

Veteran: James C. Sandberg, World War II

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Interviewers: Alex E. Jolley and Holly Jolley

Int: Could you please state your full name?

Vet: James Calvin Sandberg.

Int: Where do you currently reside; in the city and the state?

Vet: Cedar City, Utah, 1150 West.

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

Vet: No, I was living in Antimony at the time I was enlisted.

Int: In which branch of the service did you serve?

Vet: US Navy.

Int: Were you full time or were you in the reserve?

Vet: I was full time.

Int: Where was your headquarters located?

Vet: Different places. First in Farragut, Idaho for boot camp. Then I was in the hospital for a period of seven and a half months. Then I went aboard ship for eleven and a half months, USS Gerrard, an attack transport.

Int: During what years did you serve?

Vet: From September 1943 until February of 1947.

Int: What was the highest rank you achieved?

Vet: Quartermaster Third Class.

Int: Could you tell us some of the duties you did as that?

Vet: Quartermaster was assistant to the navigator aboard ship. We also had to learn the things the things a signalman did. We learned to send semaphore, and Morse Code on a light. We had to learn to send Morse Code 22 words a minute, and semaphore 14 words a minute. That's

waving the flags. We had to stand signalman watch aboard ship along with the assistant officer on that deck with the navigator.

Int: Were you ever decorated for your service?

Vet: No, no decorations. Should've got one for being in the hospital so long.

Int: Why were you in the hospital?

Vet: I got Rheumatic Fever night after I got out of boot camp. They put me in the hospital and wouldn't let me touch my feet on the deck for three months. I went to serviceman school after I got back in, went to quartermaster/signalman school; went back to Farragut for that again.

Int: Were you in a combat or non-combat position?

Vet: I was in a combat position aboard ship.

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

Vet: No, I guess not. We were in Tokyo Bay when General MacArthur signed the surrender, accepted the surrender of the Japanese people. That was the only real landing that we made was in Tokyo Bay. We did a lot of training. The attack transport carries the small boats. We had thirteen small boats aboard ship. It'd take us about 30 minutes to put all those small boats in the water, and they'd circle around our ship and put up a smoke screen. At the right time they'd all head for the shore, hit the beach with the combat people on them, usually marines that we had.

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

Vet: Probably the period of time that I was in the hospital, remembered it. Probably going in and taking over the Yokosuka Naval Base in Yokosuka, Japan. That's why made, we did a lot of training, and they finally made a landing in Yokosuka at the naval base there, it's in Tokyo Bay. When we went ashore, they had interpreters that had white arm bands on. The first day you'd see a white armband maybe just up around the corner. The second day you'd see the interpreters would be talking would be talking with the sailors that was aboard ship. The third day you'd see the GI going down the street with a Japanese girl under both arms. So they fraternized quite rapidly.

Int: Any other memorable events?

Vet: Yes. I guess the most memorable event was being set apart as a group leader in the Church, being responsible for the group meetings that we had. After we got aboard ship we held our church meetings in the barbershop. Our barber, Welby Ruston, was LDS, and we had many interesting meetings there. We had an investigator named Francis Zimmerman who led the singing in our group. He learned all the LDS songs, and he would help us do missionary work. We couldn't baptize him. We didn't have a font aboard ship and couldn't do it there, but he was

baptized right after he got off the ship; both he and his wife. They came and visited us, we were in Logan at the time going to school in Logan. They came and visited us there. We had our Patriarchal Blessings together. So that was an interesting event and a little bit of missionary work I was able to do while we were aboard ship.

Int: Were there particular moments of religious or spiritual, any more of religious or spiritual experience during your service?

Vet: Yeah. We had meetings. We were the first ones hold the group meetings aboard ship. Later on they also started having the Jewish services, and Protestant services aboard ship. Ours was going for quite a while. When they got, after our shake down crew which was down to San Diego, we went to Hawaii. I was able to get off the ship and go over to the Island the temple was on and get some literature that we could study in our group meetings. That was quite an interesting event.

Int: Could you tell us a little of your family life while you were serving? What kind of family life did you leave at home while you were serving?

Vet: I just barely turned 18. I went to boot camp for three months. When I came home we got married, I married Marba Haycock from Panquitch. Most of my service time, I had a wife at home waiting for me. She put together this scrapbook for me. This picture here shows time spent in the hospital. A group of my buddies made good use of our time.

Vet's Daughter: You should mention that you were engaged when you went in the service.

Vet: Yeah, I was engaged before I went in the service.

Int: What kind of contact did you have with your wife during service?

Vet: A letter every day. This is commissioning of the ship. This is my highest rank, well not rank, Quartermaster Third Class. This shows a picture of the ship steering wheel. We had to be proficient helmsman and train at the helm. This indicated third class. That's just a picture I picked up in Tokyo of a Japanese lady washing her hands in Holy Water before she went up to worship. I kept this picture on my locker door.

Int: Did you get mail every day then?

Vet: No. Sometimes we'd get fourteen or fifteen letters at once when our mail didn't catch up with us. This is my buddy that I kinda, maybe thought we could stay together. His name was Sergeant and mine was Sandberg. When we went through the line coming in, when we come out we had different numbers on our sea bags. So he went to one company, he went to Camp Bennion, and I went to Camp Hill, so we didn't stay together the first night. This is some of my buddies. This is a buddy I was gonna try to see at this reunion. His name's Francis Zimmerman,

he was a radar man. I kept Marba's picture on the locker so I could see her every time I got in my locker.

Int: What kind of quarters did you have on the ship?

Vet: We had bunks on top of each other. You could let 'em down, they'd swing down and just hang, or you could raise 'em up and tie up the sides. They were about that far apart, one on top of the other. We were in quite close quarters.

Int: Could you tell some of your experiences of joy and sorrow that you felt during your service?

Vet: I was pretty sad all the time 'cause I was lonesome. We were a mobile distribution unit for the 3rd Fleet and were stationed in an area in the Mariana Islands; the fleet was up bombarding the coast of Japan. We'd take mail and servicemen and make transfers at sea. While we were underway we'd have big booms that we'd have cables strung from that would make these transfers at sea, one ship to another. I don't have a picture of the platform and the rope net; they'd send a rope across to the other ship and pull the rope up with a cable. When they'd tighten it up it'd raised the platform up off our ship and move over to the other ship and right back down again. So we made a lot of transfers at sea, especially after they dropped the atom bomb. The war was officially over but a lot of the Japanese submarines didn't know that yet, so we still had to have general quarters an hour before sunrise every morning that'd help us in case a Japanese submarine was still shooting torpedoes, we'd have to be at our battle stations. When we anchored in what they call Sagami-wan, it was just outside of Tokyo Bay. We dropped anchor there and waited for the rest of the armada to form and General MacArthur to come on the Battleship Missouri; they all steamed into the bay together. It was nice to see those white flags all flying. They'd already surrendered, so when the Marines aboard our ship that we transferred from the aircraft carriers and battleships wanted to go in there fighting, they thought they were getting off too easy for what they'd done. But I was glad to see them, the white flags.

Int: Could you describe some of your feelings of support from home?

Vet: Those were very good; my wife writing a letter every day and my mother wrote to me often. My little sister, that's the last I lived at home, when I went in the service and I was pretty much on my own. It's just Marba and I.

Int: Could you describe some of your feelings of support from you country?

Vet: Yes, it was very good. It was all out war and we were out to win, not like today with them quibbling over whether or not we should be fighting, whether or not they should support the troops. Everybody was all out to win.

Int: What were the physical conditions under which you served? Were you at sea most of the time? Docked?

Vet: Physical conditions on the ship?

Int: Yeah.

Vet: They were good. That's one of the big reasons you joined the Navy, so you'd have a clean place to sleep every night; wouldn't have to be dug into a fox hole or something like that. We thought we could be together with my friends, but it was probably good that I wasn't 'cause I wouldn't have made a lot of other friends, I'd a had just one friend.

Int: Do you have any regrets about your service?

Vet: No, I'd regretted I was in the hospital for so long, but that was the doctor's orders that I wasn't to put my feet on the floor 'til I was over the Rheumatic Fever.

Int: What is the single most positive experience of your service?

Vet: Probably making the landing at Yokosuka Naval Base, which we'd trained a long time to make landings. Every place we went we'd try and, my battle station was in the after steering engine room of the ship. I had the ammunition hold below me and a five inch gun above me, so they'd pass the ammunition through the compartment I was in to get it up to the gun to shoot. Every time they'd shoot the five-inch gun, the deck'd go down about that far from the recoil of the five-inch gun. They shot a projectile about that big around. Whenever we came into port, like into Pearl Harbor, we have gunnery practice. They'd send a plane up and drag a target four or five hundred yards behind the plane. Our guns would have to shoot down the target, and just practice. We had a good gunnery crew aboard ship. They had made landings in Italy and had been together for a long time. They'd usually get 'em about the third or fourth shot. They'd shoot the target down. We were in a typhoon in Tokyo Bay. That was an interesting experience. A small boat came drifting by with some personnel in and the motor had stopped on them and they couldn't get it going and they were about to sink. The captain sent down a small boat from our ship and rescued them. But the wind was blowing away from our ship and they couldn't make it back to our ship, so they went and tied up behind a LCVP, they called 'em landing a ship, anyway, that landed tanks. They tied up behind one of them. During the storm, the LCVP had to get underway and they had to cut the small boat loose. It went over and wrecked on the sea wall that was there. The next day after the typhoon was over, we sent another small boat out to salvage the motor off the boat that was on the sea wall. When they got the motor salvaged and put it in the other boat and had the front end down just a little bit from the personnel carrier. It swamped it, and it sunk. So our captain was in the ocean swimming to the sea wall; Captain Barnett. That was quite an interesting experience. The motors on those, LCVPs, they called them, Landing Craft Personnel, were about the same as the motors that are in these Greyhound Buses; big motors. We sunk two of 'em on a Japanese sea wall.

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

Vet: They were very good. They allowed us a lot of freedom and encouraged us to go to church when we could. We had our, like I say, we had our group meetings. We had our group and we'd always invite other people to come in. So that was an interesting missionary experience.

Int: Do you think your service changed your political views, or your religious views?

Vet: No, they strengthened my religious views. Like they say, there's no atheists in fox holes. We ran onto some sea mines and cone mines; they're big balls like that loaded with explosives the enemy turns loose in the ocean so that if you happen to hit one of 'em and explodes, it blows your ship up. We spotted quite a few of those and would have to sink 'em, shoot at 'em with our guns. We had twin 20-caliber guns and twin 40-caliber guns, and then they had rifles to shoot the mines. They'd either sink or blow up, one of the two.

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

Vet: Train good. Be good soldiers. Keep your body in good condition at all times.

Int: How do you feel about the current conflict in Iraq?

Vet: Well I think that we're not behind our president as much as we should be. I think they kinda created comfort and help for the enemy when they threatened to cut off the support for the troops. I think they should put more of the Marines. What was island they put up that flag on? We lost 8,000 people in that battle, but nobody talked about giving up because there's some people killed. If we'd have given up then, we'd still have been speakin' Japanese still. The Japanese would have won the war if we'd have given up. That's what I'm afraid these terrorists are evil people. They send their kids into places loaded with explosives and blow 'em up so they kill a few Americans. I think they're evil people and they have to meet 'em with force.

Int: Do you have any more experiences you want to share?

Vet: Yeah, there's a couple that might be interesting. Because we had a religious group aboard ship, the executive officer called us in and asked us to put on a Christmas program. This was in 1946, Christmas. So we got a Christmas program. I had a quartet singing 'The First Noel'. Some of the people were from down south and were quite prejudiced. They were up behind, up on the deck behind the performers calling them names while they were singing 'The First Noel'. We had seven nurses that we were bringing back from the Philippine Islands, and all the officers was sitting out on the deck there, they could all these names these guys was calling the singers 'cause they had one black guy singing and three white guys. So we had quite a bit of prejudice at that time we had to overcome. That was the year of two Christmases. We crossed the International Date Line on Christmas, so we had another Christmas. Christmas went around the world and came back to us again. I asked the cook if we could have two Christmas dinners. He said, "Yes, if you're willing to starve all the rest of the way to the United States", which we weren't, so. It was quite interesting.

Int: Do you have anything else?

Vet: When I was in boot camp, I didn't like lining up in the chow lines. So I'd see the guys on the boxing team didn't have to line up. They had special tickets to go to the head of the line, so I decided to get on the boxing team. I weighed 168 pounds at the time. I thought I could get down to 165 pounds and box in the 165 pound class. I tried for two weeks and got on the scales again and I weighed 175. I'd gained, so I had to box in the upper, 175 pound class. I was on the boxing team, the boot camp commander wanted to keep me in boot camp for another two weeks so I could box in the finals, but I didn't want to. The guys were getting tougher and I was planning on getting married when I got home, so I didn't stay to box in the finals. I won the first two fights. I loved to box. We did a lot of boxing aboard ship too, which was quite a bit of fun to keep in shape.

Int: Did you ever receive anything unusual from home?

Vet: Oh yeah, I wanted to tell. My mother sent me a sprig of sagebrush in an envelope. I put it under my pillow and I could really smell the sage. I dreamed I was hunting deer all night long. It was one of the best deer hunts I've had. That was it. I believe that's about . . .

Int: Was there anything else you wanted to show us in your book?

Vet: I showed you the pictures of my friends and my wife. This is my ruptured duck, that's what they give you when they. . . Call it a ruptured duck. They pin that on your . . .

Int: Did you have any different duties or jobs after the war ended?

Vet: Yeah, it might be interesting, we evacuated a prisoner of war camp up at Sendai. That's about two hundred miles north of Tokyo, Tokyo Bay. The prisoners of war were some of 'em had been taken at, in the Philippines when they were, when the Japanese went over in the Philippines. They'd been dropping them supplies from the air from the time the war was over. It was about two weeks, two weeks they'd been dropping them supplies. Dropping them K-rations, that was corned beef and different kinds of sandwiches. Some of the fellows that were 150 pound men before they went in the service got down to about 90 pounds. They'd been eating these K-rations. Some of them had gained 20 or 30 pounds, it had all gone on their legs. To talk to some of those people who that'd been in the prisoner of war camps was a real experience. They'd tell you about the death march through the Philippines. The worst part of it was transporting them from the Philippines up to the Japanese Island. That's when they got up in the islands they were used for forced labor. When we went on the shore, they had big piles of clothes and stuff that these prisoners of war had got. They were only allowed to fly back 35 pounds of stuff. They'd been dropping them quite a few things; new clothes, new bedding and everything. They had it in a big pile there, we could go down and take what we wanted. Their experiences were pretty sad that they lived through. Some of them had been there three years in the prisoner of war camp. The people there were real good to 'em. Some of the people would

even give 'em part of the rations they had, which wasn't very much. The Japanese soldiers were real cruel to 'em while they were there. As soon as they'd come to the dock, they'd come from the camp down to the dock to take 'em out to the hospital ship, they'd check 'em out to see how their health was and then they'd send 'em from the hospital ship over to our ship. Our ship would feed them a big Thanksgiving Dinner when they got there. Some of 'em would go through the line two or three times; once through the line was more than you could ordinarily eat. I was talking to Dr. Reese, and he said, "I know they're gonna be sick, but I don't have the heart to stop 'em from eating." So they'd let 'em go through two or three times and then they'd have to pump their stomachs back out. They'd forgotten there was even that kind of food in the world 'cause they'd been in the prisoner of war camp so long on just a little ration of rice was about all they were living on, just enough to keep 'em alive. You'd talk to one and he'd tell you a story and then say 'Aw, that couldn't be that bad", and then you'd talk to another and he'd tell you the same story, so you could tell that they were telling the truth. They were telling how bad it really was in those POW camps. That's the story of the POW camps. It was quite an experience evacuating them.

Int: Thank you for this interview, Mr. Sandberg.