

**Allen Ray David
Veteran**

**Interviewed by
Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke
at the New York State Military Museum
on 3 June 2004**

Q: Alright this is an interview at NYS military Museum Saratoga Springs 3rd of June 2004 at about 1: 30pm. Interviewers are Wayne Clarke and Mike Russert. Could you give me your full name, DOB, and place of birth?

AD: Allen Ray David, July 22, 1926. Schenectady, New York.

Q: What was your educational background prior to entering the service?

AD: High School.

Q: Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

AD: Yes I was in study hall, well it happened on Sunday, we listened to the president's speech on Monday in study hall.

Q: Do you remember the reaction of yourself and fellow students?

AD: Well, I think we all were a little worried but I don't remember it affected us to much because I was in 10th grade at that time and we thought maybe it will all be over before we get drafted, which wasn't the case.

Q: Where you drafted or did you enlist?

AD: Yes, I was drafted.

Q: Where did you go for your induction or basic training?

AD: I was inducted in Albany then they sent us to Fort Dixie, New Jersey and from there we went to Fort Knox for basic training.

Q: How long was your basic?

AD: 17 weeks when I got out of basic training our whole group went to Fort Mead, Maryland and we were there about a month and they would give you a pass to anywhere in the United States as long as you could get back by the end of the weekend. So I was getting passes to come home and on one of those passes I had an automobile accident. I totaled the car broke my jaw and ended up in Roads General Hospital up in Utica, Army Hospital. The group I trained wit basic training all went to Europe and of course while I was recuperating which was for 8 weeks. The war ended in Europe so when I got back to Fort Mead they put us on a troop train to Seattle to go to the Asian Pacific War and I think it took us about 8 days on that train to get to Seattle and when we got there, there was no ship to put us on, so they sent us down to Oregon, I don't remember the name of

the camp it was below Salem, Oregon I believe anyway there was a major forest fire at the time and all the man at that base were fighting that forest fire so we kind of just sat around there for about a week and they had a ship come in to take us overseas we went back to Seattle and got on a ship and that was in July 1945 by the time we got on the ship. The Ship was in a convoy, the convoy grew as it went. I don't know where these ships came from it started off fairly small convoy then it got bigger and bigger. We by passed Hawaii which disappointed us all, we did stop in the Mariners on a little island called Mock or Maud something like that. It was a tiny little island I think that highest point was 15 or 20 feet above high tide but of course it was protected by a Coral Reef.

Q: Now where you assigned to a unit at this time?

AD: No.

Q: You were going as a replacement?

AD: Yes, yes we were all replacements and I remember seeing this island in a magazine sometime after the war when natives had returned to it. We saw nothing but navy personnel when we were there but in the magazine article on this very island I saw these beautiful Polynesian girls whistling around topless.

Q: They must have hid them from the GI's?

AD: I think they did. So anyway from there that was the only stop we made on the way over about an hour after that ships paper came out that said war ends we made a complete U-turn and everyone thought we were turning around going home turns out they were just changing position in the convoy that was a big disappointment too. So anyway we went on to Okinawa I'm not sure of the exact date when we get there but it was obviously after the war ended so it was mid-August I guess I think it took us 28 days to get over there traveling in this convoy.

Q: Now where were you when you heard and your reaction to the death of President Roosevelt?

AD: Well he died April of '45, I must have been in the hospital when I had the broken jaw I don't remember that pressed me to much because he had been very sick anyway.

Q: When you went to Okinawa what was your assignment there?

AD: We first went to as a preplacement I believe it was a 716th Amphibious Tank and then it was shortly after that, that group I got to go home, they had been over there for a couple of years I guess they got to go home as a group so they moved us to this 536th Amphibious Tank we were the very southern tip of the Island in fact it was, we were only a 1/2 mile from the cliff where the last of the Japanese soldiers jumped off the cliff to kill themselves. There was no clean up when we got there, there was still bodies everywhere and they never did pick up all the Japanese we had that summer or early fall we had two typhoons the first one was not to bad but it did damage but the 2nd one just blew everything apart it blew kwanza huts down we were in tents it just tore the tents to

smithereens it didn't blow them anyway it just stood there and tore all to piece's and the first night of that storm I woke up my cot had just sunk totally into that ground I was lying in a puddle of water the next night we borrowed on of their amphibious trackers slipped the knot and that wasn't about to blow away I think the weight was 28 tons or something.

Q: What about topical diseases with all the dead bodies was there toroid or any of that?

AD: Not that I know of that was a warning of Japanese Encephalitis and they came up with a vaccine for it they took us all up to this medic station to get shots this was a vaccine for Japanese Encephalitis and the very 1st man in line they gave him the shot and he dropped dead so they sent us all back again, never did find out what was the matter with him but it turned out it was not the shot, he just had a heart attack or something.

Q: Did you take Atabrine for Malaria?

AD: They treated the water we didn't take it they put something in the water to protect us from Malaria but there were very few miscues there it was actually a rather nice climate there probably low temperatures in the winter of 40 degrees and that was an unusual day and high temperature in the summer of 90 maybe at the most of course it's that influence of the ocean that keeps the temperature mild I guess but obviously we were headed for the invasion of Japan first started out course open olives was the staging area.

Q: Now where were you when you heard about the dropping of atomic bombs?

AD: On that ship.

Q: Do you remember the reaction when you heard about that?

AD: Well I think everybody was pretty much AHH and of course when they dropped the second one and then the end of the war which then was a big relief to everybody. We would have been in the invasion of Japan which I'm sure would have been a horribly bloody battle.

Q: Did it surprise you, you didn't turn around?

AD: Not really.

Q: Didn't you to do occupational duty?

AD: No it didn't really surprise us.

Q: What were some of your duty's while in Okinawa?

AD: We were in because of course the war was over we sat around for probably two or three months with nothing to do really and we were close to the ocean right on the southern tip of the island so we would go down on the beach and there were still a lot of Japanese bodies on the beach then we had the first typhoon and that's when we got this

first outfit home and when we got moved to the other one 536 and then the second typhoon as I say it took things up and the officers decided to fix-up the area before they got new tents and stuff so they went down on the beach dug up sand and made it a beautiful area. But we didn't stay there very long we were transferred to Yontan (?) Air Base which is about maybe a third of the way up the island going north I think it was on the western side of the North end of island and they were all off limits nobody could go there this air base was very close to the boarder where you couldn't go any further north and we ran an air transient center for military personal, traveling from Australia to Japan or vice versa they would have bedding and meals then the next morning they would go on their way and that was our assignment for the rest of the time we were there except we moved from the On-tire air base they closed that down and we moved to Noda Air Base, Noda was the capital of course it was liberated when we were there.

Q: So you didn't work in MOS like you were trained for?

AD: No, well we were trained for the armor division driving tanks and things there wasn't any need for it but that island was just loaded with literal for the invasion of Japan they had tires and all kinds of air plane parts and they gave it all to junk eventually which didn't do them any good.

Q: How long were you in Okinawa?

AD: We were there until I think the end of September 1946. I remember when we were at Yontan of course we had to feed these transients and part of our job was working in the mess hall one day we were assigned to distribute the food as they went through the line and the dishes and stuff the next day you would be on garbage detail, we drove to a big open area near the ocean that they had dug to a ditch with a big bulldozer and this ditch must have been 10-12 feet deep and maybe 1/2 mile long and you would just back up to this ditch and dump your garbage into it. And it was full of slop at the bottom maybe knee deep and every time you backed up there would be a whole gang of natives it was early after the war and the Americans were not feeding the natives yet it would be a whole flock of natives in this ditch, they would run to catch anything edible you dumped and you could not put this garbage in the ditch without pouring it all over them. It was tragic, by the time we moved from there to Noda they had started feeding the natives they had started letting them back into their little villages there was still off limits as enlisted man we had no opportunity for women all the white women nurses, USO personal all those kind of people were automatically classified As officers and we couldn't associate with them and the natives were all off limits. They were allowed to come and work in the mess hall and the man worked in the motor pool but they were under guard all the time and were taken back home before dark we did have one girl stay there that night and she went home with a truckload of cigarettes that was the only opportunity anybody any enlisted man in our area any way for a visit with a woman.

Q: Now where did you go after you left Okinawa?

AD: As I say Okinawa is a fairly mild climate we had our summer clothes by that time they put us on that ship and took a great circle route back to San Francisco which took us way up by the Aleutian Islands and we pretty near froze to death on that ship.

Q: You did mention on this form you turned in that you were in Manila for TDR&R

AD: Temporary Rest and Recuperate, we were there for I think 3 days and the last day was Independence Day and they made us get back on the ship because they were afraid we would get hurt with all the celebration. There were permit personnel on shore we were just visitors so they made us get back on the ship but they light up the sky with fireworks that night it was quite a display.

Q: After you took the Northern route home where were you discharged and when?

AD: Well we went into Oakland Army Base and from there we were there for 3 or 4 days and then were put on troop train taken back to Fort Dixie, New Jersey that's where I was discharged.

Q: What rank were you when you were discharged?

AD: PFC

Q: And did you join any veteran's organizations after your service?

AD: I was in the American Legion for a while but not for long I joined it in Galloway at one point all these guys wanted to do is play cards. I'm not much of a card player. I joined it up in Syracuse for a while but I never went to any of the meeting or anything so I didn't keep it up.

Q: Did you make use of the GI bill at all?

AD: Yes, I went to University of Kentucky for a year and Syracuse University for 2 years before the money ran out, I should have stayed in Kentucky because tuition was only \$90.00 a year.

Q: Do you ever make use of the 52-20 club?

AD: Yes for a short time I came back in the actually my discharge was actually in December and of course it was too late to start college that year I took advantage of the 52-20 club for a while because I couldn't go to college until the fall.

Q: Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in services with you at all?

AD: I borrowed \$20.00 from a friend in San Francisco when we got back there because I didn't have a dime and we had a pass to go into San Francisco from Oakland and he loaned me \$20.00 and when I got home I sent it back to him. We corresponded for several years and then it just faded away I don't know whatever happened to him.

Q: How do you think being in the service made a difference or change or affected your life?

AD: I think it makes you grow up a little faster than any other guy.

Q: You were only 18 or so?

AD: 18, Yes I graduated High School June of '44 and inducted in November not much time to do anything.

Q: On your form you said prior to entering the service you were part of the GE victory core, what was that?

AD: They had a program for High School students to work as massagers and clerks and that sort of thing to just help out in the GE in Schenectady, it was a big deal if you went to school 45 or 50 mins earlier than everyone else you got out at noon and then you had to go down to the plant and work for 4 hours in the afternoon from 1-5pm and it was a well populated program a lot of kids doing it.

Q: Did they pay you?

AD: Oh, sure. 45 1/2 cents an hour no you didn't get any credit for it. But you put in your full school program by the time you got out at noon you didn't get to miss any classes or anything.

Q: Now as an armored placement battalion specialized in training then?

AD: Yes we had to learn how to drive tanks, we had to learn how to do everything in the tank, shot the gun, load the gun, there were five people in the tank these were Sherman tanks I guess. The driver, co-driver, gunner, loader, and the tank commander. So we had to learn how to do every job there. And we also had to learn how to shoot all these things up to started with rifles and the grease guns, and we had to shoot 30 caliber machine guns and 50 caliber machine guns, and of course the 75 millimeter guns these tanks were equip with 75 millimeter guns and a newer tank with 76 millimeter guns, it was a much better gun I guess. But for training purposes they didn't have any of these we also had to learn how to drive 1/2 tracks and Jeeps, virtually all the trucks that they had. When we went out on bivouac you wound up your training with two pieces of bivouac. It rained cats and dogs in fact it flooded the Ohio River that year. It got quite deep I guess. I don't know how many of those tanks we got stuck in the mud. They did ruin one tank trying to get it out of the mud; it was an experience when we got back to the barracks, of course we had to clean everything. What a mess, trying to clean that mud off of everything.