

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

U S Navy during World War II

Personal Experience

O.H 1599

JOHN HARR

Interviewed

by

John Grischow
on

November 1, 1994

JOHN HARR

John L. Harr was born in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania on December 4, 1926 to John and Eleanor Harr. After graduating from Beaver Falls High School, Mr. Harr married his wife Peggy, then joined the U.S. Navy in August 1944. His boot camp, at Sampson Naval Training Station in New York, was followed by signal training at the same location.

Mr. Harr served on the U.S.S. Henrico as a signalman. He was mostly in the Pacific theater during World War II. He received his discharge from the Navy in July 1946, then attended Geneva College on the G.I. Bill. He earned a Master of Arts Degree in Education from the University of Pittsburgh in 1950.

Mr. Harr was an employee of Boardman Local Schools from 1950-1991. He served as Director of Transportation and Purchasing, and as Assistant Superintendent. He has been enjoying his retirement in Boardman, Ohio since 1991. His interests now include golf, fishing, his grandchildren, reading, and watching movies. In 1985, he was honored by the Boardman Civic Association as their Man of the Year, and as a member of the Boardman Boosters Hall of Fame. He currently belongs to Boardman United Methodist Church and Boardman Rotary. He has a son, Richard, and a daughter, Marjorie.

G This is an interview with John Harr for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the World War II Project, by John Grischow, at 285 Wildwood Drive, on November 1, 1994, at 9 30 a.m

G: Mr Harr, thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today

H You are welcome

G Could we start with a little information about your early years? What do you remember about your schooling and your life as a very young person?

H I was born in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, on December 4, 1926 My mother was Eleanor Ervin Harr My father was John L. Harr I went to school in Beaver Falls public schools I went to high school at Beaver Falls High School I graduated in May of 1944

G. Were those enjoyable years for you at the school?

H Very enjoyable I enjoyed school very much, especially high school

G What made high school so enjoyable for you?

H I played football and basketball We happened to have a basketball team our senior year that had a record of 20-4 We went to the finals of Western Pennsylvania which was further than any Beaver Falls team had ever gone at that time. I just enjoyed school, my classes, and the people that I was in school with During the summer of my junior year I worked at the Armstrong Cork Company The following year, my senior year, I worked a few months at the B&W Tube company until I went in the service I guess that experience told me that when I got out of the service I would like to go to college because I did not think I wanted to work in the mill the rest of my life

G The mill was not exactly right for you?

H The mill and I did not get along that well

G That is probably a common experience So it was 1944 when you graduated from high school?

H I graduated from high school in May of 1944 I worked at the B&W Tube until midsummer A friend of mine and I decided that rather than being drafted we would like to go into the Navy We went to Pittsburgh and enlisted in the Navy

- G You enlisted in the Navy to avoid the possibility of being drafted in the Army perhaps and having to serve as an infantryman?
- H That was part of it, plus growing up I had always liked water. During the years that I was in high school the war started in December of my sophomore year. I followed the war closely. Of all the different services, the Navy appealed to me more than the Army, the Marine Corps or the Air Force. While I had the opportunity, I was going to enlist in the Navy.
- G During those years there was a little bit of a debate before the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor about whether the United States should become involved in a European war. People who did not want the United States involved were called non-interventionists. As a youth, did you notice a lot of anti-war sentiment around you in Beaver Falls?
- H In our community, no. Of course I was young at the time and interested in other things. I did not really notice it in the community of that size. Beaver Falls was a community of about 20,000 people at that time. I did not notice very little, if any anti-war feeling.
- G So there was a lot of support of your decision?
- H A lot of support. In fact, at that time there was a lot of support of all of the service men.
- G Which was certainly a good thing. After you enlisted in the Navy how long did they give you to take care of your affairs at home?
- H We enlisted in July and we left on August 15. We went to boot camp August 15.
- G During that time did you ever have any second thoughts and start thinking, "Boy, what did I do here. I have been in Beaver Falls all my life and here I voluntarily agreed to going the Navy. Who knows what is going to happen, now?"
- H No, I did not. Being in the service during World War II was kind of a popular thing. For the people that were in the service, the people in the communities supported service men. I think the war, because of the way it started with the Japanese invading Pearl Harbor, had much greater support than wars that followed. I guess when you are eighteen years old, you look at something like is the thing to do. Also you talked to friends who are or were in the service and came home. They relayed some of the experiences that they had. It just sounded like the thing that you wanted to do.
- G. You mentioned that because of the way the United States was brought into the war due to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that public sentiment was largely for the war. Was anyone thinking at that time that President Roosevelt's actions against Japan had somehow forced them to attack Pearl Harbor, that he had in fact, allowed the U.S. to enter

the war through the back door?

H No, not at that time. I think historians have kind of written that in, in things that I have read now. At that time most everybody was very supportive of Roosevelt and were very patriotic and interested in the way that our country was going.

G Tell me about your boot camp experience. Where did you first attend boot camp?

H We went from Beaver Falls to Pittsburgh. We boarded a train in Pittsburgh and went to Sampson, New York. Sampson Naval Training Station was where I had boot camp. At that time the boot camp was for ten weeks. We were there in a mixture of weather. We were there when it was very warm when we first arrived. Sampson, New York is an area that gets quite cold in the wintertime. It is about 100 miles south of Buffalo. We had some cold weather as part of our experience. Boot camp was rather interesting in that a lot of the fellows never had any type of camping experience or any type of training. It was very obvious. Many of them came from different areas of the United States. We had people from the south and people from Brooklyn, New York. There were a number of them from the Brooklyn area. For me it was a new experience because I had more or less stayed in the Beaver Falls area. During the Depression you did not move too often. You did not go on vacation a lot. It was my first time really away from home at any distance. Getting together with a number of fellows that you never met before was also a new experience.

G And all having to get along together.

H And all having to get along together. Sometimes it worked out well and sometimes it did not. The boot camp experience was basically to get you familiar with the military, to march, to take orders, to drill. We had a little bit of life boat training at Sampson in the early part. As it got colder, they had to discontinue that. As I said, we were there for ten weeks and it was just basic training.

G Besides marching, was there any sort of physical training that you had to go through?

H Yes, they had a big Quonset hut type field house where they had physical training. They had sports that were popular at that time. We were going into the basketball season after football was over. They had indoor sports such as basketball and volleyball. You could do that. Part of it was the physical training that you had, and also in the evenings you could go over if you so desired and play intramural type sports such as basketball, volleyball and that type of thing.

G That all sounds rather pleasant compared to some of the boot camp experiences that I have seen on the big screen. You describe it more as intramural play than as strict pushups and sit-ups, and rope climbing.

H We had that We had the rope climbing, sit-ups, pushups We had rifle training They had a rifle range and you were taught the proper way to fire a rifle For the most part, the boot camp training was not all that unpleasant. You had to make your own bed You had to clean up the barracks You had inspection once a week You had to clean up the head and have your clothes folded in a proper manner and stored in the lockers, that type of thing I suppose for some people that had never done any of that, that it would be a trying experience I took care of my own room when I was a kid so it was not other than learning to fold them the way they wanted them folded It was not that much of a problem As far as cleaning around the house, I had done that as a kid Cleaning the barracks other than doing it the way they wanted it, again, was not that much of a problem

G It seems to me the way you describe the Navy training, people would be busting down the doors of the Navy recruiting center rather than being drafted into the Army Was that any sort of problem? Were there a disproportionate number of people seeking to enter the Navy?

H That I really cannot answer I really do not know If I were to do it again, I would again enlist in the Navy I am sure a lot of people that were in the other services would stay in the services they were in I think a lot of it is individual preference During the period that we were in boot camp we also took a number of screening tests for an area that we might specialize in while we were in the Navy We took aptitude tests and that type of thing I was evidently higher in quartermaster and signalman areas than in the other areas There were not any openings at that time in the quartermaster schools. There were openings in the signalman school because they had that right at Sampson Following boot camp, we had a week leave as I remember The ones that were assigned to the signalmen school reported back to Sampson Naval Training Base for sixteen weeks of signalman school training

G You say that you tested high for being a quartermaster also What is a quartermaster?

H A quartermaster normally is on the bridge of a ship to assist in the steering of the ship They also have to have a background of at least the fundamentals of signalmen It was a little higher of a ranking in the Navy than maybe some of the others I enjoyed signalmen's school

G What sort of signaling were you doing?

H You had semaphore, which was using flags like they had in the boy scouts You had to know the code for the flags that you used in signaling You had to know Morse code because they used flashing light That was primary The signaling device that was used on ships was primarily light They flashed the light with Morse code Then they also had flags that had certain meanings that you would raise on the yard arms of the ship

primarily in port or if you were in convoy. If there was radio silence, they used a semaphore if it was close enough. They used the flags if it was visually close enough or the flashing light which was better at distances.

G That training was sixteen weeks?

H There was sixteen weeks of training. A lot of it was because of the difficulty in reading light. Everybody did not get onto it right away. A lot of it was classroom where the instructor would use a light and flash the different letters of the Morse code. Then you would call out the letters that you saw. After several weeks they got into using words. It was just a progression of learning the various uses of semaphore, the flags, or the flashing light. In your twelfth week they had signal towers spaced throughout the camp. You would go to the signal tower and it was more of a simulated bridge of a ship. You would signal from one tower to another and get more experience and get comfortable using the light that they use on a ship. You are reading and you have someone next to you transcribe what you read. You really get basic training that you would need when you are on a ship.

G How many hours a day was the signal training?

H It was a regular eight-hour day.

G During the rest of your time what did you do?

H If you wanted to you could go to Ship's Company which was a ship store. They had a recreation area there like ping pong tables, that type of thing. They had soft drinks, ice cream, that type of thing. You could go to the field house if you wanted to participate in some type of physical activity. They had movies that you could attend in the evenings. Of course, you had the regular routine of taking care of the barracks just like you had in boot camp. You still had to take care of your basic needs; making your bed, taking care of your clothes, washing your clothes, putting them in your locker and that type of thing. The setup that we had when we were there is we had every other weekend off. The weekend that you were on the base you had to take care of the barracks. They had one group on the upper level of the barracks and another group on the lower level. They alternated your weekends. If you were on weekend, the other group was there and they had to take care of the barracks and that type of thing. They did not neglect the barracks. They always had someone there to take care of them. Then you had to go over to the class area where we had our classes during the week, and we cleaned that area also. We did a lot of cleaning.

G Yes, I have heard that. After sixteen weeks were you a pretty talented signalman?

H I had the basics. Fortunately, a signal light seems to be something that comes to you.

You do not get it right away. All of a sudden, maybe on the twelfth or thirteenth week there it is. You can read it. Fortunately about the twelfth week it started to come that I could make the words out and read it pretty well.

G Were you worried up until that twelfth week? Did you ever think that you have been learning these signals for twelve weeks and they still are not making sense? Were you worried that in four weeks you would be assigned to a ship and be responsible for reading these signals?

H No, not really. The instructors that we had were a first class signalman and a chief signalman who were in charge of our class. Both of them were really fine fellows who were outstanding in their field. They kept telling us, "Don't worry about it. You will be able to read the light. It is just that it is something new. You do not know the Morse code. You had to learn each of the letters. You have to learn those letters well enough--it is just like when you are learning to write and spell. You learn the letters. Then you have to be able to recognize those letters as forming words.

One of the things that I had a problem with and I think most everybody that was there had a problem with was that you tried to anticipate. If you would see A-B-O, you would think it was going to be 'about'. Then it was not 'about'. That threw you off. You had to get in your mind to let the letters flow and let the word develop. Once you mastered that you were able to read them fairly well.

The problem that you did have and everybody had was that when they send the light it is a big light with a handle on it. You use the handle, and you had to make dots and dashes out of it. If they tried to go too fast or if they were sloppy it was difficult to read. It was easier to read your own classmates signals than anyone else because they were also hesitant and slow. They went slower and it was easier to read. Then someone would get on the light who was an experienced signalman and they figured that the person at the other tower was also experienced. They would start going too fast and you would get lost. Also, our instructors told us, "Do not be concerned. You are not going to be out on the bridge of a ship by yourself for a long time." That turned out to be true. You go out of there as a seaman second class or a seaman first class. It depends on how well you ranked in the class as to whether they gave you a first class seaman rating or not. Then you went on a ship or a signal tower. You were assigned with someone else. You had the experience for a number of months before they would let you be up there by yourself. In many instances you may never be up there by yourself because you would have a first class or a chief in charge of the watch. They would double check that what you read is really what was sent.

G That is important business. You really do not want to make an error receiving or sending a signal. Where were you first assigned then Mr. Harr?

H When I left Samson, New York, I had ten days delayed orders to get to Treasure Island in California. I was able to go home for several days. I had train reservations to take me to

Treasure Island, California

G Was it difficult leaving Beaver Falls?

H It was rather difficult at that time because the war was on and you were going to California. You knew you were going to the South Pacific, but you did not know where. We were not assigned to anything at that point in time. It was kind of up in the air. You did not know where you were going. You went to California and from there everything else would fall in place.

G So you went to Treasure Island. How long were you there?

H We were at Treasure Island about ten days to two weeks. I know we were in San Francisco two weekends, but it seemed to me there was a weekend, a week, a weekend, part of another week, then we were gone. We went from Treasure Island with several ships to Pearl Harbor. At Pearl Harbor a convoy formed. We left there and stopped at Kwajalein. We did not get off the ship, but we stopped there. We went from Kwajalein to the Philippines. The first island we were on was Samar. I spent most of my time between Samar and Leyte in the Philippines.

G Although all the experiences that you had in the Navy were much different from growing up in Beaver Falls, being on a ship must have been pretty unique. What was the name of the ship that you were on?

H The U S S Henrico PA 176

G How did that strike you? It was in Pearl Harbor that you joined the Henrico?

H No, we were on the Henrico from the time we left Treasure Island and went to Pearl Harbor. Then a convoy was formed at Pearl Harbor. It was rather interesting. There was a baby carrier in our convoy and it had ambulances on the flight deck. It was interesting in that after I got out of the service and came home and went to college, we would sit around having bull sessions. It was amazing how many people were in that same convoy. The key was the ambulances that were on the flight deck. I remember one of the fellows said, "Well, I talked to our commanding officer." I said, "I do not feel too comfortable with those ambulances on the flight deck. What if there were planes coming in?" He said, "If Japanese planes come in you will see those ambulances in the ocean so fast you will not know what happened." I am sure that was true.

G Were they expendable?

H They were transporting them over to that area. They just had them up on the flight deck. It was very unusual, and also made it easy to talk to someone and tell them where you

had been, where you went, and what convoy you were in

G That is quite a coincidence. What were your impressions of the Henrico? What did you think when you saw that ship?

H The Henrico was an interesting ship in that it was a transport. I was not assigned to the Henrico at that point as a crew member. We were in transit. They were taking us to the Philippines. We were down in the hold of the ship where they had put bunks in so that they could have accommodations. When I say bunks, they were just canvas bunks that were four or five high. We found that it was very hot down there. We decided to try sleeping on deck on the hatch covers instead of sleeping down there.

It took us 30 days to go from Pearl Harbor to the Philippines because you traveled at the speed of the slowest ship in the convoy. You had to take your time. It took us fifteen days to come home. It took us 30 days to go over. You know you were traveling pretty slow.

This was at the time that the Japanese were using a lot of the kamikaze planes. They were always on the lookout for something like that. It was in the waning part of the war and the Japanese were not flying in this area. They were flying primarily around Okinawa trying to stop the naval ships in the invasion of Okinawa. We did not run into any problems as far as our convoy was concerned with the kamikaze planes, and we did not have any problems with the submarines. They did sight a floating mine while we were in convoy. It had evidently broken loose some place. Other than that it was a rather uneventful trip from Pearl Harbor to Kwajalein, and from Kwajalein to the Philippines.

G If it was an uneventful trip there must have been some long days on the ship. What did you do to fill up your days?

H You just sat and watched the ocean most of the time. A number of us would go up near the bow and watch the flying fish. It was rather interesting to see them come out of the water and sail along. From time to time several porpoises would come along and play around the ship. That was kind of entertaining. Other than that you had three meals a day so you stood in line part of the time, a half hour for each meal. Then we developed a group that seemed to get along pretty well together and played cards and the normal things you do to pass time.

G What did you think of the meals they served you there? Were they pretty agreeable?

H The meals were okay. I felt the food in the Navy, in boot camp, and in signalmen's school was pretty good. The food on the ship, because of the number of people they had to feed was okay, but something they could get in large quantities. So it really was not that outstanding. We ran out of fresh milk shortly. They started to use powder milk. To this day I do not care too much for it. Ice cream made with the powder milk was better than just the milk. When we got to Samar and left the ship they had just started to break

up the tent cities and put in Quonset huts. They had a big Quonset hut dining area. You could always tell when you were going to have k-rations food. The line went through very quickly. K-rations really were not all that bad. You knew when you were going to have them because it did not take the line long to go through. They just passed you a box and away you went.

G What did the k-rations consist of?

H I cannot really recall right now. The best thing they had in it was a chocolate bar. They had different things. They had different food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They did not have too much of a variety in the k-rations. They were pretty much one, two, or three. You had this, that, or the other. There were about three selections that they had and they would vary them. Most everybody got the same thing on the same day. There was not too much trading around.

G Were you working very much as a signalman then?

H No. In fact, I did very little signaling when I was in the Philippines, in the South Pacific. That is what I was trained to do. The one thing that we did do while I was with the Henrico was practice landings. The island of Leyte is where McArthur had given his famous speech in the city of Tacloban. He had given his famous speech called "I Shall Return."

Red Beach and White Beach were right outside of Tacloban. They used those beaches for practice for what at that time they thought would be the invasion of Japan. One thing that I did was run the landing craft. We had LCVP's which were landing craft-vehicle personnel. Then we had LCM's which were landing craft mechanized. I happened to be assigned to an LCM. There were three of us.

We had one fellow whose specialty was to be a cook. He was a cook-baker. He was the one in charge of the engines. He knew next to nothing about them. Fortunately, the landing craft were new so we did not have much of a problem.

G That was fortunate.

H The other fellow's background was to be a yeoman. That would be someone to work in the office. He was kind of like the seamen. He took care of the lines when we were to tie up against a dock or come next to a dock on a ship.

I happened to be a signalman, but I was the coxswain on the landing craft. The LCM had two grey marine diesel engines. As I say, it was in very good condition. We had no trouble with it.

We would take the Army and Marine personnel that were assigned to the ship at that time and take them ashore in a mock invasion. Fortunately the beach was pretty good there. The red beach and white beach were both pretty good. You could get in fairly close to shore so that when you put the ramp down, they were in water no more.

than up to their knees. In some of the instances in talking to some of the fellows that had been in other areas, they would come into a spot like that and hit a sandbar. They would let the ramp down and be in water up to their knees. All of a sudden they would go down to water up to their waste or higher before they were actually able to get to shore.

In the area where we were practicing had a nice beach and a nice area. We did not have much of a problem. We did that for several weeks.

Then the decision was made to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then the war rapidly ended after that happened. A lot of people make the comment, "They should have never used the atomic bomb." Anybody that was in my position where you were practicing for the invasion of Japan, and they had estimated in all probability there could be up to 1,000,000 casualties, we felt that was a very smart move for them. Here just recently when they were talking about the fiftieth anniversary, there was a young priest that was in his thirties who said that it was a tragic mistake. I thought, "You are too young to know if that was a tragic mistake or not." If you had been where we were it was the smartest thing they ever did.

G I imagine practicing for those invasions and an invasion of Japan appearing eminent, that must have pretty much occupied your thoughts?

H Without a doubt.

G I know that some Navy personnel were amphibious. They were trained to invade themselves. Were there people like that on the Henrico? Not the Henrico, because you were on a landing craft. Would they be Navy personnel, perhaps yourself included that would invade?

H When they had an amphibious force, what they were referring to primarily was landing craft larger than what we were using. In an LCM you could take probably 25 or 30 infantrymen, marines, or what have you. They may have had an armored personnel carrier, some type of a vehicle on the LCM and take that ashore with just a few people. The amphibious groups were primarily LST, and ships that were larger and self contained. They actually were manned by a crew of Naval personnel and they would transport perhaps Marines if it was an invasion of one of the islands. They would transport Army personnel, and they had a bow that would open up. They could take equipment and personnel out that way. They were much larger than what we were using.

The landing craft that I was assigned to actually was on the ship. They would lower that landing craft down from the ship and then take the people in because the ship was too large to go in. LST's and LSM's, that type of ship, actually went ashore themselves. They went onto the shore, maybe not as close as our landing craft could go, but they went onto the shore and unloaded right there. The amphibious groups were areas that you maybe did not want to be in.

G Yes, I can understand that. Fortunately for you that never came to pass. You never had

to worry about taking part in an invasion of Japan?

H No

G Were you immediately discharged?

H Oh no I was in the South Pacific for sixteen months I would say most of the time was after the war was over. After the war ended and they had dropped the atomic bomb and there was not going to be any invasion of Japan, I was assigned to a base across from the city of Tacloban on the island of Leyte. It was a small base called Macaroda. It was on the island of Samar. We were there for primarily security reasons. They had a lot of equipment and material that they had unloaded from ships.

At first when we were assigned to the base all we had were tents. We were put into what they referred to as a boat pool. Again, we ran the landing craft. We would take things from the merchant ships that came in the harbor to shore so that they could build a more permanent base. Eventually they did away with our tents and built Quonset huts. For the first three months that I was in this boat pool we were able to get some lumber from the Air Force that was at Tacloban. We built a little house over the well deck on our landing craft and we stayed right on it because it was better than staying in a tent. We only went ashore to eat and that type of thing. Many times we would go to a merchant ship or a naval ship that was in Leyte Gulf and eat on the ships because the food was better than what you were able to get at a base that was just being established. We were in the boat pool for probably three or four months.

As I say, we would unload British merchant ships or American merchant ships that came in and take the supplies and materials ashore. Then the sea-bees would build the bases and bridges, that type of thing in reconstructing the two islands that had been ravished by the invasion and the war that went on during the Philippine invasion. I did that for about four months. It was kind of enjoyable because you knew the war was over.

There were still some Japanese stragglers that were in the mountains and jungle area. They had groups of Marines primarily that were going out and flushing them out and getting them out of the areas that they were huddled up. We did not have any problems with any of that. We did have one interesting experience.

The aircraft carrier, Ticonderoga was in Leyte Gulf. We thought, "That would be kind of nice. We would like to go on an aircraft carrier." The three of us took our landing craft out and went along side the Ticonderoga. It had a floating platform out there along side the ship. We tied up to that and started up the gangway. We got to the top and the officer of the deck was standing there. We lived kind of casual when we were on the landing craft. We did not wear our hat. We did not necessarily wear a blue shirt or even dungarees. We might have just a T-shirt on. The dungarees we had we would cut off as shorts. We went up and the officer of the deck took one look at us and probably wondered where in the world we came from. We said we would like to come aboard and have lunch. He said, "Well, we'd be glad to have you, but you will have to have a dungaree outfit of clean dungarees, a dungaree shirt, and a white cap." I suppose

some place in our sea bag we probably had all of that, but we did not think it was worth that. We thanked him for letting us come up that far and that we would eat some place else. We went over and had lunch on a British merchant ship that was much better probably.

G You spent the remainder of your term of service there?

H I spent it in the Philippines, but we were probably in the boat pool for four months. Then we were assigned to security on the island of Samar at what had been a naval base. It was a small base where they had about eight to ten buildings that had been primarily for food storage. They had a group of us stay there as security to make sure that it was not vandalized, torn down or stolen. As it turned out, I cannot really understand why it made any difference because when we were to leave to go and get discharged or to be sent back to the states for discharge, they did not put anybody there to replace us. I am sure the Quonset huts, supplies and things that were there were quickly confiscated by the Filipinos.

G Were they expendable like the ambulances?

H Many of the landing craft were expendable. When they broke up our boat pool many of the landing craft, I am sure, would not be taken back to the states. They would not have any use for them. They were probably turned over to the Philippine government or something of that nature.

It was interesting the way they formed the boat pool. After the war was over, ships would come over and confiscate the landing craft from the ships. That was how we got the landing craft to develop the boat pool. The ships would come over with, in most cases, brand new landing craft that were right up to snuff because they were using them or planning on using them -- probably for the invasion of Japan or whatever other use they would make of them. They were in good shape. They just took them from the ships and said, "Okay, we need these for the boat pool." Since they did not need them anymore they would come back to the states and get new ones or come back and not even bother refitting them with landing craft.

G It must have been a happy day when you were sent back to the United States and you were discharged?

H That was rather interesting, too. We came back to the very spot in Samar to get a ship that we had landed on Samar probably fourteen or fifteen months before. We waited there. You would not have recognized the base. When we first went there, there were primarily tents and they were in the process of putting up Quonset huts. They did have a large Quonset hut that they used for the dining area. For the most part where you stayed were in tents.

When we came back, everything was Quonset huts. They had streets laid out. It

was quite a base. We waited there probably four or five days until we were assigned to a ship to come back to the United States.

As I mentioned earlier, it took us 30 days to go over in a convoy and took us fifteen days to come back. Of course, the ship was not in a convoy anymore. It was just coming back to the United States. We landed at Treasure Island. Would you believe there was a train strike? We were supposed to be transported by train to Bambridge, Maryland, for discharge. We were in Treasure Island with the group I was with for 30 days waiting for the train strike to end so that we would have transportation over to Bambridge, Maryland, so that we could be discharged. Finally the strike was over. We did get on a troop train to come back to Bambridge for discharge. The troop train, as I recall, pulled off on a siding for any train that was on the railroad. We spent a lot of time on siding waiting for passenger and freight trains to go by. Finally we did get to Bambridge. In two or three days we were discharged and took a train from Bambridge to Washington, Washington to Pittsburgh, and from Pittsburgh to home.

G Beaver Falls?

H Beaver Falls

G Then you were off to college?

H Yes, I was discharged in July of 1946. In September of 1946, I started under the G I Bill at Geneva College. Maybe the government has done a lot of things that a lot of people thought and still think is a waste of money. One of the smartest things the United States government ever did was to create the G.I. Bill. There are many people, most of them in their sixties and seventies from World War II who now have a college education and went on to do a lot of things throughout the United States that bettered our country. They would never have had the opportunity if it had not been for the G I Bill.

I am sure that a lot of the fellows that I was in college with would never have had the opportunity to get a college education. Fortunately, I probably think I would have had a college education. I was able to play basketball at Geneva and would have probably played and got a scholarship to a small school. The G I Bill was very helpful. I went to Geneva college from 1946 to 1949. Peggy and I, my wife, wanted to get married. I was two years older than most of the kids that were in school. Many of them that were in school at the time were a lot younger than I was. Seventeen and eighteen-year-old were coming out of high school and going to college. We decided we would like to get married. I went summer and winter and graduated in three years. It was also a fortunate thing because it meant I had another year on my G I Bill.

At that time I felt I would like to go into education and be a teacher. Instead of right away looking for a teaching position, I thought I would go to Pitt and get my Masters in education. That way I would have the G I. Bill, be married, and have an income. Also, the schooling would be paid for. At that time they were not sure how long the G I Bill would continue after the war. I thought I better take advantage of it while I

have that year In 1949 and 1950 I went to the University of Pittsburgh and received my Master's Degree in Educational Administration

G Did you become a teacher then?

H. Yes I applied several places in Pennsylvania My high school basketball coach was an assistant principal and coach at Midland, Pennsylvania While I was going to the University of Pittsburgh, the first month I taught as a substitute in Midland and went to the University of Pittsburgh for my masters at night I took night courses Most of their courses for my masters program in 1949 and 1950 were night classes because most of the students they had were teachers They were taking two courses in the evenings I was able to substitute there for a month for a teacher that had been injured and was not able to come back to school right away I did get some valuable experience in teaching I found that I enjoyed it That kind of confirmed my idea of going into education I applied at several schools in Pennsylvania and several schools in Ohio I was fortunate enough to be hired by I J Nisonger, superintendent of Boardman schools in 1950 I was with the Boardman schools from 1950 until I retired in June of 1991, 41 years

G Forty-one years, that is a stretch

H Sounds like a long time, but as they say, "Time flies' " It was a great experience

G I am sure It is a fine district. You were a teacher for a part of the time?

H I was a teacher from 1950 through 1955. The 1955-1956 school year, the title I had was director of transportation and purchasing Basically from then on I did the same work plus additional responsibilities. As the time went on I became administrative assistant, then later the title was changed to assistant superintendent I was basically in charge of the business affairs for the school district

G Very good Did you have any children, sir?

H Yes Peggy and I have two children We have a son who is a C P A and lives in Silver Lakes, just outside of Akron He has two children, so we have a grandson who will be eleven in December and a granddaughter that is seven

G What is your son's name?

H Our sons name is Richard. He graduated from Boardman High School. He played three years of basketball for Boardman and played on their team that went to the state semifinal in 1969 and 1970. He went from Boardman to Mount Union and played basketball for four years and received a fine education and majored in accounting He is now a Certified Public Accountant.

G: You have a daughter also?

H: Our daughter Marge is 39. She is married to Bob Topaleski. They have two little girls. One is three and one is two, so they are little. Marge teaches elementary physical education at Western Reserve School District in Berlin Center. Her husband is also a social studies teacher at Berlin Center and a football coach.

G: You have been retired three years now. What do you do to make yourself enjoy these years?

H: It is very enjoyable. I really enjoy retirement. In the summertime I play a lot of golf. I do a lot of fishing. We take the grandchildren to a number of places. Our grandson likes to fish so I have a fishing boat and go fishing in the five lakes in the valley. I enjoy taking care of the yard from about April to the present time which takes up most of your time. In the wintertime I enjoy walking. I go over to the mall and walk. My wife takes care of our two youngest grandchildren, the one that is three and the one that is two. I help her by taking the kids over to the mall or taking them to the park, or to Kids Town which makes the day go a little quicker for them and for her, also. I have no problem in putting in the time. I enjoy it very much. I enjoy reading, watching movies and that type of thing.

G: Fantastic. Well Mr. Harr, it has been a great pleasure to talk with you. We thank you for your contribution.

H: Okay.

End of Interview