

Veteran: George F. Rhoades, World War II Veteran

Interview Date: July 26, 2007

Interviewer: Alex E. Jolley

Int: Please state and spell your full name

Vet: George Franklin Rhoades.

Int: Where do you currently reside, in a city and a state?

Vet: 341 North 700 West, Cedar City, Utah.

Int: Is this the same area where you resided when you were drafted or when you enlisted?

Vet: No. I lived in Indiana at that time.

Int: Okay. Were you enlisted or were you drafted?

Vet: I was enlisted.

Int: What type did you serve in, what branch of the service?

Vet: I served in the Army Air Corps. I went in as an aviation cadet.

Int: Were you in full time?

Vet: Yes.

Int: Where was your headquarters located?

Vet: I didn't have any. I moved around quite a little bit. I took basic training in Mississippi, Biloxi Air Force Base. Then I was transferred up to Altus Air Force Base, in southwest Oklahoma. From there I went to Carlsbad Air Force Base in New Mexico. From there to Madison, Wisconsin to radio school. From there to down to Scott Field, Illinois to the next higher radio school, and I was discharged from there.

Int: During what years did you serve?

Vet: My enlistment was from the 25th of August, 1943, to the 6th of November, '45. Two years and three months or four months, something like that.

Int: What was the highest rank you achieved?

Vet: Aviation Cadet.

Int: Oh, same as you started. Were you ever decorated for your service?

Vet: Not really. There just wasn't an occasion for that.

Int: Did you serve in a combat or non-combat position?

Vet: Non-combat.

Int: Were there any people of your acquaintance that have become prominent historical figures?

Vet: Well, one of the fellows in my class became a major a little later. That was about the most prominent in that bunch.

Int: When you reflect on your military service, what is the most vivid memory of your service?

Vet: That 's kind of difficult to say; maybe when our train pulled in to Carlsbad, New Mexico. Every building in that town was white. And I soon found out why. It's hot there in the summer time; hundred and twenty every day all summer long.

Int: That's crazy. Were there any particular moments of religious or spiritual experience during your service?

Vet: About the only thing I can think of along that line; I read the Old Testament while I was in the service.

Int: Tell of your family life while serving, could you?

Vet: Our family consisted of mother and dad, my sister, and myself. My dad was an accountant for several companies that were involved with war production during the war. I think the last one was Allison Aircraft Engines in New York. So he travelled around quite a little bit. But he never failed to write me a six or seven page letter every week. I don't know how he did it. I could never think of that much to write back. My thought was, well, there's nothing going on here that's interesting. Oh, my sister was in the Navy. She was a control tower operator in the Navy. She went in about two years before I did, right after Pearl Harbor.

Int: What were your experiences of joy and sorrow during your service?

Vet: I can't think of any that were either one to any extreme. Things went pretty smooth.

Int: That's good. Describe your feeling of support from home, like your family, your country, your congressional and or political.

Vet: I suppose I was well pleased with it.

Int: What were the physical conditions under which you served—like a jungle, at sea, sand and/or desert terrain?

Vet: It was all here in the States.

Int: Do you have any regrets about your service?

Vet: Not a one.

Int: That's good to hear. What is the single most positive experience of your service?

Vet: I suppose I'd have to say the day I found out I was going to be discharged.

Int: How has your service colored your current political, social, or religious views?

Vet: I don't think they did a bit, not a bit.

Int: If you could give advice to service men and women of today, what would it be?

Vet: There's an old axiom that came up in the West, in the 1800's that said 'ride for the brand' and 'work for the brand'. What that meant was that if you hire on to a ranch you supported that ranch with all your actions. My advice would be that if you're a soldier, or sailor, or marine, or WAC serving your country, serve it with all your heart.

Int: That's something that everybody could take, I think. How do you feel about the current conflict in Iraq?

Vet: I wasn't in favor of the first action, 'cause I felt like it wasn't in response to Iraq attacking us directly. But since we were there, I supported the action and the troops wholeheartedly; and still do.

Int: Thanks, Mr. Rhoades for letting me do this interview with you.

Vet: You're certainly welcome.

Int: I was wondering, could you tell us more about your duties as a cadet?

Vet: Yes. At the beginning of my enlistment, they gave us three days of intensive testing for just about everything: Math, reading, and all kinds of things. And the highest score of those tests would be three areas of ten was the highest. And I all scored nine on all three of them. And so that put me in line for pilot training. And more specific, for fighter pilot training. And had I been able to finish the course, I probably would have been flying P51s, which at the time was a marvelous piece of machinery. But of course they had such a backup of cadets in the program and were weren't able to enter the program completely until some later date. And at the end of the war they had 40,000 extra pilots so they said, well, you've got a choice. You can take a discharge and go home, or you can stay in the program, wait till you can get into flight training. And I said goodbye, and I went home. Wasn't bad I guess.

Int: Yea, I don't blame you for that.

Vet: I didn't either at the time. I've wondered several times since then, if maybe I should have, but if I had, I would've come out just in time for Korea. And I'd of been flying F80s or F86s, and I'd probably got myself shot down by some hotshot North Korean Pilot. So I decided it was just as well I went home.

Int: Do you have any more memorable experiences?

Vet: When I was stationed in Carlsbad, New Mexico, due to the heat we slept outdoors at night. And on the 5th I think it is of August 45, quite a few of us were awake just staying around. And I was facing the west and almost the whole sky west and east and above us lit up as bright as daylight, maybe brighter than sunshine. And we later found out that was the first atom bomb test that was taken; about sixty miles west of where we were. But we didn't find that out until later that month. But that might be the most impressive thing I had happen.