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Veteran**

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Interviewer**

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**Q:** Let's start out with, where were you on December 7, 1941?

**WH:** Visiting some friends. I was going to school at the time, and I had been invited to visit them for dinner. I actually had to travel to get there, and I'd stayed overnight with these friends, and we had just got back from church when the news came on the radio.

**Q:** How did you and your friends react to that?

**WH:** I anticipated having to eventually have military service. We both knew that the country was going to be in for some hard times.

**Q:** Having grown up in the Great Depression, can you describe that for me?

**WH:** Well I was relatively young. I was 10 in 1933, so one doesn't have too much of an impression at age 10, and 1933 was pretty much the bottom of the Depression.

**Q:** What did your parents do during the Depression?

**WH:** My father had died in 1930, and my mother had to bring up four children all by herself.

**Q:** So you had four siblings? Two brothers, two sisters? What were your siblings and how old were they?

**WH:** I was the oldest of four. I had a sister and two younger brothers.

**Q:** After you heard the news, is that when you decided to join the service?

**WH:** By that time I was already 18. I had registered for the draft, as was expected. I was going to school where they had ROTC. Have you heard of ROTC? I was signed up. One has to be signed up for the first two years when one goes to an ROTC school. I was signed up, hence I was probably not called up by the Draft Board for that reason. So for the next two years I was in the ROTC program.

**Q:** Where did you study? Was that MIT?

**WH:** MIT, yes.

**Q:** What major?

**WH:** Chemical Engineering.

**Q:** What did the ROTC program entail exactly? What kind of training?

**WH:** Well once a week there was military drill. Apart from that it was just lectures on military activities. I honestly don't remember now. Too long ago.

**Q:** So there were not a lot of additional requirements?

**WH:** No.

**Q:** Because of the ROTC Program, you were admitted to Officer Training School? Or how did that work?

**WH:** That's the concept. Strangely enough, the officers who were running the ROTC Program persuaded roughly 80% of my group to join the Enlisted Reserve during our second year of college. Lo and behold, the government decided in all their wisdom to call us up at the end of the second year. So we were all told we were through with school for a while and to report to a camp for military service.

**Q:** So you really didn't get to finish your four years for a bachelor's?

**WH:** Correct.

**Q:** After your two years were up with the ROTC Program, were you immediately shipped to Europe?

**WH:** No, we went to Basic Training. Really started at the beginning. Essentially, we were recruits, although we were put into a program that ended up being a little bit special after the Basic Training camp.

**Q:** So because of ROTC, were you a little bit better off than some of the others who had been drafted?

**WH:** Probably so, but I opted for something else. I wanted to do a little bit more than just be a soldier. It was possible to join the Air Force. At that time the Air Force was part of the Army, and I asked to be transferred. After Basic I had to wait around a few months. I was sent to a pre-basic part of the Air Force. I wanted to be a navigator.

**Q:** Why did you want to be Navigator?

**WH:** I felt there was more to it. (unclear)

**Q:** Where did you complete your United States training?

**WH:** I didn't quite, because again in all their wisdom, I stayed for about eight months in the Air Force at what they called pre-pre-flight. I was actually at Butler University in Indianapolis in school. A large number of the recruits coming into

the Air Force had no college training and they wanted to give us the rudiments of a college education. At the end of that period though, instead of going on to extended Air Force training, the government sent back all of the people who had been in the Army. I was sent back to a newly formed Infantry Division to start training all over again.

**Q:** And what Division was that, do you recall?

**WH:** The 86<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

**Q:** Where did you complete your training for that?

**WH:** In Louisiana.

**Q:** How long was it before you were called to fight?

**WH:** Quite a while because they ended up sending us to California as a group to do amphibious training. This would have been in 1944, and if you are familiar with the history of the war in Europe, you may recall that the Battle of the Bulge occurred in December of '44. Again, the government in all their wisdom decided that they needed a brand new Infantry Division, and they rushed us to the east coast, put us on board ship, and by February we were in Europe. By that time the Battle of the Bulge, of course, was history, and they didn't need us. As a Division though, we actually did cover the territory of Germany from the Rhine to the Austrian border for a mop-up drill. We saw very little of the war though.

**Q:** Did you land at Normandy and then proceed on?

**WH:** We landed at Le Havre. It's a fort in France. By that time, the war was at the Rhine. France had been liberated.

**Q:** So by the time you got to Germany you didn't really have a lot of combat action?

**WH:** No.

**Q:** How long were you in Europe, in Germany?

**WH:** We stayed about a month, and again, because the war was still on in Asia, they sent the whole Division back to the United States, I guess to get a fresh Division, anticipating shipping us out to the Pacific. We had a very nice two week furlough. After that we regrouped out in California. As the war in Asia finally was over in August of '45, lo and behold, we were sailing out underneath the Golden Gate Bridge as a unit on V-Jay Day. So, my experiences in World War II were as benign as one can expect. I had it very easy. I got lucky.

**Q:** Did you actually get to the Pacific?

**WH:** Yes. They sent us out to the Philippines as an Occupation Troop.

**Q:** And that was after the bombs had been dropped at Iwo Jima and Nagasaki? Do you remember where you were on those two days?

**WH:** In California. I can't recall for sure.

**Q:** How did you hear the news?

**WH:** Well, I think we were all very glad that something as dramatic as this was used to end the war.

**Q:** So you agreed with it?

**WH:** I don't think that thought was a part of our make-up to either agree or disagree. It happened.

**Q:** Once you got to the Philippines, what did you do there?

**WH:** We were strictly an Occupation Force. Our unit actually did have a specific job. The main air base, Clark Field, north of Manila about thirty or forty miles, and they had a gasoline pipeline from Manila Bay up to Clark Field to supply their fuel needs. Because there still were some forces who were not happy with the results of the war, and they were hitting occasionally on the pipeline, we had to guard the pipeline. Very simple job though.

**Q:** And when you were back in Europe, what was your job there, in the Infantry itself?

**WH:** I was a mortar gunner.

**Q:** And what did that entail?

**WH:** I (unclear) the mortar on the ammunition floor. I only had one occasion to use it though.

**Q:** When was that?

**WH:** I can't say. I don't recall. It was during that period of April 1 to early May in '45, when we crossed Germany.

**Q:** Once you got to the Philippines, how long were you stationed there?

**WH:** We got there in September of '45, and I returned in March of '46 and I was discharged.

**Q:** And you didn't reapply for a second?

**WH:** No.

**Q:** Did you go immediately back to MIT to finish your schooling?

**WH:** The following term, yes. That was March and I had to wait until September to return to school.

**Q:** Did you stay there for another two years and finish your Bachelor's?

**WH:** Yes.

**Q:** Did you pursue a Master's Degree in Chemical Engineering?

**WH:** I looked for a job after I got my Bachelor's. That's why I am here in Glens Falls now. I went to work for a company here in Glens Falls.

**Q:** What company was that?

**WH:** Imperial Color, in the wallpaper division.

**Q:** What did you do there?

**WH:** I was a Chemical Engineer.

**Q:** How long were you with that company?

**WH:** For the rest of my service. Forty years.

**Q:** Did you have a family?

**WH:** Yes, I had six children. They were all born here, they all graduated from Glens Falls High School, and not a single one of them lives anywhere nearby.

**Q:** When you signed up for the ROTC Program, how did your family feel about that?

**WH:** That was a prerequisite for going to MIT.

**Q:** So they supported you in that decision to go to MIT knowing that you would probably have to go to war?

**WH:** I was really rather privileged to go to MIT.

**Q:** Do you think that the Army and your time in the service helped prepare you for your career?

**WH:** Not really, no, because I never got above the rank of PFC.

**Q:** Because you were in the ROTC, that didn't help with your rank at all?

**WH:** No. I might have if I had stayed with the program they had envisioned because most of those people who were accepted went into what they called the Army Specialized Training Program. Probably not too many of them ended up as officers, but they ended up with high ranking non-com jobs in different branches of the service that did not require an awful lot of combat duty.

**Q:** Do you have any fond memories of when you were in Europe or the Pacific? Do you have any funny stories to share?

**WH:** Not really because . . . well, in one sense, yes. I was actually asked to do some teaching. My MIT background was sufficient, and I was accepted as an instructor for a math course. I did that for a while in the Philippines. The people who were running the show wanted the men to be occupied and that was one of the things they did. They started schools so people could do a little learning in anticipation of getting back home. I did have the chance to play Duplicate Bridge, and another fellow and I won the tournament. So I have a very fond memory there.

**Q:** Did you have other friends from MIT who were in the ROTC program with you?

**WH:** Oh yes. It was essentially the whole class. And 80% of them were persuaded to join the Enlisted Reserve, all of whom were soon called up at the end of the term.

**Q:** Were the majority of those men in your division?

**WH:** No, you see I went into the Air Force. I was the only one in the group who did that. So I completely lost track of them.

**Q:** Do you remember anything in particular from that one time you were in combat? Does anything come to mind?

**WH:** No, we just marched.

**Q:** How was the food at the camps?

**WH:** I have no fond memories, believe me. We accepted what there was. Although I suspect though that the military had really good food, more so than many of the civilians, due to rationing.

**Q:** When you were in the Philippines, were you building houses as well? Were you working closely with the Marines?

**WH:** We were just (unclear) in a special place that would accommodate us. We were just an infantry division. All we were capable of was fighting a war, which was over.

**Q:** Do you ever regret that you weren't able to join the Air Force and become a Navigator like you wanted?

**WH:** Yes, I think I do to a certain extent. I would have like to have that experience, but it wasn't to be. I actually did have one small, fascinating or happy part in that short time in the Air Force. I got to have ten hours of dual instruction in a Piper Cub. It was fun.

**Q:** Do you think that if you had been able to stay with the Air Force, that would have changed your combat at all? Do you think you would have been more actively involved?

**WH:** I have no way of speculating.

**Q:** Did you get married when the war was over or during your leave?

**WH:** A few years later.

**Q:** Right here in Glens Falls?

**WH:** No, the lady I married came from Boston. I met her while I was going to school.

**Q:** Where were you from originally? Down near Poughkeepsie?

**WH:** I grew up in Ulster County.

**Q:** Whereabouts is that?

**WH:** Do you know where Ellenville is? Do you know where Newburgh is? Do you know where Kingston is? South of Kingston. Away from the river.

**Q:** Where you parents from there too? Were you there for most of your childhood?

**WH:** No, we were originally from Brooklyn. I was born in Brooklyn.

**Q:** How long did you live in Brooklyn?

**WH:** Ten years. My mother's family was in Brooklyn. We moved up to Ellenville because it was less expensive during the Depression, which was desirable. It wasn't bad really living in the country. I liked that aspect of it.

**Q:** What did your mother do during the Depression to support you and your brothers and sister?

**WH:** There was family help for quite a bit. Later she went to work as a secretary.

**Q:** Did you send your reparations from the service home in order to help support your family?

**WH:** There wasn't much. A PFC didn't get very much in the Army.

**Q:** You said your wife was from Boston. Did you meet her while you were at MIT?

**WH:** Yes.

**Q:** Do you recall when FDR died?

**WH:** No, not as a missive. I am sure at the time we talked about it, but I really don't remember.

**Q:** Seeing as how you weren't in direct combat with the Japanese, do you have any hostility towards them or the Germans today?

**WH:** No, I don't think so. As a matter of fact, here in Glens Falls we have a native, a few years younger than me, he grew up in wartime Germany, he and his wife both did, and he was in the Youth Corps, because at a certain age they were automatically recruited. He never saw any combat; he wasn't old enough for that. He actually worked as an interpreter, because he had a good English command. He ended up finishing school over there and then coming over here. He worked here at GE in Hudson Falls. He was a neighbor of mine here. They were very good neighbors.

**Q:** That's all the questions I really have for you. I would like to thank you and I have a release form for you to sign.

**WH:** Sorry if I have disappointed you in any way, but that's fate and may be why I am here now, the fact that I had an easy go of it.

**Q:** Do you think that maybe because you spent those two years at MIT with the ROTC program that helped you be better off?

**WH:** (Unclear). I would not have planned to go on to be an officer had I finished the second year.

**Q:** So you really had no intention originally of ever joining the Army?

**WH:** No, it was a prerequisite to go to the school.

**Q:** What were your other choices of schools you could have gone to and not had to face that?

**WH:** You know, surprisingly enough, that was my first choice and I got in right off the bat. Today it would have been difficult because it was a lot easier to get into then than it is today. But at that time, I would say 50% of the students at that school were local. Today probably 90% of them are international.