

LELAND CRAPSON

This is a portion of the *Oral Histories in Northwest Missouri in the 1940s* program. The Nodaway County Historical Society is sponsoring this program in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council, and with support of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Today's date is April 2, 2009, and this interview is being conducted at the Tarkio Resource Center, Tarkio, in Atchison County. The interviewer is Joni Amthor and assisting is Margaret Kelley, and we're here to interview Leland Crapson from Tarkio, Missouri. His birthday is September 20, 1920. He served in the war in the U. S. Army; he was a Staff Sergeant, and he's going to tell us a little about the war and what life was like in the 1940s.

Amthor: Okay, Leland, can you tell us where and when you were born?

Mr. Crapson: I was born September 20, 1920, at Erie, Kansas, at home.

Amthor: Could you tell us about your parents, what your occupations were, and if you had any brothers and sisters?

Mr. Crapson: My father was a part time farmer and gardener, a school custodian, a truck driver, and a laborer.

Amthor: What did your mother do?

Mr. Crapson: She was a housewife.

Amthor: So how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mr. Crapson: I had one brother, three years younger.

Amthor: Did he serve in the war?

Mr. Crapson: No, he did not.

Amthor: So can you tell us what life was like before the war; before 1940?

Mr. Crapson: Well, I was born and raised in a small town in southern Kansas, southeast Kansas and it was a small town life. I went through elementary school and high school and we had thirty-six in our class in high school and we all graduated together. We were all friends, we knew each other's families, but we were not real close, necessarily, but we just knew each other and we depended on each other for lots of things. We had fun together, and we had classroom reunions until about three years ago where those of us still alive made arrangement to attend. We always had this in our home town and we always would complain about how small town life was not anything like it used to be.

Amthor: So what year did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Crapson: 1938.

Amthor: 1938. Did you have any other members of your family that participated in the war?

Mr. Crapson: No.

Amthor: Okay.

Mr. Crapson: Well, except cousins; I had lots of cousins.
[one cousin was shot down over Germany]

Amthor: What were you hearing about the war before it actually started here in the United States? Did you hear anything about what they were saying about Germans and Japanese?

Mr. Crapson: Yes. Yes.

Amthor: What were they saying?

Mr. Crapson: Well, the war was on in Europe and I was – I had written some papers in late high school and early college about the way people were treating each other and it was very sad for me to see the news reels we used to see these news reels at the movies before the movie started, maybe you aren't old enough to remember that, but that's what happened. That's how we got a lot of our news, because most of us did not – in our town did not take a large city newspaper. We had a weekly newspaper that had local news, but we got our news through radio and through the movies.

Amthor: So where were you when the attack of Pearl Harbor happened?

Mr. Crapson: I was in my dormitory at college and I was getting ready to go to work; it was a Sunday afternoon, and I was ready to go work at a – I worked at a drug store in downtown Pittsburg, Kansas, when I was at school at Kansas State Teacher's College in Pittsburg, and I was listening to the radio and all of a sudden, it broke in – here was this announcement about Pearl Harbor. From then on it was everyday I heard news and I remember our college president got us all together the next morning on this Monday morning, December 8, and all of us were required to go to administration building where we had an auditorium and could listen President Roosevelt and his Declaration of War. Immediately some of the guys of course were going to drop out of school and join the service to win the war. I wasn't that excited about it. I stayed in school because I knew that an education was what I needed and I was registered for the draft, but I was waiting to be called. I did not want to jump in, but a lot of my friends, and buddies in school did. They dropped out of school and joined the Army.

Amthor: Now what university was this?

Mr. Crapson: This is Kansas State Teachers College in Pittsburg, which is now Pittsburg State University, which you would know as a rival of Northwest Missouri State.

Amthor: So you actually waited to be drafted?

Mr. Crapson: Yes.

Amthor: So you were drafted into the Army?

Mr. Crapson: Yes. On July 28, 1942.

Amthor: Can you tell us a little bit about your basic training and where you went?

Mr. Crapson: I went Camp Barkley, near Abilene, Texas, West Texas, and West Texas in August is no place to be. The sand blew everyday and all night, and the camp was of course, there was no air conditioning in those days. So every morning we were required to go out and pick up cigarette butts, but none of us had any cigarettes, so I didn't know how we managed to do that and most of us were assigned to KP several times a week but we just ran over each other in KP because we didn't have anything else to do for they didn't have anything for us to do and our regular Army sergeant who was supposed to do our training was drunk about half the time with a cigarette in his mouth all the time and so actually we had little basic training. We did close order drill, and that I didn't mind that because I was a music major and going to be a band director, so I sort of enjoyed marching, even in the sand. We had lots of KP and lots of the regular cleaning up every day and cleaning was well, with the windows not working, they were either way up or closed, the sand still blew in some. It was not a happy place. It could have been much happier if the regular Army sergeant had not been drunk most of the time, you know? So that was my basic training experience. Practically nothing.

Amthor: That's the only place you went for training?

Mr. Crapson: Yes!

Amthor: Did you get any other specialized training later?

Mr. Crapson: Well, very little. From Camp Barkley we – some of us went to Camp Robinson in Arkansas, at Little Rock. [Laugh] We were going to work in a hospital and so I was assigned and how it came to be, a company clerk was one of the sergeants when we were going to Camp Robinson said, "How many of you so-and-so, you know, nothing kind, are literate?" Because I was in college, I held up in my hand, "Well, I'm literate." "Okay, you're going to be a company clerk. So at Camp Robinson I was assigned to a hospital unit as a company clerk; talk about basic training? I just went in and met somebody who was doing the job, and I sat down and started being a company clerk.

Amthor: No training?

Mr. Crapson: No training.

Amthor: So what did you do as a company clerk?

Mr. Crapson: Well, we took census every day and we assisted the nurses in some way that they needed help, in clerical stuff.

Amthor: Okay. So when your actual service started, where were you posted and where did you go from there?

Mr. Crapson: Well, I think it started at Camp Robinson, because I was assigned as a company clerk to the hospital at Camp Robinson, you see.

Amthor: Was that where you stayed most of the time during the war?

Mr. Crapson: Oh, no! Oh, gosh!

Amthor: Where did you go from there?

Mr. Crapson: Oh, my! Well, in Camp Robinson I was assigned to a unit to a hospital unit that was going someplace else, and we went there – from there to Utah, near Salt Lake City, to a camp and we were to help in this hospital there which we did. We got some training there, but not as a company clerk, we just did it. I just did it. So actually no training. We didn't stay there very long, and then we went – this was in Utah, and then we went to an orange grove at Pomona, California, and set up our hospital, but we didn't every have any patients, and this was in the orange grove outside Pomona. It was a beautiful place, but it was so cold at night – we were in tents and it was so cold at night that we all had to get our long johns out and put them on and wear our overcoats to keep warm. Now we were in tents and so we're supposed to get patients, but we never got any patients, but we had lots of time, and most of us spent a lot of time in Los Angeles, and Hollywood, and every time we [a pass to leave camp], that's where we went. Being a musician, we organized a band, and we had a band that played in the parade in Pomona for some celebration; I think it was some kind of a city celebration but we did play and we played pretty well but we didn't have any training. Of course, I was training in music, but I was not the leader. We had to have an officer as leader, you see, who may have not known anything about music, but that's the Army. That's the Army for me, anyway, to that point and date.

I had a clarinet so I think as I remember I sent for my clarinet.

Amthor: From home?

Mr. Crapson: From home. No, I didn't use an Army instruments. I had a personal clarinet. We actually played some concerts out, too, while we were there, in Pomona. But I do have a picture of a parade that we marched in Pomona, but I'd have to circle me, because there's no way you'd have found me in the – just in a picture. We spent a lot of time in Hollywood, I did, with a couple of buddies, you know, but we didn't have girlfriends. None of us had girlfriends. We did back home, probably, but not in the Army, at that time, anyway. From there we went to San Francisco and we knew they were getting serious then. We went into San Francisco and we were there just very short time. We loaded on January 4, 1942 [1943], onto a cruise ship, which was loaned from the – it was loaned from the Netherlands government. It was a 36,000 ton ship so we knew there would be a lot of people, and there was an entire division on the ship; infantry

division plus us and since we were gathering officers then to go overseas, why we had a better place to get on a ship, so we were not in the lower decks of the hold of the ship, we were close to the top. Of course our officers were doctors and nurses, so they had the choice places on the ship. So on January 5, 194[3], we went under the [Golden Gate] bridge and out to sea and they didn't tell us of course where we were going but we knew we were going west- we couldn't go east. We knew we were going west, and south west, so we figured we were either going to the South Pacific, or we were going straight over – and we couldn't go straight over, because Japanese controlled all of that and the Japanese were active in submarines in the Pacific Ocean. But, as far as I know, we didn't ever encounter any of them; they didn't tell us anyway, but we'd had all the training to evacuate the ship. So, the trip to Australia was not really bad at all. In fact, the thing that scared me most was the equatorial calm. You know about three days in the middle of the ocean, in the Pacific Ocean it's actually calm, so you're going, the ship is going straight through the calm. To me it was scary because I was afraid the ship was going to turn over, you know, but it didn't. And, there's this ceremony that people have to go through when you cross the equatorial calm. You're shaking your head maybe you know what this is. You do? What?

Kelley: Sort of.

Mr. Crapson: Sort of. Well, they chose – we chose – we were able to choose some people who would go through this ceremony and it was just some point thing like this and it was experiencing and telling about experiencing this equatorial calm. I experienced it by being very scared because the ship was quiet – everything was quiet, and we had to be very quiet, until we got through and then we could yell.

Amthor: Why is that?

Mr. Crapson: Ah, it was a ceremony, I don't know. I don't think there was anything to it, other than it was really scary to me, because here we'd been going like this, and I never got sea sick. For some reason, I never got sea sick; but some of the guys spent a lot of the time at the side of the ship at the rail because some of them were vomiting for two or three days. Couldn't keep anything down. I don't know whether you want to hear things like this, but . . .

Amthor: Yes, go right ahead. We just love listening to your stories. Go right ahead.

Mr. Crapson: So, we knew that we were going someplace in the South Pacific. So after the fourteenth day from San Francisco, we docked in New Zealand. Of course, we all wanted to get off ship, but only the officers and doctors got to get off ship and that was just for overnight. We docked, as I recall in the morning, and they got to get off the ship and stay until the next morning, in Auckland, New Zealand. From where we could see, and where I could see, it was a beautiful country, and we could see the hills and the valleys and the lakes, and I would like to go back to New Zealand, but we were there overnight. And then we went over to Sydney, Australia, and that was the Australian Sea, there between Sydney and Auckland is very rough and so some of our guys got sea sick; I didn't, but some of them did, some of them spent the day at the rail, and we docked in Auckland [Sydney] and we were able to get off ship, all of us, so we knew it was going to be some time. And we set up camp at one the suburbs of Sydney, and actually we

had passes to go into Auckland [Sydney] a lot of the time, so we didn't set up hospital. We thought that we would, but we didn't and we spent, oh, about two weeks there. I remember one of the fascinating things there was going out to the suburbs to the racetrack and of course everybody – everybody, goes to the races in Australia, but they run the opposite way. Yes, they run opposite than we do. It was fun seeing them and some of our guys bet on the races; I didn't – I didn't have any money, but some of the guys bet and of course most of them lost, their money at the races, but it was fun being in Sydney, because Sydney is a city, a metropolitan city, and they hadn't built the opera house yet, but that's the most famous thing in Sydney and everybody has to go to the opera house, now, where then it wasn't – well it wasn't finished. The bay is beautiful, the city is a major city and we had lots to do if we had any money in Sydney. From there we were at – our camp was just right outside Sydney. From there we went north of Sydney and we thought – oh, what is the town? Anyway, we went north and we thought we were going to set up a hospital, because there was a hospital that had been vacated there, and we started to set up the hospital, and we got word this was not going to happen. We were going north. So then we knew it was serious. We went to New Guinea and we went to Finschaven, New Guinea, which was a station that the Germans had had as a hospital and a as a school and it had been vacated for some time and there weren't any buildings left. So it's right on the coast as New Guinea goes out to the Pacific, it was right on the coast there. The Navy and the Marines were fighting for the New Hebrides Islands, which was a very bloody battle. We thought we would have patients from there, but by the time we got our hospital set up, it had moved on north. We did set up hospital at Finschaven, right on the ocean. We had a tent hospital, and by the time we left there fourteen months later, we had some buildings, but the Seabees helped us set up. We did most of the work ourselves. And, as a non-commissioned officer, we had – we didn't stay in the barrack type tents, we had a four man tent, and it's interesting – my tent mates – -----my notes. You want me to follow my notes? My tent mates were three guys: one was an architect from Chicago and his job was the dirtiest of them all – he worked in the lab, working with the diseases that we were about to take care of and most of them were intestinal disease, and skin diseases. We had some of our first ventures with what we call jungle rot, and that was a terrible skin disease that you got in places like New Guinea. It might start with a little ring worm kind of thing, and spread clear up your arm and your legs and on your body. Back then Calamine lotion was about the only thing we had to take care of it. We had to start taking atabrine then, which was to control – atabrine.

Amthor: That would have controlled malaria.

Mr. Crapson: Malaria, yes. Anyhow, we had a lot of malaria and those of us that had light skins turned green. It was a yellowish-green. Well, I had some, but the real blondes just really just turned a sickly green. There wasn't anything that you could do, because it controlled malaria, and that was the only thing we had to control malaria then. The patients that we got – we got some battle patients from the islands, and our doctors did what they could; our nurses did too. They were very efficient. Our doctors and nurses were sent from Presbyterian Hospital in Chicago, and they're very good at what they did. Not so good about celebrating, but very good when they were working because they were the people who got all the booze and the nurses and the doctors had many parties, but not when they were working.

Amthor: They share that with the rest of the group?

Mr. Crapson: No. No. They didn't. Well, I said the architect and another one – I was the company clerk, so I got a privileged place in the tent. Another one was a psychologist from University of Illinois, and he was supposed to be working with the people that needed the psychological help- and we all did. Then one was a pharmacist and he got assigned to some pharmaceutical things in the hospital, but not the kind of things that he was used to doing either. So we were all doing something that we hadn't done, really, before, because the psychologist was just still in school. We were all green in what we were doing, but we all somehow made it. My job was to take the census every day, the hospital, and of the camp, and there wasn't any place to go if you wanted to go AWOL, so nobody went AWOL, except, and this was a very sad occasion. Our head nurse, was an old school nurse, and she was feeling that she had lost control of some of her nurses. She walked into the jungle, and the jungle was right there; she walked into the jungle one day, and never returned. We sent out search parties for her; we never found her. Well, it is very easy to get lost in the jungle. In the jungle – we were on the beach and about, I would say, fifty yards, was the jungle. Our patients: some came from battle, but most of them came as patients with psychological problems, jungle rot, intestinal diseases, and a few from battle. Some, later on, had been prisoners of the Japanese and were, when we conquered the Philippines, we got a few of those prisoners who'd been denied everything, you know, since the beginning of the war. So our patients were battle patients, dehydrated, starved, jungle rot, and we were there for fourteen months.

But we didn't know any better! You know?

Amthor: Yes. You had to deal with a lot of different. . .

Mr. Crapson: Yes!

Amthor: And probably not – did the doctors have a lot of training in some of those things?

Mr. Crapson: Oh, we didn't have any training.

Amthor: Were there a lot of wild animals in those jungles?

Mr. Crapson: No.

Amthor: Were there snakes?

Mr. Crapson: Yes.

Amthor: Did you have to deal with a lot of snake bites?

Mr. Crapson: Ah, a few, but not many. Of course the natives, and the natives came through, several natives, the families, would come through the camp, and we allowed them to do that, because some of them had little gardens on the other side of our hospital. They had starter gardens, so we allowed them to do that, but it was awful to see little kids, toddlers, starving, you know? We did provide some of them food, but they didn't know our food.

Amthor: Of course. So did you get many patients from Luzon?

Mr. Crapson: We got some. Mostly from the islands.

Amthor: So how long did you stay at that hospital?

Mr. Crapson: Fourteen months.

Amthor: That's what you said. Did you go anywhere from that point?

Mr. Crapson: Oh, yeah!

Amthor: Where did you go from there?

Mr. Crapson: The Philippines! [Laugh] [Philippine Islands]

Amthor: What was it like there?

Mr. Crapson: Awful. Because the Japanese had just vacated it there. Starving, we didn't set up hospital because we were to be a major hospital for the invasion of Japan. So we didn't set up hospital there. We gathered all the stuff again that we were to have for the invasion of Japan.

Amthor: So what happened to the people that were on the Philippines? Did you take them with you?

Mr. Crapson: No. We just kept our group; we just kept our group.

Amthor: So what happened to the people that were on the Philippines after the Japanese left?

Mr. Crapson: I don't know. We were – we had our own little camp in the Philippines – in Manila and we did take care of a few of the soldiers that had been left there for some reason or other. We tried to get them taken care of but we didn't set up our hospital as such.

Amthor: So that was just kind of a stopping point before you went to

Mr. Crapson: Yes, that was a gathering point and there were several Army divisions gathering there, too, see, but we didn't set up hospital. We were there a short time, and we knew we were going to be a hospital in the invasion of Japan.

Amthor: So where were you setting that hospital up?

Mr. Crapson: In Japan?

Amthor: In Japan.

Mr. Crapson: It was near the city of Fukuoka. It was a Navy base right at the south edge of Japan. Then we went to another Navy base which was Sasebo, which was probably going to be the major hospital. That's right on the island, the major island, of the south, the Navy base on the south island, the major island of Japan. We were ready to go. And we knew we would go. But ... The Bomb.

Amthor: So how did that affect everything?

Mr. Crapson: Well, [sigh]. The President said "The war's over!"

Amthor: So did you stay and help some of the men there?

Mr. Crapson: We went to Japan, oh, yes! We went to Japan and we were there and we figured we were going to set up a hospital in Japan. We were all set with the doctors and the nurses, we were the 13th General Hospital all that way and we were to have a hospital and we were ready to set it up and the war ended, we stayed for about three months, though, in Japan.

Amthor: What kind of casualties did you see there?

Mr. Crapson: Well, we still took care of the sick people as much as we could; we couldn't take – we didn't have – we didn't treat the Japanese, though. We were not to do that and we were going up the island, the main island, and they had fixed the train tracks so we were able to go north and we went to – we saw the results of the bomb.

Amthor: Did you have problems with the radiation?

Mr. Crapson: We didn't. We didn't know any better. We didn't know.

Amthor: So how was – is this something that you found out about later?

Mr. Crapson: Yes. [Emphatically]

Amthor: How did that affect people after being there?

Mr. Crapson: Ah, I don't know; it apparently did not affect me; I don't know. Yes, we went through the whole area there! On a train! Up to Osaka.

Amthor: You would have thought the radiation – unless the radiation moved.

Mr. Crapson: We didn't know!

Amthor: Wow!

Mr. Crapson: Nobody told us!

Amthor: Was that the Army? Do you think the Army just withheld. . .

Mr. Crapson: I think the Army, partly, and I think they didn't know themselves. What damage there was. Now that's my feeling.

Amthor: Did you happen to see anyone that had radiation?

Mr. Crapson: Oh, yes! Oh yes.

Amthor: How horrible was that?

Mr. Crapson: It was very – it's very awful. Very. Sores, yes.

Amthor: Did people that really have the severe burns – did they live much longer?

Mr. Crapson: No.

Not to my knowledge. No, just – the whole town – city was just flat – the only building was that building that we saw on the news – that one building, which was very – wasn't usable. But, it was – well, our train moved slowly enough through that we could see.

Amthor: How long did you stay on that island?

Mr. Crapson: [Sigh] Well, we were there about a month.

Amthor: When did you get to go home?

Mr. Crapson: We went on a troop ship in December of 1944 from Osaka and it was a smaller ship than we had been on, - in the North Pacific in December is pretty bumpy, so – [laugh] I did not get seasick! I did not get sea sick – but a lot of guys spent a lot of time at the rail – couldn't keep anything down.

Amthor: You could have been a sailor!

Mr. Crapson: No.

Amthor: No?

Mr. Crapson: We went from Osaka to Seattle across the north Pacific in December which was not good, but we didn't have any causality that I know of.

Amthor: And that was in 1945?

Mr. Crapson: 1945

Amthor: When you came home.

Mr. Crapson: December, 1945. We docked in Seattle, a few days before Christmas. I happened to have an uncle and aunt who lived in Seattle, and so I got pass and so I called them, it was a weekend, so I had a nice weekend with them in Seattle. They owned a market where they sold groceries and my aunt was a very good cook, and she always had stuff on hand and so I spent the weekend with them in Seattle. Then had to go back to camp, and then we were sent by troop train from Seattle to, well, we went down to the camp to be discharged in Washington. I got discharged there and in January of '46, and took a train back to Kansas City.

Amthor: Where did you go from there? You were in Kansas – so did you go back there?

Mr. Crapson: Yes. Now the tears. Yeah, I went back - we had – I had really a pretty good trip back to Kansas City and there's an evening train that goes from Kansas City down to the Katy, MKT railroad – you don't know anything about that, but like Union Pacific, only it serves eastern Kansas and goes down to Dallas and Galveston, Texas. The Katy – the MKT railroad and they have an evening train and I got in and got on the evening train, and the evening train has something for me because I used to deliver papers and my papers came in on the evening train, so I know about the trains. So I knew when it would stop at my hometown, if there were any passengers, but most of the time the papers were thrown off the train because it didn't have any passengers, so I would have to chase the papers down, but that's another story. You know, they just threw them off the train.

Amthor: They didn't have to stop.

Mr. Crapson: No, they didn't stop! But they had to stop because I was on the train. So my Dad met me and my Mother worked as a telephone operator, night shift and so we had to go by and see her.

Amthor: It was probably a very nice welcome home.

Mr. Crapson: Oh, gosh! [Laugh] Yeah, but that isn't the end of the story. Because I had – well, that could be the end of the story, if that's what you want.

Amthor: NO! Go ahead; we want to hear the end.

Mr. Crapson: Well, the end doesn't come until later. So, family reunion was mainly local family, and I decided I was going to take several months off and that changed my life. My maternal grandfather and I were good friends, but we became very good friends, because he and I had a lot of conversation about what I should do and he said, "All your buddies are getting married," and he said, "They don't know what they're doing. They're buying houses, which they probably can't pay for, they don't have jobs," he said, "stay at home for several months until you decide what you really want to do!" Now I think this is part of the story, don't you?

Amthor: Oh yes! Definitely.

Mr. Crapson: "Stay at home," he says, "your mother's a great cook." I said "I know that." So I stayed home and he and I had a lot of conversations and he said "Go back to school." And I said,

“Yes, I think I’d like to do that.” I had the GI Bill, which takes care of everything, *then*. It took care of everything. And I said, “I could be a music teacher, but” I said “I don’t know that I want to do that.” I said, “I’ve seen so many starving people and so many people who need help, I think I’d like to go back and do something to help those people.” I’d always wanted to go to the university and he said Go!! So I did. I went to the University of Kansas, my state university, and I majored – I started to major in social work, and I decided I’d combine that with something else, and so I did, and that was the idea of public relations and social science, social work, and getting into politics maybe, you know, and political science, and so I combined the major at KU and had a **ball**. For two years. So then I didn’t get a job there, I mean, in that area, so what happened then was some guy told me he would hire me as a social science and a music teacher, which I could do, in some little town in western Kansas. I said, Well, I’m not doing anything else, I might as well try it.” So that’s what happened.

Amthor: Is that where you met your wife?

Mr. Crapson: Yes.

Amthor: So is that the end of the story, or is there more?

Mr. Crapson: Oh, lot’s more – that’s the end of this story.

Amthor: Well, I have a couple of questions I want to go back to. Now when you were in Japan and you were where the bomb went off, how did you feel about that? Was that something that you agreed with Truman when that happened?

Mr. Crapson: I really had mixed feelings. I didn’t like the idea of so many people being involved that weren’t in the war. That bothered me, but I also thought you know, here we are, going for an invasion of Japan; it is going to be – we don’t know what is going to happen to us, to our little group. We figured we might be run over, you know, by the Japanese army; we didn’t know whether we could carry out that invasion before the bomb; we didn’t know! We were going to invade them, come hell or high water, you know?! So it was scary. The idea of the invasion; invading a whole island like this, we knew there would be many, many casualties.

Amthor: Now with the war going over, did you have any threat of – feeling of communism being a major threat?

Mr. Crapson: I didn’t at that time, no.

Amthor: How about polio – when you got home was there a lot of worry that people would be getting polio?

Mr. Crapson: No, there was – yes, there was a lot of worry about polio, yes.

Amthor: Did everyone in your family get vaccinated?

Mr. Crapson: Yes. Yes and nobody in our family got polio.

Amthor: That's good. How about entertainment when you were out in the service, when you were in the islands? Did you have any type of entertainment?

Mr. Crapson: Oh, we had weekly movies.

Amthor: Did you play cards or anything else?

Mr. Crapson: A lot of the guys did; I didn't.

Amthor: Did the USO or Red Cross happen to stop by at the islands? No?

Mr. Crapson: Not on our island! We did have – well, the only USO shows I ever saw was in Hollywood!

Amthor: Did you meet any special actors?

Mr. Crapson: I got to sing in a small chorus with Rita Hayworth one time.

Amthor: Wow!

Mr. Crapson: Oh, yeah, wow.

Amthor: Did you get her autograph?

Mr. Crapson: No. A lot of the guys did, but I didn't.

Amthor: Did you listen to Tokyo Rose?

Mr. Crapson: Some. It came on Armed Forces radio. We listened to the news every night on the Armed Forces radio and --get it especially in New Guinea, because that was our only radio, was the Armed Forces radio. We always had to hear our commanders and our generals, MacArthur especially, because they came on at six o'clock at night when we were at the mess tent, you see, telling what he had done today, where he had been, and who he had conquered, you see, and we all sat there and yeah, yeah, you know. None of us appreciated MacArthur.

Amthor: Did you ever see him?

Mr. Crapson: No. He didn't come to our island, no.

Amthor: Let's see; did you write a lot of letters home?

Mr. Crapson: Yes.

Amthor: Did you get a lot – how did that communication work?

Mr. Crapson: Yes, it worked well, I think.

Amthor: Did you ever try to tell them where you were?

Mr. Crapson: We're not supposed to.

Amthor: Yes.

Amthor: Did you ever try, though, give them a code?

Mr. Crapson: No.

Mr. Crapson: They knew where I was. Somehow they knew where I was, but I didn't make a big deal of it.

Amthor: Did you join the American Legion or the VFW?

Mr. Crapson: Yes. Yes. Both.

Amthor: Are you proud to be a veteran of the World War II?

Mr. Crapson: Yes.

Amthor: You already talked about taking advantage of the GI Bill when you came home.

Mr. Crapson: Oh yes!!

Amthor: What do you think are the major differences among the war today and the war of World War II?

Mr. Crapson: Well, there are both very dangerous, but I think there are so many more instruments of war these days; I think it's horrible to even think about war these days because there are even more horrible things that can happen. Think about the war in Iraq, just the more horrible things that happened. It was horrible when we took – well, I think about in Europe – Paris for example, a major city, was damaged but not like Baghdad has been damaged, you know? It's been wiped out and Paris was damaged, and London was damaged but not – they're still able to do things there, you know, and carry on with commerce in Paris and in London during the war. But our damaging the places in Europe are just horrible and there still rebuilding in some of those cities in Europe. I've visited Cologne, in Germany, and it was – I mean that huge and beautiful cathedral just *putt*. And our bombers did that. You know? Places in France and Holland; I've been to those places and it was horrible. Even now some of that stuff has not been fixed. So I blame us too.

Amthor: Okay. Do we have. . .

Kelley: Let's stop it right there and I'll change the tape.

[Pause]

Kelley: Okay.

Amthor: I have one more question for you. Okay. If – is there one special moment that stands out in your mind during your service that has special significance for you that you would like to share with us now?

Mr. Crapson: I don't think so. My homecoming was the important thing.

Amthor: That's what the lasting memory is how your family welcomed you back home after you were gone.

Amthor: If there was advice that you could give to this generation that could be helpful for what we're going through now – we have this bad economy, we're going through a war – compared to the forties, I mean it's not the same thing, it was a totally different economy back in the thirties and the forties, but you were also going through a war. What things through your experience could you help people going through today? What would be some of your advice?

Mr. Crapson: Well, first off, hang on to your family and help them wherever you can and don't be nosey when you shouldn't, but help your family and be somebody for them, that they know they can depend on. Be somebody for them. And the important thing I think about the kids across the street is to not listen to everyone but depend on a few people who really know something about what goes on in the world, and who love you. And don't just take advice from everybody about everything. And be careful who your friends are. And most kids don't. Aren't. Who ever happens to be popular that day is the one they all gather around. Who's going to be popular ten years, fifteen years, twenty years, and there are kids across the street who never will understand that. It's "I'm going to graduate from high school then I'm going to find somebody and I'm going to get married and I'm going to be rich."

Amthor: Yeah, that's hard to come by, isn't it?

Mr. Crapson: Isn't it? Think ahead.

Amthor: I think that's a good parting statement right there.

Mr. Crapson: Think ahead.

Amthor: Well, thank you for allowing us to interview you today.

