



Arnold Jackson with his wife Elma and daughter Carole

## Arnold Jackson

Arnold Jackson remembers where he was when he heard the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

"We were in a car with another couple, on top

of Loveland Pass, Colo., heading to Denver," he said. "When we heard the news on the car radio, we couldn't realize how bad it really was."

Mr. Jackson knew the military operated on a point system. He was already married and they had a baby.

He said, "I figured if they ever got up to mar-

ried guys with kids, I'd get drafted."

In early 1945, he was drafted into the Navy. He settled his wife and daughter Carole in a trailer next to her parents' home in Platner, Colo., before he reported for basic training in San Diego. As a Seaman 2nd Class, he was assigned to the 273 Company, a transportation unit that moved supplies and personnel.

He was on the deck of the troop ship when he looked over the rails and spotted a floating mine. The ship passed within six feet of it.

Mr. Jackson was sent to the little island of Samar in the Philippines. He remembers it being 20 miles long and 10 miles wide.

The children there went naked until they went to school at age 6 or 7. He remembers the children gathering below a foot bridge the sailors crossed. The men would throw coins into the water and the children would dive sometimes as deep as 20 feet, to retrieve the money. They liked the silver coins, but if a man tossed in a penny, the child would throw it back and say, "No good Joe."

His wife Elma wrote him a lot of letters and even sent him a cake once.

"It was so dried out when I got it, we had to use a hatchet to cut it," he said. "I had invited all my friends to share it with me, and we couldn't eat it."

While he was gone his wife received \$50 a month for herself and \$30 a month for their baby. He got by on \$14 in military scrip.

"I didn't need any more," he said.

When word was received about the end of the war, Mr. Jackson, jokingly told his wife, "You just think it was the A-bomb that caused the Japanese to surrender. But, they heard I was coming."

He thinks the label of "greatest generation" might be right.

"I lost a couple of cousins in the war," he said. "There were three of us brothers in all at the same time. They're all gone now, but me. I was the youngest."

He was discharged in 1946. He said he and his wife had a quiet reunion at her folks' place and "just enjoyed being together".

The family settled in Norcatur in 1950, where he started a blacksmith shop. They had two other children, Sharon and Terry. The family has grown to include five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

He and his wife were married for 60 years before her death a few years ago.

"I learned one thing while I was in the service," he said. "I learned how to make out with little to nothing and to make life go on without much."

## Wilber Johnson

Pvt. Wilber Johnson served in Germany on the front lines with a rifle company in the 86th Infantry Division.

When he was drafted in April of 1944, he was 18 and excited to be getting away from home. That excitement didn't last long once he saw combat.

"Our outfit was never in real fierce combat like a lot of people were because the war was winding down," he said. "But it has a pretty profound effect on a person when you see your buddies getting killed."

He said when he was sent to Germany, their ship docked at LaHarve, France.

"That's one sight I won't forget," he said. "It was all bombed to pieces. Railroad tracks were twisted and blown up. Buildings were blown up."

"I was ready to come home. All through Germany, it was hard to find one building that wasn't at least half demolished.

"I have a lot of sympathy for the military personnel in Germany."

Mr. Johnson said when the war ended he was in Austria. Every day they took in hundreds of German prisoners, some as young as 14 and others in their 60s. They didn't have a lot of fight left in them, he said.

When the war was over in Europe, he had a 30-day furlough to go home. After that he was loaded on a ship for the Pacific.

"We were out to sea about three days when we were told we were scheduled for the invasion of Japan," he said. "We were about halfway across the Pacific when they dropped the atomic bombs. The Japanese surrendered, otherwise I probably wouldn't be here."

The soldiers were unloaded in the Philippines,



Wilber Johnson

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where he drove a truck for about six months, hauling food to the Filipino guerrilla army.

"I think service made me realize how fortunate I was to live in the United States," he said. "It made me a lot more disciplined. Some of that stays with you."

Mr. Johnston said after he was discharged in May of 1946, he was extremely happy to be home.

"I'm sure my folks were happy too," he said. "I remember, the next day I went to the field and started planting corn."

He farmed until he retired in 1994, when two of his sons took over. Since then, he's been working in his shop, which is west of Lenora, fixing stuff for the neighbors.

He and his wife Betty were married in 1948. They had nine children and several granddaughters.

## Doug Johnston

Doug Johnston spent so much time at sea during World War II, it felt strange for him to walk on land.

Mr. Johnston, a radioman third class, served from August 1943 through 1946.

He said he enlisted because it was the patriotic thing to do. He was on six ships in the Pacific, including a gun boat, two destroyers and three cargo ships.

His service began with radio school in the states.

His outfit then picked up a patrol craft ship in New York and took it down to Jacksonville, Fla. and converted it into a patrol motor gunboat. From there, they did sea trials to get the ship seaworthy then went through the Panama Canal to the Pacific.

His first overseas duty was escorting landing craft from San Francisco to Guam.

Next, his outfit was assigned mine demolition duty in Okinawa prior to the invasion of the island.

They arrived on the beach five days before the invasion and helped destroy mines so invasion forces could go ashore.

He then spent eight months in Okinawa doing radar picket duty. The job was to protect the

shores and try to shoot down enemy planes. There were a lot of kamikaze planes trying to take back the island. He said he had to shoot a Japanese plane down.

They also swept and destroyed mines in the inland sea of Japan so that American ships, invasion forces and occupations forces going into Japan would be safe.

There was a scary moment when their ship passed over a mine, blowing a hole in the bottom. They survived, but they had to carry 17 feet of water.

"The force of that explosion sent me backwards and the typewriter in front of me went up in the air over my head. It broke 105 radio tubes," he said.

He was on one ship for 11 months without touching land. He only got seasick once, however, during a tropical storm. He said the mast of the ship was 45 feet tall. The waves were higher.

He also experienced a hurricane while anchored in the harbor. The winds caused the radio antenna to come lose, and he was given the duty of fixing it.

"The officers volunteered me because I was small," he said.

"They put a lot of rain gear around me and tied a rope around my waist and I got the job of climbing that 45-foot mast to put the radio antenna back on. The rain was so strong that rain hitting you felt like BB pellets."

He said the war helped him grow up and be more mature. It also paid for his college education.

Following the war, he received a bachelor's degree from Bethany College and a Masters from the University of Colorado.

He was a band teacher for 39 years, including 25 in Norton.

He was in high school during the Pearl Harbor attack and he said for the rest of his high school days, all the boys were conscious of the war because they knew they might have to get involved.

"We thought that if the war was still going on by the time we graduated from high school the thing to do would be to go serve our country," he said.

## Harwood Lockhart

Harwood "Hop" Lockhart served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and the Korean War. He retired just before the Vietnam War.



Harwood "Hop" Lockhart, standing at attention (second from right)

## Bob Madden

Bob Madden was only 15 years old when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

He said he was in school when the teachers announced it, but like most kids that age, he didn't understand the implications it would have in his life. He thinks he heard President Roosevelt's famous radio message about "a day that will go down in infamy".

But, by the time he was a senior in high school, he talked his parents into letting him quit school and enlist.

"They didn't like it," he said. "But, they knew that it was what I wanted to do. And, that it was something that had to be done."

Mr. Madden enlisted in the Navy, taking his boot camp and gunnery school at Farragut, Idaho. He went in as an apprentice seaman.

He was sent to New Guinea with the 902nd Anti-Aircraft Battalion as part of a five-gun emplacement. His duty overseas was spent on land.

He was in the Philippines when Japan's surrender was announced. He said he doesn't remember any special celebration only that he was on one of the first ships to return soldiers and sailors home. "They took an aircraft carrier, The Ticonderoga, and removed all the planes," he

said. "Then they made bunks and quarters for all the men. When we came into port there were crowds to greet us and bands were playing." He was discharged as a seaman first class.

His homecoming to Norton was great too.

"My parents were real glad to see me," he said. "I came in on the bus and it parked just one block of where *The Telegram* office is now. My folks lived close by where McDonald's is now."

"It's something you never forget," he said of his war experience. "You had to learn how to take care of yourself. You can't expect other people to take care of you."

As for his being the greatest generation, Mr. Madden said, "It depends on what side of history is looking at it. We were the greatest for this generation. World War I vets were the greatest for their generation."

He said he made many good friends in the service, but they lost touch over the years.

He worked for 38 years as a lineman for the City of Norton. He and Vadis, his wife of more than 50 years, raised their three children here.



Doug Johnston



Bob Madden

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