Ralph S. Heiner- Life during WWII

By Ralph S. Heiner

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Box 3 Folder 7

Oral Interview conducted by Alina Lindstrom

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Brigham Young University – Idaho
AL: You can just pretend that that’s not even on (indicating the recorder), just look at me if you want to, or Daniel.

RH: (mumbles something inaudible)

AL: He’s a what?

RH: (laughs) I can’t look at him.

AL: Oh. Good. (laugh)

RH: He’s not as cute as you are.

Daniel Mower: I know. (laugh)

RH: Just about though.

AL: Ok. Go ahead and state your name

RH: I’m Ralph S. Heiner

AL: Ralph F. Heiner?

RH: S.

AL: Oh, S. Heiner, and just tell us where and when you were born?

RH: I was born March 22nd 1926 in Afton, Wyoming.

AL: Thank you. And can you tell us how old you were on December 7th, 1941?

RH: I was about 13 and… you figure that out. Can’t you? You got mathematic?

AL: I don’t. Do you? (laugh)

RH: I was about 14.

AL: Do you remember what grade you were in?

RH: What grade? Yeah, I was in high school. I was a freshman I think.

AL: So what can you tell us about that day? What do you remember about it?

RH: I don’t remember a lot about it, because, I was kind of young and it seemed like that that was a long ways off for me to be able to go, and so I just took it like a child would.
AL: So you didn’t think anything spectacular about the attack? Did you have any feelings about it?

RH: Yeah, it was interesting because we didn’t have it on TV and… what do you get out of listening to the radio? Not much! Pass word here and here and here and pretty soon you found out that we was in war. President, what was his name?

AL: Roosevelt?

RH: Roosevelt. Started that off. I guess he was a good man, you know when you’re 14 years old you don’t think much about politics, have ya?

AL: What did your parents think? Did they ever tell you anything?

RH: Not much! They were republican, and they stuck with that pretty good. And Roosevelt wasn’t. Was he?

AL: I don’t think so. No. He was a democrat.

RH: Don’t think so, too. So anyway, the *(unclear mumble)* didn’t get around that good an’ it seemed like that war started and that was the beginning of a great faction, I remember that.

AL: So would you say there were more bitter feelings for the President than to the Japanese?

RH: There was bitter feelings towards the Japanese.

AL: More bitter?

RH: mm-hm.

AL: Did you feel at all hurt that they would attack the U.S?

RH: I didn’t really understand what war was about because who would then? It was all new, we didn’t have anything before that— that I know of, and war was just what you read in history books, and I didn’t really understand what it was like until then.

AL: So you were 14 at the time, so when did you… were you drafted or did you enlist?

RH: I went through high school and my birthday’s in March, and about in the middle of, I was sitting right in seventeen why here comes the draft boarding letters, and put me in grade 1A to be drafted into the service if I didn’t volunteer, and when my dad see that he went to the draft board and said “Don’t you let that service take him before he graduates from high school.” And they give me a three-month deferment so that I could graduate from high school, and then I was drafted the next day after that three
months. And from there on I went to Denver and was—took a physical, and passed the grade, I guess. And headed for Fairgate on an old train that had cattle car transferred over to seats into it. It was a “puff, puff” train, and that’s all they had then. And it’s a steams train, and went to Fairgate!

AL: Fairgate?

RH: Idaho.


RH: And I was in the Navy. And the way they done that—all the Wyoming group, about oh there must’ve been about 35 or 40 of us from Wyoming that went to Denver, and they lined us up along a line and they numbered off one, two, three… one, two three. Going down the line, all the one’s step out here, and you go to the army. And they marched them off, step over the line, they marched us— them off. Number two, step over the line, and they march another way. Number three was in the Navy, they marched us another way, and we went to Fairgate.

AL: So you were number three?

RH: We was number three. The navy. That’s the way they divided us up, so each one in their own service, each company had the equal amount. Wherever they needed the most I guess. The army didn’t go up there, neither did the marines, so here we sent. And went to boot camp, now that was…

AL: Where was boot camp?

RH: In Fairgate.

AL: Ok.

RH: Stayed there three months, and it was cold. Fairgate was a real big development place. They had swimming pools for the navy and we had to learn to swim, jump off the twenty-foot drop into the water there and take our clothes all off while we’s in there and tread water for twenty minutes, and I never did do that very good at home, never could do it, but I had to pass—I spend a lot of time doing that.

AL: What months were you there? Remember what year?

RH: Well, yeah. I guess in about, forty… forty-two I imagine. 43? In December. I know December I was there because they stood guard around the barracks around the Fairgate there, and there was snow.

AL: So was the swimming pool inside or outside?
RH: There was a lot of swimming pools. Must have been seven or eight of ‘em. BIG ones! Couple hundred feet long, fifty feet wide…

AL: Inside or outside?

RH: All inside.

AL: Ok, good!

RH: We marched around outside…

AL: Why do you think it was so important that ya’ll had to swim?

RH: We was in the navy.

AL: Right! Of course! (laugh)

RH: You know you get dumped out in the ocean and if you don’t swim, you don’t float either.

AL: Did you float?

RH: Tried.

AL: Tried.

RH: Anyway, after three months of that, why, they put me in the CB’s.

AL: What’s that?

RH: That’s a Construction Battalion. In the navy.

AL: What do they do?

RH: Went down to Camp Harts, in California, and that’s right close to Alameda. You know where it is? I don’t know. But it’s right close to Alameda with up on the mountain there, and they trained us all to run caterpillars and carryalls, and run big equipment because it was a Construction Battalion that used equipment to build airports. I spent three months there.

AL: What time of year was it?

RH: Towards the summer. Let’s see, towards the summer. It was summer all the time there. It was—California’s nice!

AL: Yeah it is.
RH: In the summer.

AL: I know.

RH: Don’t know what it is in the winter. And anyway, from there on they just kept training us and we go up to the rifle range and shoot . . . always practiced. Marched, got on machinery. They land the mountain off right on top there so that they could land an airstrip right across the top and that was just a practice for all those who were trained to be able to run equipment. And they had lots of equipment: carryalls, and trains, and tractors, and cats and . . . up there. Carry them back and forth and learned how to run machinery.

DM: So your purpose was just to learn how to run machinery and not necessarily to build anything or were you building?

RH: Never built anything. Only build to run machines. Then about . . .

AL: Machinery for navy purposes?

RH: For C.B. purposes. And then they shipped—while they were loading the ship, they put on—we had a big carryall, and big cranes, not nothing like they have today. The crane we had probably wouldn’t be any bigger than these little track holes that we have around here. And they had buckets on them, and some clams on some of ‘em, and lots of trucks, lots of constant huts, cement bags, and when you went over there, over to Samar, and that’s a south end of the Philippines. And they build an airstrip right across the end from ocean to ocean, from one island to the other. Right across there.

AL: An Airstrip?

RH: Airplanes can come in and land right there. The planes took from there to Japan and back on a tank of fuel.

AL: How long was the trip over to the Philippines?

RH: Took thirty-one days.

AL: You get sick at all?

RH: Not as bad as I thought. Some of them got sick, boy! They put us in—they converted an old carry-on ship to take troopers over and—five bunks high (charades the bunks with his hand). Just about two feet between them, five bunks here. They shoved us in there, I think there was about two thousand on a little bit of ship to just—wasn’t very big, and the first thing I remember, we went in there and they give me the second bunk, one was below, and I had the second one, and I set my sea bag right there
against the wall. *(recalling)* Five of ‘em. Both sides. We got out in the sea and it wasn’t very long until they start vomiting.

DM: Oh no!

AL: I knew it.

RH: They filled my sea bag, and when you stepped on that floor, and you just skidded.

AL: AGH!

RH: I got my sea bag, pulled it up, and went up the ladder out on the deck, and washed it off. I stayed there up on the deck overnight, you couldn’t stick... I've never had a sick stomach but boy! You couldn’t get back down on that boat because it stunk so bad. Know how that’d be?

DM: No, don’t really want to know.

RH: Anyway, we slept out on the deck, right out on the deck and I slept by the smokestack there, oh about twenty or thirty of us. I took my pants off that was smelly, put them on a rope, I had a big long, good clothesline rope, laid it out on the back, and the ship went about, oh, about ten knots that be about twelve miles an hour or eleven or something. You’d whip on the ocean there, and that’s the way you would wash your clothes. Stick the ropes through the belt buckles of your pants there *(pantomiming the rope going through the belt buckles)*, and shirt, everything you needed to wash. If it didn’t whip it off, why you had something to bring back in, and you hung it up there and the wind blew it off dry, took it off and that was fine! You could put it back in the sea bag, or whatever. But anyway, when that happened... how strong do you want that? The ship was about twenty-two...

AL: We can go on if you want to.

RH: The ship was about twenty-two or three feet wide.

AL: Twenty-two feet wide?

RH: Uh-huh. That’s not very big is it? And they had the restroom down there, and I tell you they converted one, and I tell you too, now I don't want you to put that in there, but I’ll tell you. *(story censored by interviewee’s request)*

RH: Now don’t put that in, I just tell you that. We stopped on Sitan, we stopped on Truck Island.

AL: Where’s Truck Island?
RH: It was a little island that had a little airstrip on it and one or two trees is all. And we stopped there to. . . they dumped us in the ocean and made you swim. Swim to the island then they hauled us back in the boats. Just so we could get some exercise. They took a bunch of beer, big pallets of beer over there for all those guys who drink beer, and then they sit around there, a little while, I imagine and we’d probably stop there. One part of the day, on the island three or four hours, come back to the ship, just to rest. And went on again. And never did they go the same direction, there was about ten ships, a battleship and . . . two battleships, at least that, an aircraft carrier, and some other guard ships they had like cursers. If a submarine came, why they’d go out and hunt it. And you’d go this way, and you’d all shift, and one time I was in the back and I noticed, cause I stayed on the deck there for several nights, sometimes you was right there in the front going, then the next time, you know you’s on the side, next time you’s up on the back. And I never did go the same direction because the Japanese subs were around and they didn’t know which way it was headed, for sure. That’s the way they traveled. And finally we got to Sanar.

AL: To where?


AL: What was your rank?

RH: Just a barely a C.B.

AL: hm-k.

RH: C.B. second class, and finally I got to first class- engineer, and I never did rate any officer’s position. And, later on I’ll tell you what happened there. And anyway, there we was on Sanar and we went out there and started building constant huts, where everybody lived, these little couple feet wide, fifty feet long. You see a lot of (mumble). Then they got the big ones at forty feet wide and sixty or a hundred feet long. And they got one sitting down here where the other one is and they got . . where’s your little one’s sitting around. Anyway, we set those back up again, we just put those up in a hurry, and put a board floor in so everybody could sleep. We had them all up in a week I imagine, and the big one constant all the machinery to fix it, and we were already working on the airstrip. They sent—CB’s is a construction battalion of old men who have been married and works in the single service in the United States when the war started. And they volunteered and got in the C.B.’s to be a construction battalion to just to do work like that, to build business, that’s what the C.B.’s did. And they sent twenty-five of us young guys out of Fairgate to be their gophers. Hurry ‘n do this, ‘n hurry ‘n do that, an’ this and that, and they were all the bosses, an’ they had all the engineer license and responsibilities, and they were really sharp men and married, some of ‘em was probably fifty years old and down to twenty-five, or thirty or forty. And that was a battalion: ten-twenty-two(1022), was our battalion, 1022. And we started lending off space there and set them constant huts and then it wasn’t very far, maybe four or five blocks, down to the airstrip. And that’s
where we worked. Well! It wasn’t very long when the airplanes would come in from
the mother islands and they’d land there, and go for the bombs and they fill them up
and go from there on over to Japan and back. And sometimes they leave at about two
in the morning and they’d just about get to Japan at daylight to know where to drop
the bombs cause they never had any professional targets like they got nowadays, you
know, you had to bomb an area there, and he had to look through a scope and kind a
watched out on a map to see where the city was and where they wanted to drop the
bombs and then they’d fly over and dump them out. And head back home. When they
start, there was quite a few that didn’t come back—bombers. The Japanese would
send their planes up right then, juros(sp) and fighters and knock ‘em out and they had,
they’s had some aircraft carriers that were around there and they sent a bunch up right
then too and they’d fight. And after about three months, or four months, why every
plane would come back that went over—the bombers. And a later on, why, they
talked about, they’re always—the Japanese always had somebody on the radio telling
everybody that they was winning, ad’ the states were losing, and this ‘n that, given
bad names to the United States. Their name was Hiroito.

AL: How do you spell that?

RH: I don’t know.

AL: Say it again?


AL: What does it mean, do you know?

RH: That’s the name of a girl. (chuckle) And she was always on there. And . . . anyway
the time came that they got ready to drop the atomic bomb, and . . .

AL: How old were you when the atomic bomb dropped?

RH: Right to the end I was just about twenty. Went in eighteen and just about twenty
then—probably about nineteen and a half. And the atomic bomb dropped and,
anyway! The United States told ‘em to surrender. Boy that was on the radio—I had a
radio, you need a radio, boy when you’re lonely like that. And I listened to it
whenever I could. The United States warned ‘em that they’s gonna drop a big bomb.
“Ah you don’t got nothing like that. We’re winning, you’re losing, and we’re gonna
win,” and they just went on like that. And they told ‘em to surrender, and give one or
two days, I don’t remember what it was. Anyway, they went over and dropped the
first bomb on Hiroshima. And then of couple days went by and they just kept telling
them to surrender! Or we’ll drop, drop another one, I guess, I don't know. Two, two
or three days went by and they dropped the next one on ‘em. And I never heard
Tokyo Rose anymore more on the radio, and I never heard Hirosh. . . uh…

AL: Nagasaki?
RH: Nagasaki. It was all silent. That was the end of it. And all the radio that came out of Japan never heard it anymore. So I guess they really slaughtered that place, I don’t know. And, I stayed right there for a little while and cleaned up, and all the old airplanes and B-24’s that was wrecked and put ‘em over there, pushed them around there and there’s a little crevice there, and put ‘em in there and run over them with a cat an’ stomped them in and cleaned them all up right good, and covered them up and cleaned the place up, before it was right clean why then they put two CB battalions together and I was in 1066 instead of 1022 and then we went from there to Sipan. And I was in Sipan, already, everybody in the CB’s who was married had their portions (sp) gone, all there was was us gophers, young guys, left in there. And we was in Sipan we unloaded ships and ships and ships that had bombs and there was a pile of prestone (sp), there times as big as this house, an’ we unloaded that ship and sit there . . .

DM: Did it make you nervous to be handling all that stuff?

RH: No, that . . . Would you be nervous at your age driving a forklift up and down the road ‘n truck and go dumping all the stuff? yeah, that would be . . .

DM: Well if it’s carrying bombs, yeah! (laugh)

RH: I never had a bomb in the truck, but they’d line them up there I’d imagine, a quarter of a mile long and stacked them a hundred pound bombs. About that . . . that big around (using arms to show size of a bomb).

AL: Were they American or Japanese?

RH: All American! Ready to go, and that boy, they had, they had enough equipment to lick the whole world! The United States. And we unloaded the trucks, and every kind of equipment! Jeeps and, bombs, and I don’t know where the detonators was in the end and I never did see them, had them stashed in some other place so somebody wouldn’t put them in the bomb hitter, I guess. (chuckle) I never see one of those. Right then, why, clothes, shoes, ‘n pants, ‘n shirts, army stuff ‘n piles ten times as big as this house are stacked along, along Sipan there on the, on the shore. The shore was about a mile up to a mountain just about this big, right there (indicating the small mountainside out his living room window). And Sipan isn’t very long probably.

AL: Is Sipan in the Philippines, or is it closer to Japan?

RH: It’s an island sitting right out on the ocean there and Japan claimed it and the United States took it from Japan. And when we got there they, they was still guarding the Japanese prisoners, and they had them in the fence and probably had three or four hundred of ‘em in there. And they surrendered and they took the island and pretty soon they were gone and they sent them back to Japan in. But Sipan was really a Japanese island because all along that mountain is where they had . . . burrowed in so
they could sit machine guns up in the rocks and inside those tunnels all the way through probably miles of tunnels, to machine gun to machine they had a whole about that, about ten feet or two feet stick that gun out in the ocean, and they invaded it and shoot the ships. Anyway, there was a lot of barges that were still sitting in the ocean right there that they shot, and they never dug 'em out, and I don't know how many thousand marines that they never did bury. But when I left there they had 'em all, all buried in the cemetery there about a hundred and sixty acres or more just as thick, with crosses and their dog tags was hanging over the cross. And, I don't know how many thousand they lost just to take that out of them, but boy! It just make you weep to walk along there and see how many of 'em give their life up. And that wasn't all because they shot a lot out in the ocean out there as far as from here down at least a mile out in the ocean. And sunk a lot of them barges. And golly those guys they never did find anymore. Anyway Japan nearly had that little island fortified there. An' they really lost some marines there, oh... terrific...

DM: Can I ask you a question?

AL: Go for it.

DM: I'm just wondering, so, when you got, before you got there... of course all of the action had already taken place on the island, how long after did that happen did you get there?

RH: Oh probably a month and a half.

DM: So, I mean did the island show a lot of signs of war?

RH: Yeah! I walked through them gun turns on the hill and there's, the Japanese still in their pants and they're decaying, well I imagine it's been about a year, since they took the island. And...they never did clean it up.

AL: The Americans never cleaned it up?

RH: No, not while I was there. Well... Didn't have time yet.

DM: So how close was the—from Sipan, where did they drive the Japanese to? And how close was the fighting to Sipan when you were there?

RH: Oh, they already, they had it all cleaned up, had the prisoners all locked up there when I was there.

AL: Did you have any friends; did you make any friends on the boat ride over?

RH: I had a lot of good, a lot of good friends, but no LDS friends.

AL: What happened to them?
RH: We was mostly all in Wyoming over here and we associated a little bit and when we got out of the service why they kind of spread out and we went to, Denver to be drafted, why some of those Wyoming’s all went in the army, and some in the marines and some in the navy and then when we got up to Fairgate why some of ‘em stay in the navy, ‘n two or three of us went in the CB’s. And they was in different battalions then, an’ never did have one from Wyoming, then after that. After you got to boot camp, and through camp parks.

AL: So did you make any friends on the long boat ride over the Philippines?

RH: Yeah. But they’s changed you. Get friendly, ‘n then the next thing you’re in a different group altogether. Never did stay close to somebody. Always changed.

AL: How did your family feel when you got drafted or . . . were you scared?

RH: Well! I’ll tell you what. I want to tell you this. My mother and I was really close, and you know what I would give her a kiss once in a while. You know. And when I was drafted they took me out to Idaho Falls to get on a train, and that’s the only time I ever remember giving dad a kiss n’ he told me he loved me, and he started to cry when I left. So—have you kissed your dads? (laughs) Girls do! Don’t you? Do you?

AL: I- I have.

RH: You have?! (laugh)

AL: I have! Not for a while though.

RH: But boy, as I ever tell ya! It’s different.

AL: Did you leave any girl behind?

RH: Yeah I had a little girl I used to chase around with and, wasn’t very long until that was the end of her. Wrote a lot of letters and, was glad to get a letter, they fed us good, if it didn’t got in them, if the weasel didn’t get in it. What else do you want? Ask me another question. Or I’ll just keep talking!

AL: All right, hold on. What is your opinion on the Japanese now? And did you ever, what did you feel towards the Germans?

RH: Oh the Germans. See, I’m a German.

AL: OK.

DM: You look like . . .

RH: I never had nothing to do with that.
DM: . . . look like German ancestry. I think.

RH: You never had nothing to do with that over on the east, I was over on the pacific.

AL: So did you know anything about Hitler, or what was going on?


AL: Just what you heard. Well, what did you hear?

RH: That he was going to take over the world. Japan was . . .

AL: Would the radio say that or would generals or friends?

RH: Radios. And he was going to take over the world, and I guess he just kept a moving from country to country down to France and England, tried to get into England, just about did. And when Japan started, why they kind of . . . they didn’t get involved over there, it was all with the United States. And they took the islands down through there, down through the front ones, and they took them back.

AL: So did you ever see any first on, first hand on fighting, combat?

RH: No, I never did get close enough to get anybody in my sights.

AL: And are you grateful for that, or did you . . .?

RH: I just never did want to do that. I just hope that I didn’t—went through the rifle training there with an expert rifle man, ever got anybody in my sights, that would be it. Just hoped that I never had to. Couple times they said, “put your bayonets on” there’s an invasion coming on in from the Philippines, you know what those are, I wished I had that gun to show ya. You took the bayonet out and stuck it underneath the barrel and kept it in there, an’ kept it sharp. And you take it out and hook it on the end of the gun out there. You know I— I never did want to get that close to somebody.

AL: How did your life change after World War Two? Did it change in any big way, or small way or not a lot?

RH: Well, yeah! I could see that there was mean things in the world. In boot camp they taught us to kill and to hate the enemy—two things. And you know—you just think about that, and they drove that in your mind so much, that a young kid, eighteen years old, heck! They believe that! They, you go in a training with a little battalion, twenty-five or thirty and they show you how to kill a person, and man! Nothing to it!

AL: Did you ever come in contact with Asians?
RH: Nope.

AL: So did you feel any animosity towards them then?

RH: Nope. I kind of did the Japanese for a while . . . but it soon left.

DM: So I’ve always been curious about this. Not just, just with military in general, did you, like did that training, training how to fight, and kill people and to hate the enemy did you have, how did you balance that with your knowledge of the gospel and with your testimony? How did, what kind of reaction did that create?

RH: Well let’s start with something else, an’ you don’t need to put that in there either. When I was about seventeen and a half, the bishop needed a (inaudible), here and he said ‘Ralph, do you want to be an elder before you go out in the service?’ and you know, I was just a kid then, and I said, ‘Well, probably it’d be all right and so in about two or three or four weeks or so, why president . . . Stake President Packards called and said ‘Come on up, I want to talk to you.’ And low and behold he pulled a chair up just like that and sat by me and talked about the service, and about drinking beer an’ smoking an’ alcohol, and I guess chasing women, and whatever. And gambling, and keeping the Word of Wisdom, really talked plain about those. And he said, ‘If you’re going to go into the service with the Melchizedek Priesthood, and you don’t break any of these laws, you’ll never be tempted in your life after that.’ The Word of Wisdom. He never mentioned tithing, I don’t think; maybe he did—the law of chastity, and drinking beer, smoking, an’ gambling.

AL: So were you ever confronted with those things in the navy and how did you cope with it?

RH: Every day! Every day. When we got out in Sanar, why the ships would sit out there for, probably a thousand feet out in the ocean and, we didn’t have any drinking water, so they’d go out there and they had a thing on the ship that they could spin the salt out of it. Some way, I guess like separate it. Salty water, and they could spin that salt water out of it. Bring it in, and they’d put it in the CB’s made a wooden barrel and hold about a five hundred gallon of water I guess and then they’d tarred it inside, put tar on it so it wouldn’t leak, and every day somebody went out and filled it up with water, and it tasted like gasoline. You know, everybody drank coffee, they’d make coffee out of that, and boil it until the fumes I guess was gone out of that water, I don’t know. The water was so . . . You couldn’t, I couldn’t drink it! Taste like gasoline! So they made soup in the kitchen there, and I’d go fill my canteen, I two or three of ‘em, and fill them up with soup, ‘cause they boiled it and that’s what I drank, soup juice. It wasn’t very long, pretty soon here’d come a little bit a Philippino about that high I’d imagine eight or seven—eight or seven year old. He had little square cans and five gallon cans, he had ‘em on his head and walking down through my barrack and taking it in there to his house, and it had water in it. So I thought, “Well!” I see him one day, and I wasn’t doing anything. I seen him and I followed him up, and went up, up the hill and off the cliff in there the water was running off.
And went in the place right there, and there was a hole right there, and was some girls standing around there and they’d get their water pour it on, and take their bath. Dipped in the pond in there, and got that water and took it down, so I filled my canteens up. About every night after dark, I’d run up there and it was about a mile at that hole, I’d fill canteens up and everybody else wanted canteens, pretty soon two of us went, and I imagine we had about ten or fifteen little canteens, fill ‘em up with water and we drank.

AL: What island was this on?

RH: That's Sanar. In the Philippines. It wasn’t very long after that, that the Carmen seen that we was getting in that water, and he tested it, and it had so many diseases in it, elephantitus (sp), I don’t know how many! Boy don’t you ever touch that water . . . I been drinking it for a month.

DM: Never got sick?

RH: But I think it was all on account of not going there and filling my canteen up with beer or coffee or tea. Everybody else did. And don’t put all that in there.

AL: What did you do to entertain yourselves?

RH: Everybody’d get paid, once a month. I got thirty-two, sixty—I think sixty-four dollars a month overseas. Thirty-two here in the country—in the United States a month. A dollar a day. And you get paid after the war, this is after the war, cause I stayed quite a while over there after the war. And they’d start gambling and shaking dice in a corner, and shaking dice in this corner, and they’d do that for about three or four or five days an’ evenings. At midnight and morn, and one or two guys would end up with all the money. The others would be broke. And I never did draw any out only maybe five dollars every other month or something, or ten dollars to buy shaving cream, soap. Once in a while, I did drink a coke. Time or two in there I didn’t know it was bad then, who did? Nobody. A bottle of coke looked like a female you know, you know what they looked like? With a little pop-belly here? Small here, and big on the bottom? coke bottles? You probably’ve seen ‘em. Little Tigers. They had coke over there and beer.

AL: So how did your religious beliefs help you cope with the military experience, like…

RH: I always stuck with what I knew. I never, never wavered at all.

AL: Did you take any scriptures with you?

RH: Yeah. There was that little scripture that they give you, little square Book of Mormon and a history book.

AL: Doctrine and Covenants?
RH: It was in there. In the Book of Mormon. And I read that, I didn’t know anything about the church, I couldn’t tell them anything, anybody about it, because I didn’t know that much. I tried a few times, and tried to get somebody to read the Book of Mormon there, I’d read it but, they weren’t interested, well I just didn’t have the spirit. That’s the wrong time to try to teach somebody about God when you’re fighting. Know what I mean? It’s just like the Book of Mormon. All those armies in there, they couldn’t teach them nothing until after, after the fighting was over. And, that religion, I didn’t vary from it at all, I stuck with it and we never had any LDS church to go to. I had a Catholic buddy there I had to charge a taitland (sp) and, pretty soon we had a little Mormon church and I think there was seven or eight of us went to it. We were there, and I went to his reading in the morning, and he come with me in the—to mine in the evening. And we done that for a couple three months and I sat way back, he went and got his sacrament, and he sat back and we had sacrament.

AL: Did you know anyone who did not return from the war? Any friends or young men?

RH: Yeah, there was a few of them that—you know there was a bunch of them in this stake. A lot of them. And they went to the service, and went to seminary, we went to, through high school, and all went in the service at different times and, everybody went in. Just eighteen and was healthy. Just several of them came back smoking . . . drinking, beer, alcohol, and they really had a job getting over that. Some of the best kids I went to high school with, ended up drinking ‘n smoking.

AL: Are you still in contact with anyone?

RH: They all live around here, and yeah, school reunions every five years and a lot of ‘em are dying now, about half of us are living yet, but graduated in forty-four. . . (story censored by interviewee’s request).

AL: How do you feel about the choices you’ve made throughout the military and then after the war when you came home?

RH: Well I’ll tell ya, when I came back home we stopped in Hawaii, and we got out, and the ships stayed there overnight, and we got back in and came on home. And when I seen that flag in San Francisco right off the dock right there, a real big flag, and ran off the ship right to it, I just about cried! That was the prettiest thing I’d ever seen. To be back home. (tearing up) And I said right then I was never gonna leave this country again. And I stuck it out. I’m still here! When we got home, why, Lloyd and dad was running this place here. Ole’ Cliff Prince he had it and he went belly-up on it.

AL: What did you do when you first saw your family again?

RH: I don’t know; I was really happy. I kind of felt like a free—a free person to get out of the military. You know, you’re under a strict control, strict rules, you didn’t dare variate from nothing! When I got home I just felt like I was free! But I still stuck to
religion, I didn’t vary from that. I started chasing around with some war buddies, they went their way and chased around here for a while, and one year, dad said, Ralph do you want to buy this place? And Lloyd? Oh man. Yeah! And he helped buy it and Lloyd did up there, and I didn’t have nothing, I wasn’t even married! I never had a car, for a year after I was married! Now Dan, you think about that. (laughing) And, I’d tell you all about married, but you don’t want that either.

AL: So how do you perceive the war now? Was it worth it? Was it good? Was it bad?

RH: The war then had to be.

AL: It had to be.

RH: It had to be or Japan—we would be in communist country today. That had to be. I can see it. Right at the time. If they wouldn’t have stopped it over there everything would’ve been in communism and Japan would have took this country over and we’d be in communism and this whole world, they’d never stopped till they went from Canada clear down to Chile. They’d took it all. But the Lord just . . . the Japanese were good fighters boy, they didn’t care whether they lost their life or not. They were dedicated. Then . . . everybody seemed like that they wanted to help the war out. They had war bonds and before I went out in the service you always had dances and they’d auction off quilts and stuff and buy war bonds with it, and they’d put all that money into war bonds, and a lot of these farmers would put thousands of dollars into war bonds to keep the war going. Cause the country was getting in debt well it had to be. It wasn’t rich! But they stopped making cars, and tractors, and made airplanes, jeeps, and bombs, everything just switched right over, golly you know, they could make hundreds of airplanes—came over the . . . Japan didn’t have enough bullets to knock them out. This country could really produce war material. It just amazed me when we unloaded it. Out of them ships.

AL: Have you ever left this country again or stayed?

RH: Well on a trip, every time I go over to Israel.

AL: So what do you think of America then?

RH: America’s alright. It’s still the choice land. And it always will be as long as we don’t mess up in the church. It’ll be a place where everybody can have a chance to listen to the gospel, to live a life to get in the celestial kingdom if they wanted. And this is the headquarters- the United States is. I don’t know what you mean, but it’s still . . . golly! Everybody that wants to make something out of life can do it! And I come back from the service, boy I didn’t tell you that, but they give me a two thousand dollar check because I didn’t draw out my money. I had two thousand dollars when I came home. Put it on this place then. That was, took more than two years to save that. But I never blew it, save money all my life, I don’t know how to spend money yet, only. . .
AL: It’s ok.

RH: Only to make money. Since, I got married, and finished a house down there that grandma used to live in, used to live in, by the Carl’s, and that started it. Then we got married and moved up here and it sit there until we got married, and I put the windows in and finished it, and went to live in it, and I stayed in it a couple years, then drive to the church house turned in down here and we lived in it here. Started farming. Build all those buildings. There wasn’t nothing here. And you’d go outside an’ look around and you see a building a day, or a building a year. Logged it, got the logs and sawed ‘em out and that would be good, and just kept buying ground. Buying ground. Just to go. Tend to business in the church, working the kids to death, and working my wife to death, and then we bought this ground and we bought two big farms and freedom. They went on missions about your age. Didn’t know what to do with the ground. Asked them what they wanted to do, Jim’s the only one that went to college . . .

AL: Did you ever talked to your kids about World War Two?

RH: Not much.

AL: Not much?

RH: Not one tenth what I told you. And, let’s see there’s something else I was going to mention in there.

AL: Just take whatever you want.

RH: You know back, just about the time that the war was over, everybody left and the barbers was all gone. And the ole’ captain come an’ look in our barracks one time and he said, “We need a barber.” I raised my hand. I always raised my- I never, when they wanted to volunteer, I volunteered. Pushing wheel-barrows, anything, I did it. I had to do something. And I raised my hand. Are you a barber? No. Can you cut hair? Yeah. He send me over to the shop to get a clipper and brush and whatever I needed there, and the old barber shop was there, all the old barbers left, and I started cutting hair. After—about every week everyone had to have a haircut. I cut about twenty heads a day, and some of ‘em I just murdered! (laugh) First month, I really had a job. Got a little better, a little better, heck, nobody showed me how, you just cut it off. And I started getting tips. And, about everyone was two bits. And if a marine come in, it was four bits. And if an air pilot come in, air force come in, he’d tip me a dollar. That was pretty good, but I was only, four months, three and a half months a barber. And they changed my occupation on I think, from an engineer to a barber. And when I got released, I was a first class barber in the navy. (laugh)

AL: Congratulations!
DM: That’s funny.

RH: When I come home, I cut everybody’s hair around here. They just come in the evenings.

DM: So you got pretty good at it.

RH: Oh I learned how to cut hair. No question about it.

AL: Well that’s all the time we have for today. Thank you so much Ralph.

RH: Well! Be real careful now, I’m going to tell you what you write in there.

AL: ‘K. I’ll take very special note to those.

RH: I’ve told you things that I haven't told anybody else. Not even my wife.

AL: Thank you, I feel extremely honored that you would tell me though. And I’ll be careful what I put in there.

RH: Make it a story for them of something. The closest I ever got was—battle was when a zero (sp) came in and hit the dock where our ship was. Flew right in here, and hit it, and I wasn’t around, and we unloaded the ship there and unloaded it, all got up and I was driving the truck and the zero came in and flew right into the dock. Missed the ship, and hit the dock. Poor pilot! Just a wooden dock, when you drive a truck on it. But boy! That just smithered that all over, everything that was sitting on it went in the ocean. There was two motorcycles, Harley Davis’. In a crate. They’s sitting there. Oh must’ve been a couple hundred feet away from where he hit the dock. Anyway, they went in the ocean. And, a buddy and I worked like a dog, about twenty feet deep. Worked like a dog to get them out, get them out of there. Finally dragged them motorcycles out, and they were in a crate and they was all covered with jelly so the water wouldn’t hurt them- grease. And we put ‘em together and cleaned them up and put the bar—handle bars on ‘em and the tires on and everything. And got ‘em started, running around Sanar, there was over on Sanar. Riding down the island there, dirt, dirty road. And hear the patrol stop. You know we never got shot! How come? Ya know, nobody drives motorcycles here. There isn’t any. We talked about it and said, You better be careful where you're driving around or, one of these guards will shoot ya! Thinking you’re an enemy. We drove it real hard there for a little age, and we never, never got out very far away. Maybe a mile or so away from camp. (laugh)

DM: So you just claimed yourself a Harley, huh?

RH: Just let it sit there when we left!

DM: Some Philippino’s had fun with that I bet.
RH: I imagine some more—maybe guys or somebody, little kids.

AL: We’re just going to stop then.