Eric Walz History 300 Collection

Bud David Zollinger – Life during WWII

By Bud David Zollinger

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Box 4 Folder 39

Oral Interview conducted by Adam Zollinger

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Brigham Young University – Idaho
AZ: The first question is, where were you born?

BZ: I was born in Hansen, Idaho, Twin Falls County.

AZ: How old were you on December 7, 1941?

BZ: I would have been 23… 7… 18.

AZ: Eighteen years old? What do you remember about that day?

BZ: That was when I was a junior in high school, and I remember, it seems like to me, it was on a Saturday. And, of course we didn’t have televisions, but we were listening to the radio. It was just a day or two before that, that, that the Japanese Ambassadors to the United States, told the people in charge, what they were discussing, that they had no intentions of declaring war on the United States.

AZ: What did you think when you heard about the attack, (the actual attack that took place)?

BZ: It was kind of unbelievable, Adam, that you would that the United States would realize that something like that could have happened, and could have been more ready for it.

AZ: Did you serve in the armed forces during the war?

BZ: I did for 38 months.

AZ: Were you ever in combat?

BZ: I was never in combat.

AZ: Where did you serve while in the armed forces? I know you served in quite a few places.

BZ: I finished up my service on Guam, I was there a year or better on Guam, and I was in headquarters and headquarters squadron of the 20th Air Force. It was the men that commanded over all of the B-29’s in the pacific.

AZ: What was your rank and what were some of your assignments while you were on Guam?

BZ: Well, you know I think they’re just fine. When the war was over, they knew the war was over, and they did those things to bring back their way of life, and do things, much different than what’s happened in recent wars.

AZ: When did you first hear about the concentration camps in Germany?
BZ: I don’t know, I’ve learned a lot more about them after the war, from reading books on them. It was a terrible, terrible, terrible thing to do even to animals.

AZ: How did your life change as a result of you serving in WWII?

BZ: Met a girl in Texas.

AZ: Were there any problems that you picked up there, or any trauma that has stayed with you?

BZ: No, I was never in any precarious situation.

AZ: How did your religious beliefs help you cope with your military experience?

BZ: I think I told you Adam, I was just a baptized member, of the church, however I adhered to the beliefs. I knew enough to know the beliefs, didn’t smoke or drink, didn’t curse or tell nasty tales. And what happened because of that, everybody respected me. And they didn’t ask me or expect me to do anything like that. It was really beneficial.

AZ: How did you contribute as an individual and in your community to the war effort?

BZ: Well, I gave thirty-eight months of my life.

AZ: What did you do to entertain yourself?

BZ: I was really busy, before I went to Guam, I, the Armed Forces sent me to many schools. And when you went to those schools they were wanting you to go to war. So you didn’t get up until 5:30-6:00 in the morning, and you didn’t go to bed until midnight, you were busy all those times. And I didn’t hear anybody complain much. It’s a little different than the services are now, in that while we were going to school, they were pushing, pushing us through. And we didn’t have to do any work in the kitchens. We didn’t have make our own beds, or do our own laundry, they took care of all that, because they needed it.

AZ: What kind of food did you have?

BZ: The food was one of the most rebellious things, I can remember in St. Louis that the food was terrible, I could hardly eat it. And then while I was going to several schools, the food was good. But the one thing I remember when I was on Guam, we never got any fresh meat. And about the last month or so that we were there, they said we were going to have fresh, fresh meat. And so the line was real long to get in there, and when we got in, it was sheep from Australia, tasted like it’s been cooked with their wool on, what a big disappointment.

AZ: What are some of your experiences, or what do you remember about rationing?
BZ: Rationing was in effect in 81 and probably 82 even. And my father had a ranch and the gasoline was all rationed. And he was able to get gas because he had a ranch. And shoes, you had to have a special permit to buy shoes. And the things, the things out of the store, because they were supposedly sending food to the soldiers. And much of that stuff, you had to have a special permit to what to buy, and how much to buy. Several things like that.

AZ: How did the war affect your community back home?

BZ: Well, we had just come out of quite a serious depression, maybe one of the worst depressions there ever were in the United States. And just on the rebound, at that time Americans pulled together. They didn’t have anybody out arguing against the president, and they didn’t have anybody condemning somebody else. They all pulled together, not only the men, but the women, many of the women went to work making airplanes, and making warships, joining the services, I don’t know for sure but it seems to me like that was the first time there were any women in the United States Armed Forces, so everybody pulled together, and nobody… that’s the way it was.

AZ: And did you know any young men who did not return from the war?

BZ: Yes, one especially, he’d been in some of the same classes of mine for the past twelve years in Wendell, Idaho, and he’d gone in when he was a junior in high school and was in the Navy, and I’d been corresponding with him. And I received a letter back saying, no address, that he’d been killed or something or other. But, he’d been taken prisoner of war. And after we got home, he came home. And went to the University of Idaho, and got his law degree.

AZ: And how did his family cope with the news of him being a prisoner of war?

BZ: I don’t know, he was from a very poor family, a very large family, but a poor family. During the depression they lived in a box car. A mother and father, and about six children. Never had an automobile in his life. But that was not the exception for that time, that was, it happened a lot.

AZ: Did you have a father or brother who served in the military?

BZ: Certainly did, my family served in the Spanish American War, in the Filipino insurrection, and went with his company to China. Then I had a brother in the marines that was hit on Guadalcanal with shrapnel, still has the shrapnel. Had a brother that was in the eighth air force in England. Had a brother that came to Japan after the war, repaired the telephone wires and the electrical systems, and had many nephews.

AZ: In what ways did you keep in touch with them during the war?

BZ: Just by mail, didn’t have telephones.
AZ: What are some of the most vivid memories of your WWII experience that stand out to you?

BZ: One of probably the most, has the most distinction, three days before they dropped the atomic bomb, being in the headquarters in the headquarters squadron, the colonel that I was working with said, “Mr. Zollinger within three days you’ll hear something very drastic happen, a change in the whole world.”

AZ: So you knew quite a bit before it happened huh?

BZ: Well, he didn’t come right out and say it, that they were going to use the atomic bomb, but we knew.