

Orvil Larson
WWII



When did you enter the military?

“March 15th 1943”

How old where you

“I was 24 yrs old”

How long where you in the military?

“I was in the military about shy of two years, two years and eleven months.”

What boot camp did you go to?

“Ah Well I attended a boot camp in Idaho, Farragut Naval training station Idaho. It was two months long”

How long were you there?

“I was there I think it was two months in boot camp”

Did you go to a second boot camp?

“No, no just the one”

Did you join the military voluntarily?

“Yes”

What made you join the military?

“Because, I did not want to get drafted into the army. A friend of mine was an army man. And he said it was rough, and I said I don’t want to be in the army so I enlisted in the Navy figuring it was the better of the two units and in the army if you are an infantry man you are in all sorts of muck and holes and everything else and I don’t want no part of that I would rather be in the navy, so I joined the navy.”

So you joined the navy correct?

“Yeah”

What equipment did you use on a daily basis?

“I went to radio material school so I worked on submarine radio equipment and sonar, radar transmitters, this is all submarine equipment.”

What rank did you achieve?

“Radio technician second class”

Were you wounded in the military?

“No”

Were you in any famous campaigns or battles?

“No”

Did you receive any awards or medals for your service?

“Well I got three medals here, American Area Medal, Asiatic Pacific Medal, and the WWII Victory Medal”

Which medal is most important to you?

“The victory medal, the WWII victory medal”

Can you describe it?

“Well I don’t know...”

Like how did you get them?

“Well this is awarded to anyone that was in WWII”

What was a “normal or average day while you were in the military?

“Well the ... when I was on base before I was sent over seas, I went to boot camp and I went to radio material school and I went to seaboard? Certain places (revisit this spot 4:58 in interview). I graduated on Treasure Island as a radio technician but I went to school to learn it.”

When you were in the military, what was your normal or most common routine when you were in battle or war?

“I was actually never in battle.”

Well like on a daily basis what would you do?

“When we are aboard ship we had our own little radio shack and we built our own radio equipment. Of course when we anchored somewhere, I should say that if we had liberty on shore. In Hawaii we went swimming a lot. We were stationed in Hawaii for awhile. We stayed at Midland island, we stayed there ??? Island till the end of the war”

You said you were in WWII, so did you fight against Japan or Germany?

“Well we fought against Japan because we were in the Pacific”

Did you use any fire arms?

“The only fire arms I used, that was in boot camp and that was the 22 for target practice”.

Did you use any heavy weapon artillery?

“No”

While at war, what helped you pass the time?

“Well, at war we were busy repairing submarine equipment. Of course, we were anchored at Midway. When we had liberty we went swimming and of course we would have a couple of beers and have a good time of it”

While you were at war what helped you get through the hard times

“Actually, I never had hard times, the only time, we had..when we were in route to midway island, we had picked up a submarine on the sonar and of course we had to go round in circles trying to avoid the submarine and they was dropping depth charges to scare away the submarine, that kept on for about two hours before they got rid of the submarine. To this day I don’t know if it was the enemy or one of ours, you know? But that was the only time.”

While you were in the Pacific Ocean were you ever stationed on any islands?

“Yes, Midway Island. We were stationed there for the duration of the war.”

After you came home did your perspective on anything change?

“Yes, big change for me, I was born and raised on a farm Brentwood Montana, and when I come into the navy....It was a whole different new world for me. I was pretty much isolated on the farm. But once I got into the military, I done went to all the schools, and I met all these guys. Of course I hardly ever saw water, but I got plenty of water on me in the Navy. I went all the way from New York to Midway. And for me that was, and not only that but on the farm you are more or less isolated; you don’t see too many people. You had your neighbors and those you maybe only see once or twice a week. But here you’re amongst your navy

guys and everyone else and it was more congested. For me that was a big change.”

Did you carry anything from the military with you after the war?

“I carried, no the only thing is the training that I got from the military enabled me to get a good job in the telephone company. So in other words, it prepared me for my life’s work actually.”

I see you brought some pictures can you explain them to us

“Yes” (he hands the picture to the interviewer)



Was this picture taken on U.S. soil?

“That was taken on US soil.”

Was that at your boot camp?

“No that was after I got my raise, after I finished school and everything. Actually that was when I was on leave at home when I took the picture.” *(Picture is a portrait of a young Mr. Larson in Navy Uniform)*

What year was it taken in?

“1943 I just came out of boot camp”

Is there anything you would like to add or say that I missed or is there anything that you would like to talk about?

“Well the only thing is a bad experience I had when submarines came in for a refit, we were the repair ship for all the submarines, this was on Midway Island and they were patrolling Japan, and when they came in they had what you call a refit, they came in for supplies and all the equipment, electronic equipment had to be checked and in good working order. After they came in for the refit they went out for a trial run to see if all the equipment that you worked on was operating properly. The only experience I had one time we were out and when the submarine dives it dives bow first, right into the water. This time when we dived, we were stern first. Completely opposite, and I was in the forward torpedo room and the torpedoes were in the racks, I think they were armed. They started sliding in the racks, because they were hanging like this (gesture) so the guys latched down the torpedoes to secure them. We then came to the surface and we went back to shore. Because someone had lost the thought of the lines of the submarines somewhere, and everything was opposite. But that was the only bad experience I had. It was hairy because the torpedoes were armed and if they ever hit something it would explode and you’re in the submarine and you have nowhere to go.”

What did you do for your target practice while you were on the submarine.

“I was sick in boot camp and I missed the shots. We had about sixteen shots lined up. We had breakfast and marching, we learned that the navy made a living on the sea and that stuff

What did you practice in the submarine, I mean target practice?

“I was on the submarine repair ship, and the only time we went out on a submarine and actually dove was when we went out to check the equipment on a trial run. And it was important to make sure the sonar worked and the transmission worked and all that stuff”

What did you repair ?

“I repaired the sonar, which is the sound equipment for the submarine. And then they had a big transmitters I only had the two things.”

Thank you again for your time

Thanks very much