

graduated from high school in May of 1944 and enlisted in the Navy in June when he was 17. He served until 1946 specializing in diesel engines for landing craft on the island of Guam.

He said the war effort was unique in the nation's history.

"It was a concentrated effort by everyone as opposed to our last several wars," he said. "Everyone regardless of whether they were in the service or defense work or farming was focused on an all-out effort to win the war."

Mr. Rowh said people did anything they could to help the soldiers.

"What stands out in my mind was the support we had while we were in the states training," he said. "People were good to you; they took care of you. Your uniform was your ticket to any place you wanted to go. Step out on the street and your uniform was your fair."

Mr. Rowh, who served in a supply outfit, said some people who were not in the service don't realize the level of supply-side support needed in war.

"They claim it takes 40 guys behind the lines to supply the one up front," he said.

Mr. Rowh said the term "greatest generation" should have been used to describe his parents' generation.

"I have no doubt that it was our parents, not the guys who served in the war, but their parents who went through the '30s and the hardships they had," he said. "I think it's an appropriate term honoring our parents, the generation ahead of us."

The Pearl Harbor attack is now a history lesson, but for Mr. Rowh and many others, it was a geography lesson.

"I was like everybody else, I didn't know where Pearl Harbor was," he said.

He heard news of the attack on the radio and said, he never dreamed he would get involved.

"As time rolled on, your fate was outlined for you," he said. "You didn't have any choice. When you graduated from high school, you knew what you were going to do. You were going into the service."

Mr. Rowh said the recent dedication of the World War II memorial in Washington D.C. was late, but a welcome reminder.

"I think the dedication of the World War II memorial was a milestone that was way too late, but it's brought a lot of attention to the 16 million people who were under arms in that conflict," he said. "It dwarfs anything else before or since as far as numbers and the all-out effort on two-fronts, Europe and Asia and the Pacific."



Max Schmitz

## Max Schmitz

There was no doubt in Max Schmitz's mind that the U.S. would get involved when he heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked.

"I knew we were in trouble and that things were going to get rough," he said. "I kept track of where my draft number was because I intended to enlist in the Navy."

However, at 23, he was drafted before he could enlist, leaving a young wife and baby son at home.

During the war, those left at home did what they could to help. Gas and sugar rationing were part of everyday life.

"The American people accepted it as something they had to do," he said.

In 1942, he was inducted into the Army and reported for basic training at Fort Riley. At Fort Riley he got stuck with lots of night duty. He and another soldier, a Chinese boy named Von Zee Chin, rotated 12-hour shifts and they became friends. Mr. Chin owned a ring that changed colors with the weather.

"Von won lots of bets by predicting when it would rain," he said. "One day in a friendly quarter stakes poker game he hawked the ring to me

until payday. I kinda wish he hadn't bought it back. It was a beautiful ring."

After the war his friend returned to China only to learn that the Japanese had captured his family. He never heard from them again.

Mr. Schmitz was assigned to the Medical Corp and transferred to Camp Meade, Md. From there he was sent to Newport News, Va., which was a staging area for troops going overseas.

"They ruined a swamp when they made Newport News," he said.

He boarded The Empress of Japan, troop ship, and disembarked for Casablanca, where he spent two months before going on to Naples, Italy. There, he helped set up the 23rd General Hospital. The hospital was on the site of where the World's Fair would have been, if not for the war.

His work there included lots of guard duty. "We were only 19 miles from the front line and over 29,000 patients came through the facility," he said. "I worked with a lot of Italian civilians."

From Naples he was sent to Marsailles, France, where he helped move a hospital to Vatable, France, where a casino was converted into the hospital facility.

"We were just four weeks behind the Germans," he said.

He was attached to a hospital unit all during the war. He said he could often hear the battle, but he couldn't see the fighting. The next stop was Paris, where he remained until the war was over in 1945.

When he was being sent back across the English Channel he was on board a craft he described as "a motorized wash tub".

"It was kind of ironic," he said. "I returned to the same port I shipped out from, Newport News. But, I can tell you there was no special reception when we returned."

His way home took him to Texas. On Thanksgiving Day, 1945, he received his discharge at Fort Hood.

"There were six of us guys," he said. "We hired a man to drive us to a train. Then, I headed north to Wichita where my brother met me. My wife and little boy were having dinner at my folks' farm when we got there. Boy, she was mad at me for not calling her sooner. But, you know, it didn't strike me I was really going home until I got there."

He and his wife, Mabel, had five children. They were married for 65 years.

"We all learned something from the war," he said. "You run into all kinds of people. One soldier was as good as the next."

## Burt Schrum

By Navy standards, Burt Schrum was old when, at age 26, he volunteered. It was 1944, and his draft number was approaching, so he decided to enlist.



Burt Schrum

He took his boot camp training in Far-ragut, Idaho, and was assigned to a company of fire fighters. He said his unit was sent into the Idaho mountains for forest fires.

He was transferred to Bainbridge, Md., where he became a

specialist in recreation and welfare.

He was sent overseas on The Loralie to Hawaii and on to the Philippines, where he worked in the recreation department. He took care of the athletic gear and organized rest and recuperation (R&R) for crews from the air base and ships in Manila Bay. His department brought in movies and helped with the USO shows.

Being a specialist-A allowed him to play a lot of baseball, he said. He managed a team that played teams from other bases. During his stay he got to play ball in Resal Stadium in Manila. It was a modern sports complex with a swimming pool, football field and basketball court.

One of his officers was Art Lund, a well-known singer in the 1940s. Another officer was Branch McCracken, the coach of the Indiana Hoosiers.

Mr. Schrum came from a military-minded family. He had two brothers, Art and Lyle, who were in the Navy and a brother, Wayne, with the Army in the European Theater.

"We were all so happy the war was over," he said. "I was just tickled to get out."

"It's nice to be a member of the greatest generation. I'm glad I survived it. It was a good experience. You learned how to take care of yourself, be punctual (maybe even ahead of time) and to obey orders."

Mr. Schrum worked in a dry cleaning plant for two years in Manning, Iowa. He went to work for J.M. McDonald's Department Stores and he came to Norton as the manager. He was with McDonald's for 30 years. After his retirement, he and his wife Betty ran Lujon's for nine years. In 1989, they both retired.

"In those days, we made a commitment," he remarked of his 65 years of marriage.



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## Lowell Sebaugh

It's been said, "an army travels on its belly." If they were traveling in Lowell Sebaugh's mess line, they were traveling pretty good.

Mr. Sebaugh was drafted into the Army in 1942, as a private. He was in basic training at Camp Bailey, close to Abilene, Texas,

"One day I was on KP (kitchen) duty," he said, "And they asked me if I could make maple sticks. I said I could and I even put

caramel frosting on them. That did it. They sent me to baker's school at Camp Beauregard, La."

Mr. Sebaugh was 26 and married when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

"I never will forget that day," he said. "My wife Evelyn and I were at my Aunt Emma Stapp's for Sunday dinner. We heard the news over the radio."

He recalls that no matter where he was stationed stateside, his wife was right there by his side. He said it was very important to him to know she was with him.

It wasn't until he boarded a troop train headed to San Francisco to ship out, that they were separated. He went right to work on the train. Everything he needed to prepare meals was set up in one of the cars. It was equipped with stoves and supplies.

On board the Sea Witch with 5,000 other men, he didn't have to cook. He said the Navy cooks fed them but he did get a little sea sick. He ate Life Savers to keep from throwing up.

He was stationed at New Caledonia, close to Australia, and stayed there for the duration. The first month he had to sleep in a pup tent. After that, he was moved into barracks which he thought were pretty nice. He was with a signal depot. They provided communication equipment for the troops.

"There were 120 guys in our company," he said. "But we had such good food, a lot of guys from other companies would come over to eat with us. We had good supply sergeants, so we had plenty of good supplies, including beef."

He was on his way home on a furlough when the A-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

"Everybody was excited," he said. "It was



Lowell Sebaugh

such a relief. We knew we probably wouldn't be going back."

He went home on his three-week furlough, then reported to Fort Logan, Colo. "There was nothing to do. The war was over. Finally, I got my discharge at Fort Logan."

And waiting for him at home, was Evelyn. They were married 59 years before she died four years ago.

"I met a lot of good fellas," he said. "I didn't do much to solve the war, but I fed a lot of guys. We had good eats when I was there."

Mr. Sebaugh lives in Norcat, surrounded by pictures of his four daughters, eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. And, of course, he's still cooking.

## Dale Severns

Dale Severns was an 18-year-old farm boy on Dec. 7, 1941.

"I can't remember hearing much about Pearl Harbor," he said. "I was probably out shucking corn someplace."

He could have gotten a permanent deferment to help his father on the farm, but by January of 1944, he figured he ought to enlist, because he knew he would get drafted. So he did.

Before that, his family, like every other family in America, had to make do. He remembers his mother canning fruit without sugar. He also remembers tires and gas being rationed.

But things didn't go as he had planned. He volunteered for the Army Air Force and got assigned to the Infantry. He took his basic training at Camp Blanning, Fla., where he said the mosquitoes were as big as pigeons.

After basic he was sent to Linnich, Germany. The day was Dec. 2, 1944. He and his unit were taking a break for supper when an 88 mortar shell hit a nearby tank and a building. The building collapsed, burying him under a ton of bricks.

When he was rescued, his right leg was paralyzed and he was taken to a field hospital. From there he was shipped to an Army hospital in Paris where they put him in a body cast. On Christmas Eve, he was scheduled to be flown to England, but fog had rolled in and his departure had to wait until the next day.

He recuperated in England and by the time he was well enough to rejoin his outfit, Co. B, 406th Regiment of the 102nd Division, they had advanced to the Elbe River in Germany. There, he was with the occupying forces manning road blocks and checking personnel.

Tom Brokaw said that the people, who lived



Dale Severns

during World War II, were "the greatest generation.

"I've heard that all my life and I think it's true," Mr. Severns said. "Everybody pitched in and helped. There was a lot of patriotism in this old country. That war taught me to be patriotic."

He kept in touch with his buddies after the war, but they have all died.

A retired farmer, he and his wife of 48 years Katherine have lived in Norton since 1980.

## Wilmer Severns

Wilmer Severns was still in high school when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

He remembers that his parents had gone to Beaver City to a funeral and he had gone rabbit hunting. In the course of his hunt, he shot a coyote and had to track it for quite a ways. He knew it was getting close to chore time when he headed home.

His parents had a flat tire and stopped by a service station to have it repaired when they heard the news on the radio. They came home and told their two sons.

The next day at school, Lee Horney brought a big radio and the whole school listened to the broadcast of President Roosevelt declaring war.

Three years later and not quite 20, Wilmer Severns was among the 24 young men listed in the last big call of draftees from Norton County. The date was Aug. 3, 1944. All were single except for one, he said.

When the bus came at 2:30 a.m. to pick them up there wasn't room for everyone. A bus had to be chartered but it didn't arrive until 11 a.m. The men were later inducted at Ft. Leavenworth and 15 out of the 24 ended up at Camp Hood, Texas, for their basic training.

Mr. Severns went into the Army as a private and took 16 weeks of basic training where he learned about weapons and digging foxholes. After three weeks of training, he was chosen as platoon guide. He recalls following a two-week bivouac the men were marching back to their base. His sergeant was so exhausted, he was walking, but sound asleep on his feet. No one could awaken him.

After basic training Mr. Severns was sent to cadre school to be an instructor. The rest of the Norton County boys got to go home on leave, but he had to stay.

His unit shipped out Feb. 1945, headed for Scofield Barracks, Honolulu, Hawaii. From there he went to Saipan in a convoy of ships. He was there several weeks.

He was sent on to Okinawa, where on the day he landed, a kamikaze plane hit the hospital ship.

Next, he was on board a landing ship tank, that



Wilmer Severns

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