

Clarence G. "Sonny" Richardson
World War II
Parowan, Utah
Interview Conducted: January 19, 2008
Adam Decker, Steven Decker, Interviewers

INT: Ok you're on...

VET: My name is Clarence G. Richardson. "Sonny" nickname by which I go by, and I do reside in Parowan, Utah and my address is 597 N. Collette Lane.

VET: I was drafted from Parowan, in 1943, February 1943, and uh...and the branch I served in was the Army, I took my basic training down in Mississippi with the 87th Division, and was there for thirteen months, and went to Fort Ord, California for special training, and went over seas...

INT: Special training in what?

VET: Uh... tactics, Army tactics.

VET: I did not serve in the Guard or Reserve Unit.

VET: I served from 1943, February 1943, and served three years, and um, one year I spent in the hospital for wounds I'd received during the war.

INT: That's what the Purple Heart's for, in the medals that we saw.

VET: Yeah, yeah. Right.

VET: Uh, I was asked to promoted several times but I wouldn't take it, because of my position and the guns that I used, cause I was familiar with and could act more active with what I had. I didn't care about being promoted, and I served as a PFC from the time I took basic training 'til I got out. They asked me to stay in and they'd promote me but I said no I'd served my time, so uh...highest rank was PFC.

VET: "Were you decorated for your service?" Yes. "Why?" Because serving in the Asiatic-Pacific, Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart and Service Stars, three Service Stars, for uh, bravery. "Who decorated you?" Uh, General MacArthur, in New Guinea Hospital.

INT: Personally?

VET: Yeah.

INT: Wow, what did you think about that?

VET: Oh, it was nice, uh, he had a home there in New Guinea, uh, Hollandia, and all the wounded he came down to visit us and served us our Purple Hearts, in the hospital at Hollandia.

INT: Did he spend time there or did he just kind of go through?

VET: No he just came through, and shook our hands and talked to us for a while, then he left. But he was a good General.

VET: Says, "Were you decorated for your service? Why? And what were the circumstances surrounding your decoration? Who decorated you? Did you serve in combat?" Yes. I served in three big campaigns, Guadalcanal, Mondy, well there's four actually New Guinea and the Philippines where I was wounded.

INT: Monda? M-O-N-D-A?

VET: Mondy, M-O-N-D-Y. Yeah it was in the Solomon Islands, New Georgia Islands.

INT: And you were wounded in the Philippines?

VET: Yeah, I made it through clear down to there, and one time all of our... in this one company there was only twelve of us left out of the two hundred people, who were wounded or killed during that time. This was with the 43rd Infantry Division.

INT: And your Hospitalization was in the Philippines?

VET: In New Guinea, they sent me from the Philippines back to New Guinea for a month and then sent me back to the states in March of '45, and then went to Beaumont General Hospital in Texas. I served a year down there getting put back together and then I got out in 1946, February 1946.

INT: Wounds from gunfire? From shrapnel?

VET: Well, gun and then I got bayoneted in the leg. We got ambushed, and there was five of us that got hurt, but none of us got killed. It's a shame to say that you have to kill people but that was one time that you didn't care, it was you or him so...

INT: Now did you leave from here? Were you living here when you left?

VET: Yeah, well I was living from Nevada but they drafted me from here so I still lived here except for the short time I went to Nevada. So there was quite a bunch of us that left at the same time, Jack Dalton, Elton Robin, Dennis Dalton, Leonard Dalton, Worth Orton, Ken Mitchell, there was a bunch of us that left at the same time. But we went different places, lets see where did I get to...

VET: Well I uh, it says here “Were there any people of your acquaintance that became important history figures?” Well yeah, I have. You’re talking about the service?

INT: Yeah.

VET: Well I had two brothers in the Navy, Paul and Frank, and uh, Paul he served over seas but Frank, he was here in the states all the time with a rocket unit in the Navy, and he stayed in the States.

INT: Now uh, Frank has passed away, has Paul?

VET: No he’s still in Nevada.

INT: Okay.

VET: My youngest brother passed away and my youngest sister.

VET: Well It says here “frightening humors of your service” um you mean just one time you were a little upset or something?

INT: Yeah just something you’d like to tell.

VET: You know every campaign you was a little upset at stuff a little scared until you really got into it then you really didn’t do anything much about it until you got through, you know? We’d usually stay out on the line for about two weeks, but one night in New Guinea we got called out at midnight, and they sent us down to Veack, New Guinea, and said the Japs were bringing in supplies, and we rode these amphibious tanks down there several miles I don’t know just exactly how many. But we hit the beach and laid there for a while and nothing happened so we came back but that was kind of a nervous night you know we couldn’t see anything, cause nights over there, some nights are so dark you can’t see you hand in front of your face, and other nights you can read a book, it’s so light. So...you’d be out there and the Japs would come up to your perimeter, and they’d lay white phosphorus down so they could come back in at night, and uh enter your foxholes and bayonet you or whatever. And it was kinda frightening too, to stay awake or have a partner that stayed awake, but other than that why, war isn’t good for anybody I would recommend every young guy go into basic training though if he didn’t have to go to war, cause it’s good training for anybody. It’s good service.

INT: What about a funny one? Is there something you can remember that’s... We were interviewing one in Cedar, one veteran in Cedar and he was a tail gunner in a plane and he shot down his own plane. He forgot to quit pulling the trigger when he passed the tail. You know I don’t know if there’s something like that?

VET: Well we had that, one night we was out in New Guinea and we pushed in about eight miles and we uh intercepted a company of Japanese and by the time we’d killed um all we uh...it was dark then when we started back in we got pinned down by our own

Machine Guns, cause a lot of Japs could speak real good English, and we didn't have the password to get back in because we figured you know we'd be back in daylight, so we laid out there all night in the rain pinned down by our own machine guns.

INT: Anybody hurt?

VET: No, no. We had a few of the guys who accidently shot themselves cleaning their guns or something, but other than that why... and you couldn't get out of your foxhole at night because your own men would shoot you, and sometimes you know, one time we'd got, they'd flew in some chicken, canned chicken and dropped it to us. And uh we didn't have anything to cook it in so we uh, just cooked it in a helmet. And it had helmet oil inside, so some of the guys got dysentery and that's one time you can get out of your foxhole because you either had to just crap in the corner or something or stay there 'til morning.

VET: Says "Memory of Service" well it was something different, something I wouldn't care to go through again. The basic training like I said is real good for anybody but, war is terrible for anybody, you see people blown apart, arms legs heads laying around you know... and it's hard to get used to stuff like that. And then if you don't have a burial crew to bury the Japs and stuff, why they lay out there for a day or two in that heat and rain and it's just a terrible smell you can't hardly stand it. But it's just bad, bad experience...

VET: Well it says "about my religion" well I was always LDS but I was never real strong, I was baptized into the church here when I was eight years old, me and my sister but I've never been really active in the church, I found a lot of political stuff in the church that I don't care for, so I just don't go much. But the Mormon Church is the best as far as I'm concerned.

VET: Well I wasn't married at the time it said "Tell of Family life" well my folks they kinda moved around, and my dad worked at the steel mills up in American Fork during the war, until I came back then I went back to Nevada. Mail was real important, it'd be sometimes you'd never get a letter or anything for a month until it'd catch up to you or longer. And it was real important as far as family you know to know what they all are doing.

VET: It says "What are your experiences do joy?" Well when we would go back for a rest in New Zealand or Australia it was real nice, they treated us good and it was nice, to get some gallons of ice cream and something good to eat. That was a Joy.

VET: Had plenty of support from the family too in their letters, and a lot of the class mates too, the girls, wrote us letters too you know, from Parowan High, JoAnne Gardner, one of the oh... Hyatt girls, and I forget the other, but that was real important to get letters from home.

INT: Would that be one of Jill's aunts?

VET: Could've been.

INT: Um, that's Alma's family, Darlene and Jeannine and Yvonne.

VET: Yeah, Yvonne I think was her name. There's a lot of stuff I've forgot you know.

VET: It says "What were my physical conditions under which we served?" well it was good, I got malaria a couple of times but other than that, why, my physical conditions was good. I was back in a rest camp in New Guinea, and they wanted some boxers, and I'd had a little training so I boxed there a while. I held the middle weight championship for our division, but then after I got my arm and hand shot up I couldn't do that anymore so I gave that up.

INT: What about... was it jungle?

VET: Yeah jungle, it was all jungle. Except the Philippines, when we hit Lang Gang Go, the tenth of January, why it was big cliffs we had to climb up and sandy beaches, and the Japs were firing at our boats bringing us in and ships, and the planes was kind of keeping it off of us. But a lot of them got blew out of the water and a lot of them got wounded on the beach, and I always tried to get in the first or second wave, cause they would zero in on the other waves coming in, and blow them right out of the water. Then as soon as I hit the beach I'd try to get in off of it as soon as I could, I'd get in off the beach because they had you zeroed in on them mountain guns. And that's when I got wounded was the second day, taking a mountain gun, and going up through some rice patties and they were hitting the grass with machine guns and that was something else that kind of bothered you when you heard all that cracking around your head and you know it was bullets aimed for you and you had to keep moving.

VET: Yeah it said "Physical conditions under which you served" jungle, sea, sand on the beaches.

VET: No there was no regrets really about the service, it says "Are there any regrets about your service?" No, I was glad to serve.

VET: It says "How has your service colored your political, religious or social reviews?" Well my religious views are good and I feel my political are too.

VET: Well it says "If you could give advice to service men and women...?" Well my oldest son, he was in the First Airborne Paratroopers and he went to Vietnam, and he came back ok but I gave him a lot of advice, when he went in.

VET: It says "How do you feel about the current conflict in Iraq?" Well I never liked it from the start we should have never gone in there, but now that we're in there I think we should stay and clean it up. Finish it and not leave them people in the bad situation that they're in today. I think we should stay there and, bring some troops home if we can and turn it over to them. But I feel we shouldn't pull out. It'd be the wrong thing to do the

way we went in there and expected to take it in a couple of months, and it'd be over, you know? So... other than that I'd just didn't like it to start with. Especially sending our National Guard in you know, we never did do that during the big wars, the National Guard is to protect the United States, they didn't go over there. And that's one thing I was against was sending those guys over there.

INT: That's just the...that's just the release there.

VET: But since I've been out of the service why, I've stayed down in Nevada for about forty years, then moved back to Parowan and retired, ran power plants for the city, Parowan City enjoyed that, then retired, so I love Parowan love it and hate to see it grow, but it is so...Ok anything thing else? Any little questions or anything?

INT: Um, I was just wondering what PFC stood for? Is that Private First Class?

VET: Yeah, I was acting Sergeant going over seas and I was there several times, and we lost so many, but I never wanted a promotion I was a BAR man and that's what I wanted to stay, so I never took any promotions other than that. I liked it the way It was and then I kind of had my own way, we had some Second, First Lieutenants come over there that had no experience, one time over there in New Guinea, we were taking a hill, and kinda down a draw, and we were mortaring a place down there and he takes some of his own men down there, gets himself killed, about blew the leg of his sergeant. And so that was another reason I didn't want to take promotions and run these guys into places you know that would get them killed, or hurt, so I just liked it the way it was, so I had a little more freedom. Anything else?

INT: I can't think of anything else...

INT: Do you have anything else?

VET: I...Like I say I don't talk about it too much with the killing and what went on but it was bad...

INT: Alright, we appreciate it.

VET: Well I appreciate helping you, anytime I can help you let me know.

INT: Thanks.

VET: Thank you.