

Interview with Jack Newcomb
Interviewer: Gary Newcomb
n.d.

Q: What branch of service were you in?

A: The Navy

Q: What rank were you in the service?

A: Well um, when I was discharged, I was a storekeeper second class and of course when I went in the lowest grade in the navy at that time is what they called apprentice seaman and that's what you were when you went through boot camp. And when you graduated from camp you automatically became rank of seaman second class and so forth. And I went on up to a second class store keeper or a second class petty officer, which would at that time in rank would be what a staff sergeant would have been in the army to give you an idea how the ranks compared.

Q: What kind of ship did they have back then and what did you travel on?

A: Well, I went overseas on, it was a troop transport, it was the USS Worten was the name of it. It was a ship that was used in the merchant marine, prior to World War II. Its name before the war was the USS Southern Cross. This ship incidentally the USS Worten was used in the first atomic bomb explosion at Bikini. The only other ship I was on was the USS Raleigh, which was a AKA or tack cargo vessel and that was the ship I came home on after the war was over. And that was the only two navy ships I was on while I was in the navy.

Q: When did you start your active duty and what naval bases did you go to?

A: I went on active duty on July 15, 1944, I went through boot camp or what you refer to as basic training in Samson, New York, which is on the Finger Lakes, Lake Seneca, actually in New York State, I was there for 12 weeks. And then from there I got a short boot leave for about seven days. I was home for two day, I think the time was mostly going to and coming back. Then from Yew York, I went to New Orleans, across the river from New Orleans actually to Algiers, Louisiana, which was naval repair base. I was stationed there for about to September until I think November, December 20; I got orders to report to Port Embarkation, at nearly San Francisco, what I say a while ago? I went to San Bruno California, that was kind of receiving center for the make shipments of men to go overseas and was there until, reported in there about on Christmas morning, December the 25th of 1944. And we shipped out on New Year's morning on 1945. And shipped out on the USS Worten and went from there to the Philippines and laid over in the Philippines for about two weeks making up a convoy and we went from San Bruno or San Francisco we went to the Hawaiian Islands. And went to Hawaii and made up a convoy and went from there to the Caroline Islands and then we went to the Marshall Islands and then we ended up in the Philippines and we landed February 1, 1945, and I spent about fifteen months in the Philippines before I came home.

Q: Did you see any action during your stay in the Philippines?

A: No, the action, what we were actually doing there, we were setting up a secret supply base for the seventh fleet. We thought it was secret until one night Tokyo Rose told us we were there, so the Japs knew all about it so it wasn't any secret. But about the only fighting, was on the other islands Men No Now they were still fighting over there. On was on a small island called Calcornen, which was a small

coral reef or island, just south of Samar, what they call the flat lands of the Philippines and is in the most southern part. As on one side of island was hata Gulf and the other was the Pacific Ocean.

Q: What were the people like on the Philippines, the natives and sort?

A: Most of the ones we came in contact within island we were at were farmers. I remember this island we landed on, there was a banana plantation on one side of it, there were a lot of coconut trees. They were more of agricultural people, they lived in huts. One unique thing about the huts they lived in was the fact that mahogany was flourished quite a bit through the Philippines, a lot of ebony and floors were mahogany floor and they fished a lot and kind of lived off the land.

Q: What did they think about you being there, the US?

A: Well they were glad to see us because up to that time they were occupied by Japan. So we were well received and they were very cooperative, no problems at all. They hated the Japanese with a passion.

Q: What was the weather like there?

A: Very warm and humid, we had hot weather most the time. One part of the year, I can't remember, they had what they called the Monsoon season we would have a lot of rain, but other than that it was hot and warm just like Florida. One thing about weather in the Philippines, it got so hot and stayed that way most the time, most of men broke out in prickly heat that was one of problems we had, it was a little bit uncomfortable during the day.

Q: What was the moral like with the men around you?

A: Well it wasn't too bad, when we first landed it was kind of rough because we were in a combat area and it was in a critical time during the war and for the first three months when we landed we were on duty for 4 hours and off for 4 hours, we didn't get much sleep and tempers were edgy sometimes, but other than that the morale was fairly well, pretty high considering all the difficulties we had.

Q: Did they favor the war, what was their opinions in general of most of men you came in contact with?

A: It was, well, you were there, everybody, most of the guys in the outfit I was in were draftees, there were a few volunteers. But the war, World War II, the opinions of men and the people was entirely different than the opinion of people that had to serve in the Vietnam War because it was a war where we were attacked and the enemy we were fighting had been the aggressors and it was just a different outlook and it was a patriotic thing to do to serve your country.

Q: Did you get much news about day-to-day things happening in the war itself?

A: Like any war you hear, an old navy expression "Sculda Butt" or rumors about what was going on. They would issue communiques periodically and tell us how the forward units were advancing and so forth and what islands we were taking and things like that, but at that time we were more occupied with doing our job, and never thought too much about it or at least I didn't.

Q: When you got home, did you notice any changes in the appearance of Evansville, in general around the state?

A: No not really, I was gone about fifteen months and my total time in the service was about twenty-three months. And at that time, the war had been over a while after I came back, I got out in May of 46. I can't remember, the war ended sometime in 45, but I was considered a central rate in the navy and I didn't get to come home as soon as the other guys did as on account of the point system they had for discharging the men. You to have so many points to get out. If you were classified to, a certain rate that was essential to the effort, even though you had enough points you still had to stay. The point system was mostly a lot made up on men that were married and had families and dependents at home, that gave them more points and of course you got so many points for each month you were in the service and if you were overseas this would give you more points. I guess all together I maybe served maybe two three months longer a lot of the other men, the fact I was a storekeeper and we were involved in transporting equipment and supplies to the islands and that was essential at that time.