

INTERVIEW

John (Jack)Wartman

YEAR

2006

GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Jack Wartman

DATE: July 28, 2006

PLACE: Ingalls, Kansas

INTERVIEWER: Lynne Hewes

PROJECT SERIES: Veterans Oral History Project for Gray County

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION:

Jack Wartman was drafted and went to Fort Leavenworth for physical and induction in 1942. After basic training in New Mexico he was sent to California and placed in an ordinance company. His group shipped out of Texas to Scotland and England and back through the Panama Canal to the South Pacific. He helped to place armaments and bombs on planes at a base in the Philippines. After the bombs were dropped and Japan surrendered they were sent to Japan during occupation. He came home in 1946 and were discharged from a base in Colorado. Jack returned to the Ingalls area to resume ranching.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Entering the service and training and life as a part of an ordinance company stationed in the Philippines and Japan and his return to his home near Ingalls, Kansas

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: 30 minute tape

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 30 minutes

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 8 pages

ORAL HISTORY
Wartman, John (Jack)
Interview Date: July 28, 2006

Interviewer: Lynne Hewes (LH)
Interviewee: Jack Wartman (JW)
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Side A

LH - I know that World War Two started in 1939 in Germany.

JW - But we didn't go in until 1942 or something.

LH - Yes, it would have been right after Pearl Harbor wouldn't it?

JW - Yeah.

LH - Do you remember hearing about Pearl Harbor?

JW - Yeah, I heard about it. I was trying to buy some cattle and a fellow got hold of us and told us about Pearl Harbor.

LH - Do you remember about how old you were?

JW - It was '42 and I was born in '17.

LH - Did you join the service or were you drafted?

JW - I was drafted.

LH - What branch were you in?

JW - I went to Leavenworth and to Hobbs, New Mexico, and took our basic training. We next went to California for some more training in ordinance.

LH - What was training like?

JW - It was OK.

LH - Did they make you march?

JW - Oh yeah, we had to march and learn how to shoot.

LH - You were a farm boy from Western Kansas. Did you already know how to shoot a rifle?

JW - Oh yes, I picked that up pretty young. Some of the people that came in there, I don't think had ever handled a gun.

LH - I'll bet that is true.

JW - There is a picture there when we went to La Junta, Colorado to an air base.

LH - What did you do in La Junta?

JW - We did some work and went on to Texas. That is where we shipped out from.

LH - Did you go overseas on a boat or a plane?

JW - Boat, Queen Elizabeth it was. There were about 45,000 people on it.

LH - They were servicemen?

JW - Yeah, from there we went to the South Pacific. We ended up where they dropped the atomic bombs there in Japan. We stayed there a while.

LH - Go back with me a bit. When you left Texas on the Queen Elizabeth, where did you go?

JW - Scotland.

LH - Did you dock in England, then?

JW - We went through quite a bit of England and boarded a ship to the Pacific by going through the Panama Canal to the Philippines.

LH - Does that seem like a roundabout way to get to the South Pacific?

JW - We had to.

LH - Why was that?

JW - Too much war. We got to go through there and it was pretty interesting.

LH - The Panama Canal, tell me about it?

JW - They would drain all the water from under the ship and put it through the next thing to lower it.

LH - Were they called locks?

JW - Yeah.

LH - How long did it take?

JW - Maybe two hours.

LH - Were you on the ship all that time?

JW - We got off. I guess they had us take on fresh water and fuel or something.

LH - In Panama?

JW - Yeah, we were there quite a while.

LH - How long did it take to get from Panama to where you were going?

JW - Altogether, I think it was 60 days. I felt like a sailor.

LH - You had your sea legs by then. Once you got to the Philippines did you go on land or did you stay on the ship?

JW - We got off there. We were stationed there five or six weeks.

LH - Was there a base there?

JW - Oh yeah, we were about ninety miles from Manila. We went into Manila and it had been bombed pretty bad. There was water running down the streets.

LH - Ruined their infrastructure, I guess?

JW - From Manila they sent us up to Japan. It was after the war. We saw where they bombed that. It was on the 6th of August. My birthday is the 5th.

LH - You almost had a birthday present. When you went to Japan what did you see there?

JW - It had been bombed pretty bad by us.

LH - In Manila were there Japanese soldiers hiding out?

JW - Some of them stayed there on and on for fifteen or twenty years, I guess.

LH - I had heard stories. Did you go into the island and experience any fighting there?

JW - No, it was over by then.

LH - It was over by the time you got there?

JW - Yes.

LH - Tell me about life on the ship. You were on the ship for sixty days and got your sea legs. What was the food like?

JW - We had plenty of food.

LH - So you didn't lose any weight then?

JW - We drank a lot of coffee.

LH - What did you do on the ship? There was not a lot to do.

JW - Played a lot of cards.

LH - Poker?

JW - Yes, we bet on poker some.

LH - Had a little gambling casino going on, huh?

JW - There were quite a few blacks on there, we didn't talk to them much.

LH - Was that your first experience being around black people?

JW - Yeah, there weren't many of them out here.

LH - Did you feel like you made some friends when you were on the boat?

JW - Oh yes, I've got some pictures here. We were still in Europe when the fog let up and there were about a thousand planes. First time there had been so many.

LH - Where were you at that time?

JW - We were still training in England.

LH - The last I knew you were in the Philippines; then where did you go?

JW - We went to Japan and saw where it was bombed.

LH - Did you do anything in Japan or just go by it?

JW - We got to go see it. We went up on Mount Fujiyama. We went to Tokyo and got to see all around.

LH - The Japanese had surrendered by this time?

JW - Yes. They had surrendered.

LH - How long did you stay in Japan?

JW - I guess it was a couple of months.

LH - While you were in Japan, what was your job?

JW - We gathered up some of the war machinery, but we didn't really do much.

LH - Did you eat Japanese food while you were there?

JW - We didn't get a chance to. I guess it is a lot different.

LH - I think it must be. I have eaten only a little bit of it.

JW - We had to eat at the mess hall.

LH - You set up a base there?

JW - There was already one and kids would show up around there. They wanted food and cigarettes. There was a guy in there from Kansas and he would bring us cigarettes.

LH - In Japan were they having a problem with food because of the bombing?

JW - I think the people did. I don't think the US Army did.

LH - Was that why the kids were around?

JW - That was in the Philippines.

LH - After you were in Japan for two months, where did you go?

JW - We came back to the States then.

LH - How did you come back?

JW - On a ship. They sent us on to Colorado to get our discharge.

LH - Was it to La Junta?

JW - No.

LH - Then you came home and became a rancher?

JW - Yeah.

LH - Can you tell me what your job was in the service?

JW - Mostly loading ammunition and bombs. Some of them were on planes.

LH - Where did you get training to know how to load the ammunition?

JW - I guess just hard work. We got to take a trip up Mount Fujiyama. The farther we would go there was snow up there. We borrowed a Jeep and went up there and looked around.

LH - What did it look like?

JW - Kind of like the Colorado Mountains, I guess.

LH - After you had been in the Philippines, it probably was nice to see snow, wasn't it?

JW - Yes.

LH - Did you do anything else in Japan?

JW - We drove around some and looked. Some of the Black Russians lived there. We had never seen any of them. That was kind of interesting. There were a lot of trains. They were really fast, some at sixty miles an hour.

LH - That would have been fast. What do you remember most about being in Japan?

JW - They didn't mind working and getting another job.

LH - The Japanese people?

JW - Yes. I guess the bomb probably saved a lot of lives, if our company had of went in there as a ground force. It really killed an awful lot of people.

LH - These days we would think about radiation after the bomb. Did you worry about that?

JW - I don't think we really knew enough about it right then. There are a lot of people having cancer now, but not too many that were in it.

LH - There are several. What do you remember most about being in the Philippines?

JW - I kind of liked it there.

LH - And you were there for how long in the Philippines?

JW - A couple of months.

LH - What did you like about it?

JW - I guess it was being on the ocean.

LH - That was new for a Kansas boy too, wasn't it? Did you get to swim in the ocean?

JW - No, we would throw coins off the boat and they would go way down there and pick them up. That was pretty interesting.

LH - Did you make friends with any of the people in the Philippines?

JW - I don't think so, too much. I think we did with the kids.

LH - Were you ever in battle?

JW - Pretty close. There was some bombing on the north end of the Philippines.

LH - You were drafted in 1942 and the war was not over until 1946. This picture at Victorville Army Flying School shows you.

JW - They trained Chinese in gunnery there a lot.

LH - Was that school in San Diego?

JW - It was at La Junta, Colorado. They gave us one of those books with pictures of everybody.

LH - This says 2053rd Ordinance Company. Is that what you were in?

JW - Yes, we loaded practice bombs on planes for training. They took them out to a bombsight and trained to drop them on a target. We had some regular bombs there.

LH - Did they know which was which?

JW - On yeah, we had to keep the temperature right on them.

LH - You wore glasses when you were in the service?

JW - Yes.

LH - Was that difficult to worry about glasses?

JW - I guess a lot of people in the Army wore glasses or go to Doctor Frye.

LH - Then you don't have to anymore. What was your rank by the time you got out?

JW - PFC. I tried to keep in touch with some of them, but they aren't in the same place they used to be. I suppose they have all gone now.

LH - Maybe all of them are not. Did you ever go to reunions?

JW - We were supposed to have some, but I never did get to go. I had a brother who was in the infantry and he went to his service reunion and he really liked it. He had some of his buddies up in Nebraska and we drove up there a few times.

LH - Did you go with him?

JW - I went with him; he didn't like to drive.

LH - Is there something else that you would like to talk about?

JW - No, I think we covered it. I hope it is OK. I have a letter that I wrote to my dad from Panama.

LH - The book of this tape will be in a room at the courthouse and if you want to put a copy of the letter in there you can. You don't have to.

Interviewer: Lynne Hewes (LH)

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Tape 1 of 1

END