

**Harold C. Smith
Veteran**

**No Interviewer Listed
Interviewed on February 26, 2010
At Veteran's Home
Staten Island, NY**

Q: Your name is?

HS: Harold C. Smith

Q: And your branch of service was?

HS: US Army

Q: And your date of service was?

HS: I started out on April 3rd, in Company B, 165th Infantry, 27th Division. I enlisted in April and got my orders on May 14, 1940. I was discharged from that same outfit on August 25, 1945.

Q: From 1940-1945? And you were born where?

HS: Staten Island, NY on July 3, 1921.

Q: And your prewar education was?

HS: I graduated from Port Richmond High School in June 1939.

Q: And your occupation that you worked at before you enlisted?

HS: I worked for Western Union for twenty five cents an hour, in Manhattan.

Q: So, you were already in the military when Pearl Harbor broke out?

HS: Yes.

Q: And how did you officially hear about it?

HS: I was in (unclear) in October, 1940, and I was in Alabama when Pearl Harbor happened. December 7, 1941. And I felt like everyone else when I heard about it. It was another war, that's all.

Q: And what was your specific training while you were in the military?

HS: While I was at Fort McClellan, Alabama, we were trained for combat before the war. We watched over the cotton fields in Alabama and we went on maneuvers in Tennessee, and after that, in Louisiana and Arkansas. Our home base was Fort McClellan, Alabama. We got out first group of draftees while in Alabama, and when war was declared, we shipped out. We were the first troops to hit California a couple weeks after Pearl Harbor. We were on guard duty on

the shores of California. We were there to defend California. There we finally got to (Unclear) tanks ...and the piers and the shores of California.

Q: And from there, you shipped out to where?

HS: On March 8th, we left San Francisco for Hawaii. We arrived at Kailua, Kauai Hawaii on March 16th, 1941. (sic: 1942) We started putting up barb wire around the Hawaiian Island. We manned our positions on the beaches there.

Q: How many people were in your unit?

HS: Our infantry regiment, plus some artillery. We were there during the Battle of Midway. We knew if the "Japs" had won the Battle of Midway, we would have been next in line to get picked for combat. But the Navy and the Air Force won at Midway, so after seven or eight months, we went to Oahu Hawaii to train for combat in the Pacific. We took on more draftees and we trained them, and we got ready for our first combat. That was the Gilbert Islands....Makin Island. The Marines landed at Tarawa Island, and our regiment, the 165th, landed at the beach at Makin Island in November 1943. Then after three days on Makin Island, we got shipped back to Hawaii, where we took more amphibious training and then we left Oahu.

(Some sort of interruption. Narrator says (Okay Stop.), and it appears some of the interview was lost, as the next question has no association with the previous.)

Q: What were you saying about Saipan?

HS: We disembarked in a Higgins Boat on the Sixteenth, and we didn't land....we were out there in the dark until we landed on the Seventeenth on the beach. Our boats landed on the wrong beach, where the Marines had landed. We had to go to the right and by dawn we were in combat, heading toward Aslito Airfield. On the way there, a mortar round landed nearby, and I got wounded in the leg by shrapnel.

Q: That was your First Purple Heart?

HS: Yes. I was told to go to the shore, so I went to the shore, and they took me out to the hospital ship. The doctors looked at it, and sent me back to combat, so I rejoined my outfit. That was on the Seventeenth of June. Then we were advancing towards..... (unclear) in combat. We moved out, and on the twenty-third, we were hitting the ground on account of machine gun fire and mortar fire, and I got wounded again with shrapnel. I found my way to the medics, where I had combat fatigue problems and so they sent me to the aid station. I was there for two days, when my brother walked in. His ship was transport there, and he somehow found me.

Q: Wow? And what was his name?

HS: Phillip Smith

Q: What was he in? The Navy?

HS: Yes, he was US Navy.

Q: What ship was he on?

HS: ARB-3

Q: That must have been exciting.

HS: He was at USS Phaon (ARB-3)

Q: Was that totally unexpected?

HS: Yes. I went out to his ship, and the doctor looked at me and changed my bandages. He told me I better not forget to do that. I stayed on the ship a while and then I went back to my outfit. After that, we were in combat, and my bandage wasn't changed for a long time. When it was taken off, it started to leak and I got dermititus.

I was there for the rest of the battle and then my regiment was to leave, and we got on a ship and went to Espiritu Santo. On the way there, the dermititus spread all over my body, and I was in the sick bay. I couldn't eat any food....(unclear) I had a little meal on the ship. It was wretched. I was in the hospital in Espiritu Santo for six weeks.

Then we were getting ready to go to Okinawa, and on Easter Sunday, we landed at Okinawa on April 15th. There was no combat at first, until we got to the front lines. I was there until my unit was relieved from battle. I still had the dermititus on one finger, so they sent me to the medic. They checked my hand and before you knew it, it was spreading all over again. They put me on a plane to Guam, to the hospital there. Then they put me on a hospital ship to California, and then to a hospital at Camp Upton, Long Island. By that time, the war was over.....On the fourteenth, I went to Fort Dix and I got a discharge on August 25, 1945. Three years, three months without a furlough.

Q: That is a long time!

HS: Three Christmases.

Q: So how did you keep in touch with people back home?

HS: V-mail

Q: V-Mail? How did that work?

HS: You wrote on one sheet and folded it, and handed it in, and they sent it out. I guess by teletype or something. It could only be one piece of paper.

Q: So, you had a lot of exposure to medical care during World War Two, what was that like? What were your thoughts about your medical care?

HS: Pretty good care.

Q: You found out about V-Day during your hospital stay? And then did you go home?

HS: On August 25th. I did get home while I was at Camp Upton. I got a pass to go to Staten Island. I didn't have anyone meet me, I just went home by bus by myself.

Q: What was your occupation once you left the military?

HS: I took a temporary job at the Post Office, sorting mail.

Q: How long did you stay at the Post Office?

HS: Until 1968 or 69. It was 1969.

Q: Do you now belong to any Veterans organizations? Are you active, and what is your history?

HS: I am most active in the V.F.W. (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and the D.A. (Disabled Veterans Association). In the V.F.W. I was Junior Vice Commander for two years, and Senior Vice Commander for two years, 1989 and 1990, and I got a few service awards for that. With the D.A.V., I worked on the Rituals Team Committee. We went to funerals and ceremonies for Veterans. We marched in Veteran's Day Parades, and Memorial Day Parades, and Saint Patrick's Day Parades, with the Fighting 69th or the 165th Infantry.

Q: So, you have a strong patriotic commitment to your country?

HS: I am committed to my fellow veterans.

Q: You attended reunions with the 69th?

HS: Yes.

Q: What was the reunion for?

HS: The Veteran's Corp. I go to monthly meetings and I served on the Board of Directors. Veterans come from all over the country, who were drafted or served in the 165th Infantry. Almost every state in the Union was represented in the 165th Infantry because of the draft. From Alaska, to Hawaii, to Florida, we had every state represented.

Q: The 165th also goes way back in history, doesn't it?

HS: It was in the Rainbow Division during World War One, and before that it was in the Mexican War. And famous people were in it as well. In world war one, General MacArthur was a top honcho in it.

Q: Any final words you'd like to say or information you would like to leave about your experiences or unusual duties or memorable things that you experienced?

HS: I was just happy to get out alive. I survived, and it's great to be alive.

Q: How old are you now?

HS: I'm eighty eight.

Q: Good job. I guess we are complete.