

Ward, James
World War II

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World War II

I went into war in 1844 when I was Eighteen years old. I graduated from high on May 11th and I was in the service on May the 16th five days later. I was in the United States navy. I was not wounded in the war but I did have a good friend from Detroit who was wounded in the war he was washed over board his name was Ben Monuki. I was in the war for two years. Some of the memories I remember was the home sickness I had never been out of Utah in fact, I had hardly been out of Cleveland when I was down in Sandy Ago. The memories are is that a it is very important to honor your country, the United States of America we are very lucky to be citizens of this country. I was not married when I went into war. I was not drafted to go into the war I was a volunteer soon as we got out of school we went in and volunteered cause as soon as you turned eighteen in those days you were gone so we wanted the navy instead of the army so we went in and volunteered to be in the navy. I served in both oceans the Pacific and the Atlantic we went through the panama canal and we were over to Pearl Harbor but they wouldn't let us go into the harbor because there were still bombs and stuff in there and it was not safe there they still had not got it down very good it just was not safe in there when we was there. My rank well I came out as a chief motermack I was in the diesel on a ship over the diesel engines.

The most exciting thing that I remember was being discharged no, it was the traveling we was on the west coast and we hit alot of ports and then we were on the east coast and we hit alot of

ports. We would come into Virginia and take out a brand new ship and check out everything and then we would bring it back and they would put the sailors on it to war. So i really had good duty yea I really enjoyed the traveling I enjoyed all the big cities. I did meet many friends while I was there I had a really good friend and his name was Calvin Cooley Johnson he was from Alabama and he was a very very good friend.

I thought the war was pathetic in the fact that they took all the young kids out of the town when you were eighteen you were drafted to the armed forces and you were kept and you were in for the go race and when you left you had no idea when or if you would return. There was no time limit sent for when you were in for the go race and if the war lasted for eight years you would have been in there for eight years if it lasted ten years you would be in there for ten years or what ever it was you would have been there so when you left your families you would never know when you would see the again.

We used many weapons on our ships we used big sixteen millimeter guns but in our engine room down there all they did was issue us a rifle so that if we were sunk and we had to go on shore or something we would be protected but i never did use a rifle but we had M-ones issued to us and they were in our locker but i never did use it.

Yes sometimes it did get scary at that time the Germans had submarines and we would convoy people prisoners back to New York but it was not to bad because we could pick up a submarine 20 to 25 miles away from us easy because of our radar on our ship. but

no we wouldn't avoid them we would just send destroyers and the destroyers would just go sink them usually.

How did i feel about going well I always wanted to go on a mission but we never got the opportunity so the army was the only place for us to go I got my education out of it and I had two real good years. It would cost alot of money today to go on the trip that i went on so i thought that I was very fortunate.

When I was there i felt very homesick In fact when we were in Sandy Ago it would have taken very much for me to come home because I was so homesick. they didn't make me go to boot camp when i went down to Sandy Ago they sent me to school and I went to diesel school so I was not ever a rookie I was in school most of the time that I was in the area so I was very lucky I was one of the very very lucky ones.

When I got home it was very different my dad was where I noticed the big difference when i left he was not very smart but when I got home he was very very smart I realized that through his experience that he was trying to teach us and he knew what he was talking about.

The service is a good place I could not of made it a lifetime thing I just didn't enjoy it enough. Everybody in this town that could pass a physical and was 18 years of age went there was 22 of us who graduated that year and there was 11 of us 10 of the 11 of us were in the service. I was the youngest one in the class and I was only 1 of how many boys and they were all in the service.

Yes the war did change my life it made me realize that I

better get to school and get a education so I used my GI bill that I earned and graduated from BYU.

My friend Ben Mounki was from Detroit and he was older than I was when he got killed me and him went on watch at twelve O'clock and I was down in the engine room and at one O'clock I called in and he called in we had to call in to the operator to tell him that the engine was running alright and he would call in at the top and tell them that everything was running alright I called in at two O'clock and Ben didn't call in and 2:15 the called and said Jim, we haven't heard from Ben so I so that I would go right up and check and I went up on top side and I could not find him anywhere and I looked all over so I went down and woke up the captain and he came up and looked and got everyone else up and we all searched but we came to find out that he was washed overboard and that was what had happened to him. So we went up to Congo and we were taking prisoners up to New York and we all asked the captain that if he had his life jacket on and it was supposed to be good for 24 hours cause it was a may west and it should have kept him up for 34 hours it shouldn't let him sink for 24 hours captain we said lets turn around and go find Ben so the captain got on the phone and we had a whole bunch of prisoners and we were taking them to convoy and we had to keep them away from submarines and he called the big shot in one of those big ships and said we lost a man overboard can we turn around and go find him and the guy said no you are in convoy and you need to stay in convoy so we had no idea what happened to Ben or how long he was up cause the sea was ruff then the Atlantic is

really really ruff and the pacific is just smooth and nice. So we talked it over and we thought well he could not of made it anyways but they might of found his body but I doubt it I don't know. But when I got discharged I got discharged in Boston and I took a train to Chicago and I went to Detroit to Bens home and I knocked on the door and his mother and dad opened the door and they knew who I was and they said" come in" I told them about Ben and I had taken Bens stuff that was in his locker I took his toothbrush and everything and the clothes they shipped home but I took most of his personal stuff home I took his letters and pictures. I stayed the night there with them and they were really really nice people all they had received from the government was that Ben Mohicki had been in an accident they had no idea what had happened but when I got there I told them and they held a grave service a flag there and a headstone on the headstone it said Ben Mohicki United States navy missed in action April 1945. Those people just accepted it cause there was lots of families that had people killed. See I was really really lucky I never had was in a risky place I was put on a ship and you had to have a number of points to get discharged and I was to sea so much that I was one of the first to get discharged so I was pretty lucky I was really watched over by our father in heaven. I was with a good bunch of people and on a good ship. When I first got in I made 26 dollars a month and when I got to be first class I was getting about 135 dollars a month and I was sending 75 dollars a month to mom and dad and I was keeping the rest to pay for a car I left home unpaid for and a fridge I bought for my mom so it

would come home directly out of my check then I would get the rest of it and I think I was making around 136 dollars when I got discharged. I had a little Ford that I had bought new right before I left a 1937 Ford and out here in your place we built a garage down where the old toilet was and we pulled it in there and jack up the wheels and took them off cause you could not buy tires back then and I put them down in your basement and when I came home Steve and Bettress Tucker put the wheels on and was running my car I had a car and it was just about paid for when I got home I paid the payments and I bought mom that fridge and all that kitchen that you guys had along time ago I bought all that for mom and I bought one of the first fridges there wasent very many fridges in Cleveland at that time I bought the first fridge everyone at that time had ice boxes. When I got to Detroit all I had was the address of Bens parents I had no idea where they lived I was on a train from Boston to Chicago and then to Detroit I was on a train I hired a cab and he took me right to Bens house and his house was a nice on for those days so I just walked up to his door and they said hi Jim We know you knew Ben. He made me a ring that I wore for years that said JW he was a really good friend.

In the navy as soon as you would want to get an advancement in pay you would have to take a test and pass it. But on our ship we couldn't do that until we had navy day in New York and we would take the tests so Ben went and took the test and he went into the top room and I went to the engine room down below and if Ben would have stayed down with me he would still be alive but he

was making pretty good money up there. It was a great experience and we sometimes wondered if ever they brought the war over here it would be terrible for instance we pulled in to Liverpool England and got milk and President Eisenhower was the head of that and we would get powdered milk and they would get fresh milk and we fought with that we said hey look our ship is spotless you could eat off of our floor it was really really clean those our ship was cleaned every day. Those English ship were so dirty you couldn't even walk on them the were filthy. To get cold milk was a treat for cold milk I would give dollars and dollars Milk and things like that was very very valuable and we had good cooks on our ship we didn't have the best food but what we did have was cooked very well we had a good capital he was a german but he was a very good captain.

There were 500 people on our ship that's top and bottom we would hold prisoners in the basement and when you would go down there we had jail cells and we had 8 or ten jail and we would put the prisoners in 44 them. So when I would go down into the engine room and I would go down to do my job there was this little Japanese who was sitting down there looking at me and when I would get down to the bottom this little Japanese could speak very poor English he would say we will own the United States and i would say you will never own the United States so me and him argued everyday I felt like to kill him I really did.

When we first started the war Hitler was trying to take over the world and we were helping the English out we had not declared war we were almost in a war we were sending people out to help

France and the English against Germany Russia was with us we were allies with Russia and the Germans were strong and smart and Hitler was a smart man he was going to have a master race and if he would have used his head he probably would have took over the world but he went down to Russia in the winter and the winters in Russia get really really cold his men weren't dressed for the cold and they weren't used to the cold and they got almost to Moscow when the United States went down and stopped them and we were getting prisoners all the way from there to Italy we were getting prisoners and we would get them and bring them over and drop them off the East Coast but Germany was very very strong and that's that Hitler business and the war with Germany was almost over with well they still had another year and the Japanese thought Hey this is a good time for us to get the United States so they sent a delegate over to talk to president Roosevelt about peace and while they were talking the Japanese came over with big fleet of ships and a whole bunch of airplanes and hit Pearl Harbor that over in Hawaii and they bombed it all our ships were sinking and they killed a whole bunch of Americans. I think that people knew that the Japanese were coming but I don't think they cared and was doing anything about it. When the bombed Pearl Harbor that's when we declared war on Japan so we finished the war with Germany and the we went and fought with Japan. We were 16 miles out of England our captain called out and said the war was going to end I'm not sure what going to happen but the wars going to end and he knew that they were going to drop that atom bomb and Hiroshima and they can't control that atom bomb cause

it's just atoms in the air that just keeps exploding but they sent this plane over and leveled this town of Hiroshima flat and there was not a house or anything left it killed everybody and the war ended the Japanese gave up and the Germans gave up and then they gave us so many points for being at sea and after you got these point you would take them to your captain and say I've got the points to be discharged and if it was right they would discharge ya. We were down in England and the lights came on for the first time in six years those people lived underground and if those Germans flew over there and if there was one light on they would bomb the place those people lived without lights everything on top was completely sealed off they were smart and had good planes.

We didn't know how long we were going to be in. When we went in and listed they said that they would give us 25 days home but the next day the phone call came and we were gone they didn't give anytime home. We thought we were cool cause we were going to Sandy Ago and when we got down there they would give us a duffle bag of everything we needed shorts shirt our uniforms shoes.

My company was 44517 that meant that here was 44 thousand companies that was down there before we had.

They would hold cigarettes out so I would give the kids in the navy that could really roll up you'r clothes nice I would give them the cigarettes every day when you had inspection you would have to put them on the end of you'r bed in rolls and this old cheif would come through and if they werent rolled up nice then he would make you roll them up nice so I would give the

cigarettes to the guys and make them roll my clothes because I could'n't do it very good. So the next day they called Jim Ward reporet to the grinder and I was so scared I said oh my gad I was about to run away back to Utah so I went in and they said you will report to the disel school at 8:00 they will take you up tonight and you will stay in that hotel. I would go to school from 8:00 until 2:30 then I would go down to see my company I had a good break I could wear anything I wanted my hat anyway I wanted. When I went to school I went from 26 dollars immediatly up to 50 dollars just by going to disel school I never had to go to boot camp I went to school for 6 to 8 months I was still in school when my company shipped out to San Francisco.

When I went back with my company we were going over to where they had bombed Pearl Harbor but when we got there they stopped up cause there were still submarines in that area and the would not let us go in so I never got to see Pearl Harbor. Then we sailed in to New York and in New York they had liberty there and they had signs there that said negros and sailors walk in the gutter niether one was very respected there,so while we were there me and a buddy of mine tried out for the basketball team and I made it so they took me off the ship and put in a hotel and all I did was go and practice basketball for a couple hour a day and this went on for a couple months or two I played basketball for the navy we have a pictue of me and the team it was a great duty I lived in a big fancy motel and we had credit cards that we could eat anything we wanted. Well after we got done then they put me back on the ship and we got onemore trip over seas and

thats when Ben got killed I got back on my ship and found out that my buddy that tried out for the basketball team that didn't make it had gotten married 7 times on the East Coast and he was going to come to Utah with me but he got scared that people were going to get in trouble cause these women were catching up with him but he stayed in the navy cause he did'nt want to get in trouble he was a good friend.

It would cost millions of dollars to go were we went today when I got discharged I was 21 but it was a great experience in my life and I will remember it as long as I live cause it taught me so much.