to the states -- I left the Philippines and come back on a troop ship. And I'll never forget when we came into San Francisco Harbor, and they had fire boats (gestures & crying) Excuse me a second.

Question: It's okay, no hurry.

Answer: Anyway, we -- we had fire boats and they had bands and it was just a real great homecoming at that time. I remember that probably more than -- I remember that homecoming, surprisingly enough, even more than I do a lot of action in the war. I was just glad to be home. And when we got home I went back into high school and got my GED and then I went to -- I went to work. And then my first job after I got out of the service I worked for the state for a short while as a timber cruiser. Up in Ozette National Forest, up by Ozette Lake up there. And you had to go in by -- you and to go in by railroad cars. There wasn't any road there in those days. We went in by railroad cars and we stayed in camp. And then every Friday night, we'd come out, or stay in camp all weekend. And then I -- and then I came out of there and then I went to work -- for building and grounds for a short while. I was still single at this time and kind of -- not really ready to do any schooling yet or anything. And I went to -- worked in the boom.

Question: How old were you when you came out?

Answer: Let's see, I was 23 -- let's see -- well, I can tell you right away. I got out in '46 -- '46 and '25 -- 21.

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

Question: At that time you were 21. By the time you were 21, between 18 and 21 you had gone and fought a war.

Answer: Yeah, yeah. Then I came back and decided I'd make a better life for myself and for the future and I worked in a boom for awhile, at the mill. I liked that, good hard work, then you go out with your buddies at night and swill a few beers and lie to each other and had a good time. And then I went to work for the State of Washington as a -- well, actually it was an apprentice engineer deal, on a location crew. And we were locating for a new highway up around Eatonville. And then I've known my wife, just before then. And so then finally we got married in '49. And then that settled me down for a bit there. Yes, dear. (laughs) Cut that out.

Question: (laughs) I like that "for a bit" -- settled down for a bit.

Answer: Yeah. And then we -- go ahead, excuse me.

Question: When you -- the feeling that you had when you came into San Francisco Harbor and you saw --

Answer: Yeah.

Question: -- this outpouring of thanks to the soldiers -- is that some of the feeling that you get today when you see the flag go by --

Answer: I do, yes. I do. I'm very -- I -- I always go to memorial services. For years I've always been there. I don't -- I -- at one time I belonged to the VFW and American Legion and the DAV and I used to go to their meetings but as I've got older I've gotten away from that and maybe I shouldn't have but I did. But when they play Taps it still makes me a tear. (crying) The thing is that so many people disrespect those. Yeah, even though. To today, we have Memorial Day, Armistice Day, they call it Veterans Day, I guess now. They were a day that you -- that you stopped and you thought about people that gave their lives for you. These people don't do that. They could care less. It's a whole different world. And I understand that. I don't like it but I understand it. And like -- like you say, they have a right to that and I have a right to my opinion. But yes, when the flag goes by, I salute it and I'm proud of it and I hate to see anybody burn it or stomp on it or anything. Whether it's us or another country. Yeah.

Question: What do you think would -- would -- because it, again, yes, they have a right to do those things. But yet there are certain things in our country, in our world, that are ... sacrilegious or whatever. You walk into a church you're quiet. Whether it's your church or somebody else's church. But yet the flag sometimes -- that respect's not there. Do you think it's -- out of -- for lack of a better word, ignorance -- not having the faintest idea, really what that's --

Answer: I think that's probably part of it, and I think part of it is that they were never taught to respect it to start with. No, when I went to school, and probably you did, too, every morning you saluted the flag. And there's so many places now that don't -- that -- you look in the classroom, the kids are sitting with his feet up on the desk, chewing a big wad of gum, and not paying any attention to that, you know. Where they should be standing up, but that's my opinion because that's what we had to do. Maybe it was wrong, maybe -- but I don't think so. And I don't understand why -- well, I understand why we can't. Because somebody -- somebody will sue us if we -- if we try to make them do that against their -- either it's against their religion or it's against -- that's their freedom, not to do it. Well, okay. You have your

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

freedom, I can have mine, and we're fine. I won't push mine on you and don't push yours on me. Unfortunately it doesn't work that way, I know.

Question: No, some people want more freedom than everybody else and --

Answer: Well, yeah, I get -- well, looking back, you know, over the -- those couple short years in there which were really, as I look back now, time wise, you know, that wasn't very long. Two and a half years in the war. At the time it seemed like it was a long time, but, you know, really it wasn't compared to -- well, what's gone on since then, you know. And I know that an awful lot of guys my age that were in the service, my brother-in-laws and they're gone now. But once in awhile we would talk about Iwo Jima, he was a Marine -- where he got wounded at. But it was just between he and I, we'd have a beer and talk about -- maybe -- maybe we'd go to sports or something else. But we never sat down and -- see, even my closest friends, we never sat down and re-did the battle again. Fought the war over again. Because it's gone, it's passed, let's leave it there. But then there's other guys that go out and blow smoke all over the place. And some of them never saw any action, unfortunately.

Question: I've heard a couple good stories about that.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Well, that's -- it's interesting that would be because there were a majority of the vets that I've talked to, and basically got done with World War II, they were handed their discharge papers --

Answer: Ruptured duck.

Question: Ruptured duck?

Answer: Ruptured duck. Oh, I should have brought my ruptured duck with me. They give you a little pin, and it's a little duck, a little gold pin. And we nicknamed it -- and it was your discharge button. So when you're going home from where you got discharged at, you could wear your uniform, but if an MP or an SP saw you, you had your ruptured duck on, that meant you were going home, discharge. And we called it a ruptured duck. I'll be darned. You never saw one, huh?

Question: No, unh-unh.

Answer: Well, I'll be darned. I think I still -- I got it someplace.

Question: So if they saw that, then it was OK for you to be off base or --

Answer: Hm-hmm, yeah. Like if you were in -- say you got discharged in Seattle and you were going to leave the next day on a train, you were wandering around down on 3rd Avenue or so at night and some guy would say, where's your -- where's your pass at, and you'd say, (gesturing) just got discharged. OK.

Question: Ruptured duck.

Answer: Yeah, ruptured duck. I'll be darned. Nobody never mentioned the ruptured duck?

Question: No, nobody's mentioned that.

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

Answer: Well, I'll have to find that little guy and show him to you, see if you can take a picture of him.

Question: Yeah.

Question: They -- they -- so basically you got your ruptured duck and went back to life?

Answer: Went to -- come back to Olympia and picked up my -- went and moved back at home again for a short while. And then after I started working -- actually when I started working the in boom I moved in with a fellow on the west side, had a little house off of ... not Brawn -- right over here off -- had a little two bedroom house, little dinky thing. He and I bached it in it for a couple -- for a year and a half until I got married. Couple of years there.

Question: So you basically at that point put the war behind you. The war was over.

Answer: Oh, yeah, now I have to go on, make a living, yeah. And at that time, still there were guys -- there were guys that went in the service after I did that were getting out later. We'd see them and say where you been, oh, I was over in China, I was over in Japan in occupation forces for six months or something, you know, and oh, good deal, you know. Move on. (laughs)

Question: Now, you were decorated?

Answer: Well, no, I just got some -- I -- no, my brother received -- all the medals in the family. I've got the medals from the Pacific and the Asian campaign and the Philippine Liberation Medal and that kind of stuff. He got the Silver Star and Purple Heart twice and he got -- of course he was in Korea

Answer: And he got the Bronze Star with a V. Which means V for valor, which is -- from the standpoint of a -- of a combat person, the Bronze Star with V for valor is rated higher in their opinion than a Silver Star is. Because the V for valor means that you got it in action where the Silver Star -- you -- you can do some things, not always -- even though it's a higher rated star.

Question: Yeah.

Answer: Yeah. So he got those. And I just -- I got my campaign stuff. In fact they sent me some out of the clear blue sky here a couple months ago. Couple medals I hadn't seen. That's all right.

Question: You put them on ice and put them away.

Answer: Yeah, put them in a box.

Question: Do you consider yourself a hero?

Answer: Nope, no. No, I don't. I -- I -- I consider ... I consider a lot of guys heroes and a lot of them are dead, and I consider a lot of guys heroes that did things above and beyond. Now, to me standing there looking at a plane coming at me and shooting at me and I'm shooting back at him, that's not -- I'm not a hero. I'm just -- I'm just doing my job. I'm going to get that guy before he gets me. If -- if ... if I'm on the beach and there's wounded people there and there's sniper fire and people getting shot left and right and a guy runs out

George Normoyle

Tape 1 of 2

and pulls some guys in, and gets shot -- then, you know, he's -- he's putting his life on the line even more than I am, by standing there, bang, bang, banging at this guy. And in that situation, yeah. But it's just like probably millions of Doughboys and me feel. We're not heroes. We were just -- just doing our job. I went into -- when we went into land in New Guinea, my - this fellow sailor -- fellow -- (inaudible) Ken Crown -- he was in the Armed Guard. And then he and I went into the amphibs together after we got. And he had -- he had a brother-in-law that was in the Army back up in the boonies there in New Guinea

Answer: Now New Guinea is not a nice place to be. I mean when it rains, you never saw -- I mean, this is nothing. Last night was just a piddle on the roof. It rains, I mean it pours. So we get -- so we find out where he's at, and so we're going to go see this brother-in-law of his. Well, he's about 40 miles back in the hills up in there. And so we -- we put our side arms on and took a couple carbines and got our poncho and took off and hitched a ride back up in there and we finally found him. So we asked his company commander, boy, that was terrible fighting place up there, oh, just miserable. The funny thing about it -- they thought they were better off than we were. Even though they were in the mud and terrible situation. They thought they were better off than being sitting out in that harbor in a ship that's going to get strafed and bombed and they couldn't go anyplace, you know. And so they thought they were better off than we were, which is really funny. This guy's name was Chris Pischu. He's gone now. But -- so we asked the company commander if we could take him back to the ship for a couple days with us. So he gave him the okay and we took him back. Took him aboard the LST and washed his clothes and gave him some good food to eat and some cigarettes. The other thing. They were always short on cigarettes. Sea stores, you could buy Lucky Strikes for five cents a pack, fifty cents a carton it would cost you. Oh, are you -- are we about done?

Question: No, just every so often I adjust -- fifty cents a pack -- I'm thinking what they cost today --

Answer: No, five cents a pack.

Question: Oh, five cents a pack.

Answer: Fifty cents a carton.