Hawarden's Heroes

An Oral History of World War II Veterans

By

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Senior Honors Project
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A generation of Americans - a group Tom Brokaw famously labeled "The Greatest Generation" - is beginning to fade away. Possibly the most important component of that generation, the approximately sixteen million people that served in World War II, are today dying at a rate of nearly 1,200 per day.[1] Dying along with them are the stories of their life experiences: dreams, challenges, fears, failures, and triumphs. These men and women came from all over the nation, making personal sacrifices for the benefit of the whole during a time of war. As they enter the sunset of their lives, many of those who served quietly go about their business - neighbors who we might never realize were once heroes. The veterans of Hawarden, Iowa are no exception.

They live in Hawarden now, but they came from all over – Cherokee, Iowa; Sutherland, Iowa; Meckling, South Dakota; Clear Lake, South Dakota; and even Boston, Massachusetts. Some were drafted, some enlisted. Some flew in the Army Air Force, some marched in the infantry. Some battled the Axis in the hills of Europe, some on the islands of the Pacific. Some were shot at; others were not. Considering their varied pasts, one must ask: how do their war experiences, the effects of those experiences, and personal feelings about such experiences compare to one another? How did they feel when America was attacked at Pearl Harbor? What did they think of the decisions of their political leaders? What are their thoughts on subsequent wars?

Perhaps the best way to collect this information is through the use of oral history. In his book entitled *The Voice of the Past*, Paul Thompson lists the definition of oral history as, "tape-recorded historical information drawn from the speaker's personal

[1]Kelley Beaucar Vlahos, "WW II Vets Say National Monument Long Overdue," (2004), http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,118216,00.html (Accessed 2 October 2005).

knowledge; the use or interpretation of this as an academic subject."[2] History is for the most part written through the eyes of the powerful. Thompson argues that through the use of oral history, we can trace the effects of major historical events on the lives of ordinary people. By seeking to understand how an ordinary soldier lived and thought during the war, we might better understand the war as a whole. By learning how a veteran feels now about past and present political events, we might better understand the long-term effects of their war service on their personal viewpoints.

Oral history as a discipline has gained popularity and legitimacy over the years.[3,4] Indeed, the specific use of oral history to collect the stories of war veterans has increased in importance, particularly considering World War II veterans. In 2000, the Library of Congress began the Veterans History Project. This massive effort to collect personal narratives, correspondence, and visual materials appears to be extremely successful. A recent release states that by the end of 2004, the project had collected nearly 25,000 veterans' stories.[5] In addition to this general effort, there are numerous other (usually more specific) efforts to collect the stories of veterans.[6]

The basis for this study is oral history interviews with ten World War II vets from Hawarden, Iowa. The research was based on methods outlined in Thompson's book, as

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[2] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), *xi*.
[3] Ibid.
[4] There have been a number of criticisms of oral history as a methodology. Historically, the academic community has ascribed less credibility in oral evidence, tending to prefer written evidence instead. There also has been an emphasis on quantitative survey research. However, oral history has grown such that it is now seen as more credible evidence. It is particularly useful for the veteran's project, considering the fact that it would be difficult to describe and compare experiences quantitatively (Ibid., 78).
[5] "Veterans History Project: Highlights from 2004," http://www.loc.gov/vets/0405highlights.pdf (Accessed 2 October 2005).
[6] See generally: Alex Kershaw, *The Bedford Boys: One American Town's Ultimate D-Day Sacrifice*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2003; and Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers*, New York: Touchstone, 1992.

well as suggestions from the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress. In preparing interview questions, the interviewer expanded on the sample questions from the Library of Congress, based on preliminary research from the work of Studs Terkel and Stephen Ambrose, while being mindful of important considerations that must be taken into account in the wording of questions, etc.

It is undoubtedly true that the stories of these men are best told in their own words. In this study of Hawarden's veterans the author has attempted to step aside, in the hopes that each man's experiences would shape the narrative.[7] The author's intervention is for the most part limited to making connections to the larger political picture and World War II as a whole. The goal of this style was to weave each person's narrative in such a way as to make the study in its entirety an almost chronological account of the war. A secondary but related goal (and hopefully an outcome) was to allow their collective individual stories to in many ways come together as one.[8] This method of presentation also allows the individual stories to themselves become representative of the broader experiences of the nation during World War II.

As expected, there were some very significant differences in the wartime experiences of Hawarden's veterans, for example: their experiences growing up during the Depression, their respective service and military job overseas or within the United

[7] According to Thompson (270), oral history can be presented in four ways: the single life-story narrative; a collection of stories; narrative analysis; and reconstructive cross-analysis. Most relevant for the study of Hawarden's veterans appears to be the collection of stories, which Thompson argues, "allows the stories to be used much more easily [than the life-story narrative] in constructing a broader historical interpretation, by grouping them – as a whole or fragmented – around common themes." Other important works that have used similar presentations include: Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two*, New York: Random House, Inc., 1984; and Ronald Drez, *Voices of D-Day*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.

[8] It is also important to note that in this study some of the quotations used from the interview transcripts have been cleaned up, eliminating false starts, etc. Also, at times the order of the narrator's statements have been rearranged in order to better fit the narrative. These are common interpretative methods for the discipline of oral history. For these reasons, the quotations in this paper may not align perfectly with the actual transcript.

States, and their reactions and feelings now to political and military situations. Yet at the same time, there are a number of similar themes that can be further explored, such as: their reactions to the Pearl Harbor attack, their feelings about the political leaders of the time, their reaction to the use of the atomic bomb, and their feelings toward their fellow soldiers. Although they had markedly different pre-war, wartime, and post-war experiences, Hawarden's World War II veterans feel their service had a positive effect on their life. They were generally fond of their fellow soldiers, their political leaders, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb. Yet these positive remembrances of World War II have not necessarily led to their approval of subsequent wars.

An Introduction to Hawarden's Veterans

Gene Aldrich

Born June 28, 1917, in Cherokee, Iowa, Gene Aldrich moved to Hawarden in 1933. He was drafted into the Medical Service Corps, and served at Okinawa in the Pacific theater. He also later was recalled to serve in the Korean War. He went on to rise through the ranks of the Bank of America, going from a messenger to a branch manager.

Φ

Dallas Crow was born January 7, 1924 in Chatsworth, Iowa. He was drafted not long after graduating from Hawarden High School. Driving a maintenance truck for a bridge-building unit, he helped build temporary bridges across nearly every major river in the European theater, including the Ruhr, Seine, Meuse, Weber, and Elbe Rivers. After

the war, Crow worked in the service station business for twenty-five years and eventually at Coilcraft in Hawarden for twenty-three years.

Born in Clear Lake, South Dakota, on April 23, 1920 John Draayer moved to Sioux County in 1929. Drafted into the Army Air Force, Draayer was a radio operator on a crew that flew air cargo all over Europe, Africa, and Asia. He made it to twenty-three countries over the course of two years during his time in the service. After the war, Draayer made a living as a farmer.

John Draayer

Born February 8, 1925, in Hawarden, Glenn Gregg was drafted into the Army in June of 1943 as a replacement infantryman. Winner of the Bronze Star and Purple Heart during his time in the European theater, Gregg returned to begin a successful farming career. Throughout the years, he represented farmers' interests as he worked to influence the top levels of government –including even White

Glenn Gregg

House meetings with Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. He is the grandfather of the author of this study.

Wilbur Hantsbarger

Wilbur Hantsbarger was born June 2, 1926. As a seventeen year old high school senior, he enlisted in the Navy in January 1944. He served at such places as Einewetok and Okinawa in the Pacific theater, driving amphibious landing craft. Upon his return to the United States, Hantsbarger worked in garages before becoming a postmaster.

Born in Washington Township on February 2, 1914, Clarence Harms was drafted into the Army after working in the agriculture business in various capacities. He served in North Africa and Italy as a repairman with an ordinance unit. In 1952, he opened Harms Feed and Supply in Hawarden.

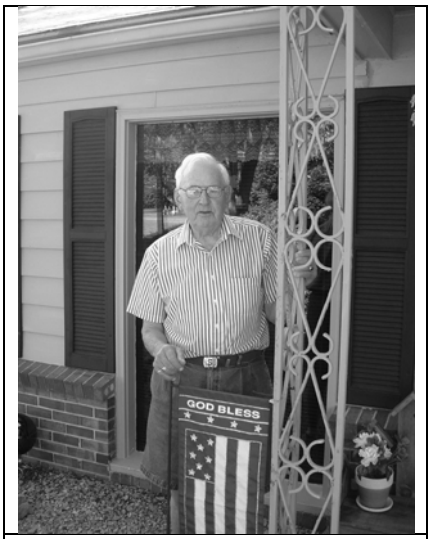
Born February 23, 1921, in Meckling, South Dakota, Elwood "Whitey" Iverson enlisted in the Army Air Force after working in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Remaining stateside throughout his service, Iverson flew air transport missions around the country. After getting a college degree through the G.I. Bill, Iverson taught agronomy and agricultural education for thirty-six years.

Ernest Packard

Ernie Packard was born in Boston, Massachusetts on December 12, 1922. He was drafted into the Air Force in April of 1942, flying missions in the European theater. He served as a belly gunner on a B-17, a job widely regarded as a suicide mission. On a thirty-day furlough during his service, Packard came to Hawarden to finally meet a pen pal with whom he had corresponded since before he entered the service. A week later they were married, and have been for sixty-one years.

Φ

Born December 10, 1919 in Akron, Iowa, Jim Skogman enlisted in the Army in March 1942. Working as a maintenance man for machine gun fire control equipment, Skogman served in North Africa and Europe. After returning to the States, he worked with a pipeline company for seventeen years before coming to Hawarden and operating the Hawarden Steakhouse.



James Skogman

Φ

Earl "June" Slife, Jr. was born June 12, 1921, in Hawarden. He enlisted in the Air Force Weather Service in February 1943. He served in the European theater, and happened to be on a day pass to Paris on V-E Day. Upon his return to the States, Slife used the G.I. Bill to earn his law degree. He opened his own

law office in Hawarden in 1950, and has served on the Farmers State Bank Board of Directors since 1952.

Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself …

President Franklin D. Roosevelt
First Inaugural Address
March 4, 1933

■ ■ ■

The World War II generation grew up in some of the most difficult economic times this country has ever faced – the stock market in shambles, banks closing, and businesses failing. Farm families lived on miniscule annual incomes as drought plagued the land. Like millions of Americans across the country, those who would become Hawarden's veterans each faced the Depression, and met its challenges head on.

Gene Aldrich: We were poor. My dad had several different jobs, most of them away from home. So my mother took care of the family, basically. There were six boys and one girl, and it was always a struggle to make ends meet. I felt that the area was under a curse. We couldn't get jobs. The dust storms were terrible. The grasshoppers were bad. It just seemed like the land was cursed, and I needed to get out.

June Slife: Well, we were poor like most people. My dad and my uncle were in the bank. We took a vacation when I was maybe five or six years old. We went to Colorado with our Methodist minister. My dad, in order to finance that, borrowed some money against a life insurance policy. We didn't have any money to speak of. But we always had plenty to eat. My mother made most of our clothes, she was very handy at that. We lacked for [nothing] that we needed.

Aldrich: We children never really got to know our dad. He was gone, I would say, two thirds of the time. Making a living, he didn't abandon the family, but he had jobs. He was on the railroad, and he was a circulation manager for a big area of South Dakota. He had these various jobs that took him away from home. So my mother really raised us …

We never had a birthday party at our house. We never went on a picnic together. We didn't do any of [those] things … And most of it was because we were just dirt poor. We wore hand-me-down clothes, hand-me-down shoes, everything was used until it was just falling apart. We didn't have our own toothbrush. We just didn't have a lot of things that most families have if they can afford it. It was because we were so poor.

My mother and dad worked so hard, and I know they loved us, and they worked so hard to support us. But they just didn't have time to play with us. I played basketball and football in high school. They never came to see me play. They never came to any of our plays in school that we were in, even if we were featured in them and all. It was just a different upbringing entirely.

Ernie Packard: It just seemed like it was a mess. The folks were doing the best they could, and I was just a kid then … My dad had lost his job on account of the Depression. But he worked for an extra year in the office, and was getting everything cleaned up. My mother had worked in the same office, that's how they met.

Jim Skogman: Well, before I started farming, my brother and two other guys, we caught a freight train out of Hawarden. Went to North Dakota and Minnesota. I thought we had shocked and pitched all the grain bundles there was in that part of the country. I'm sure we didn't.

We stayed in a park the first night up there. We were one of about a thousand, fifteen hundred other people in there. We each had ten dollars, and we had that in our shoe. We went to a restaurant. When we was coming out of the restaurant, [this farmer] hired us right there. So we went to work for him. We didn't sleep in the house, we slept in the hay mow. The only time we got in the house was to eat. We washed outside. We stayed there all through harvest.

Aldrich: I graduated in June of '34 and started hitchhiking around the country … I started for California in 1935. I didn't have any money, I didn't have any job. I didn't have any skills. I got as far as Columbine, Wyoming. I got a job in Columbine, Wyoming as a handyman, for a dollar a day and my board and room. I stayed in Columbine that summer, and came back to Hawarden when the weather got bad …

I stayed in Hawarden until the next summer, hitchhiked down to Boone, Iowa, borrowed ten dollars from my sister who was one of the few employed in the family at that time. Remember it's the Depression, and there's dust storms and all the terrible things were happening here. And took off for California again. I got to California that time.

I managed to find an elderly aunt, who was a widow with no children, and she adopted me. Found me a job wrapping rugs in a furniture store. That lasted for six months, and then I got a job as a messenger in the Bank of America in 1936, or maybe January of '37.

Whitey Iverson: There was only forty or forty-five kids in high school and twelve in my class. Of course, this is during the Thirties and there's no jobs available afterwards. So I joined what they call the CCC camp, Civilian Conservation Corps. That was one of Roosevelt's deals to employ unemployed young people throughout the nation. We were based in the Black Hills and our work consisted of working on Harney Peak and Mount Rushmore, the Wind Cave, Blue Bell Lodge, and doing a lot of conservation work. Fighting fires, and just about anything you could think of. We got thirty dollars a month for our labor plus board and room. We worked under the forestry service during the day and the Army took us over at night. So we were under Army regulations and behavior during the evening hours …

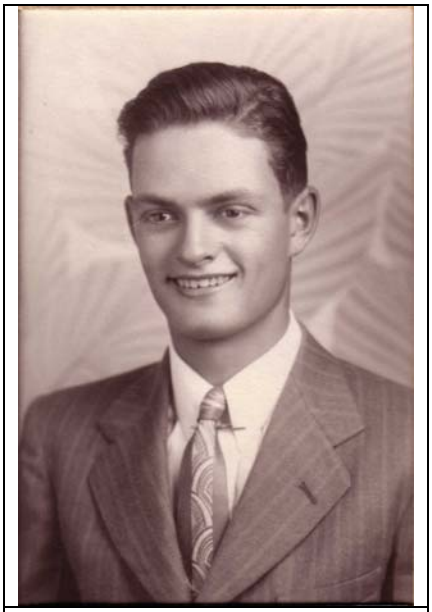
They would drop us off [at Mount Rushmore] in the morning about eight o'clock in a forestry truck, and this was mostly the summertime and late fall. Our job was to haul scaffolding up the top of the faces and take down the drilling bits that they needed, to have them sharpened. Had a little shop there at the base of Mount Rushmore. There was about twenty-eight of us at that time, young men, working there. Plus the drillers from Germany, there were about twenty of them. Most of them were from Germany.

It was quite an experience for a kid who'd lived on the farm and never had the opportunity to get out before. I didn't realize the importance of Mount Rushmore at that time, I just thought it was a job. I didn't really find out until after the war was over how important the job was. (Laughs).

But it was a job, and I didn't think it was dangerous. We had ropes let us down over the face, when we had to do some work. I think one thing I remember is somebody tipped over a five-gallon red can of paint and it dribbled out over Washington's nose, and we had to go down and scrub that off, hanging there in the swing seat over the edge of the face. But I thought that was fun, so we had those experiences. Of course along with that experience, why we got paid pretty well. (Laughs). Thirty dollars a month and board and room.

John Draayer: We went to a country school, a two-room country school just south of Sioux Center and then we went to high school in Sioux Center … I worked down at the Million Dollar Corner, pumping gas for fifteen cents an hour and fifteen cents a gallon … Well we didn't have a lot of money but we had a lot of good living. My folks lived on a farm and we always had plenty to eat during the Depression. I think we grew up in a pretty good time.

Iverson: I remember, a junior in high school, I had to have a nickel for a class party. Folks didn't have a nickel … It was a time – but we never thought everything was, you know we never had television to tell us how poor we were. You never really thought about having a tough time because everybody was in the same boat.



Wilbur Hantsbarger, 1943

Wilbur Hantsbarger: Well I was kind of little going through most of the Depression, but I can sure remember it. We didn't have nothing, but then we didn't think anything of it because nobody else had anything either. And we had enough to eat. Living on a farm you always had enough to eat. We had our own meat. Butchered our own meat. So it didn't really affect me all that much.

My dad bought that farm north of Sutherland, and he lost it. He bought that in 1925. Then he lost it in 1932 I think, or '33. Then the insurance company picked it up, you know, like they did a lot of them. So from then on we rented it until he bought a farm down at Washta. I was fourteen years old when we moved down there.

Dallas Crow: I was kind of young at the time, but you realized it. The thing that I remember the most is the drought in the middle-thirties. You can't believe how it could dry up. The corn just dried up and turned white. I think one Fourth of July, as I recall, it was a hundred and fourteen. About two days later the corn was gone. My dad took the grain binder with a platform canvass on it and went though, that way you could cut two rows at a time. Cut it in windrows, we loaded it up, hauled it in and run it through a shredder and blow it into the barn. That was the cattle feed for the winter. They were pretty thin cows when spring came. That was the worst, them drought years. You can't believe what it does. Best years of my life though, spent on the farm …

Oh, I liked it. I liked it on the farm, that was great. Had all the animals and stuff. We milked twelve head of cows. Separated the milk all by hand. We didn't have running water or electricity or nothing. Quite an experience. Didn't have a tractor. Farmed with horses. Quite a deal. Liked it though …

That was eighth grade, about the fourth to the eighth grade. Then I didn't finish the eighth grade there, when we sold out in March and then went down to Stevens. It's kind of a fouled up mess right through there …. More or less because of the drought years and stuff like that. I can't really tell you how many bushel of corn we had per acre in those drought years, but it was practically zilch. The last year we was on the farm, we figured we had a bumper crop, and we had fifty bushel of corn. I was in the eighth grade, I'd take a team and wagon and go out in the field and pick corn right alongside my dad. Ain't many kids do that today. Kind of fun. (Laughs).

Clarence Harms: Neighbors were neighbors. Got along good, always had plenty to eat. Times were rough, weather was dry. Thirty-six was a very bad year. Just didn't get no crops at all. In fact, all the Thirties were dry. Talk about dry weather now, but back then – this don't compare to what we had back then in the Thirties. There was about ten years pretty bad. Very little rain … And hot. July 4th, 1936, a hundred and eleven degrees. After that we had a hundred and four, hundred and five, hundred and six days. It was hot…

Clarence Harms

I remember in '36 we had all the snow storms, and roads was blocked and you couldn't get to town. When the snowplow did go by – they had these maintainers push the roads open. They didn't have the equipment they got now. If you didn't go to town right away you wouldn't get to town, because tomorrow morning the roads would be blown shut again. It was a rough winter that year. Snow was so hard, the cattle could walk right over the top of the fence and everything. It was hard to get the roads open, too. I wouldn't care to go through the thirties again. (Laughs).

Skogman: I farmed three years before I went to the service. I gave everything away, nearly, to my dad. I didn't need no money anyway, where I was going …

Let no man or woman thoughtlessly or falsely talk of America sending its armies to European fields. At this moment there is being prepared a proclamation of American neutrality.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt
Fireside Chat
September 3, 1939

On September 1, 1939, Hitler's army began the invasion of Poland. Although a number of factors are cited as causes of World War II, this event is generally regarded as the beginning of actual hostilities. To most of Hawarden's veterans, however, the event had few immediate consequences on their lives at that time. They were conscious of what might lie ahead for the United States, but the effects had not yet hit them. For the most part, they were still schoolboys. It would not be long until they were forced to become men.

Slife: I don't suppose I paid a lot of attention to [the war] at that time, since we were not involved … I don't know how to describe that. It really didn't affect me much personally … As soon as we got involved in the war of course then it became a different situation.

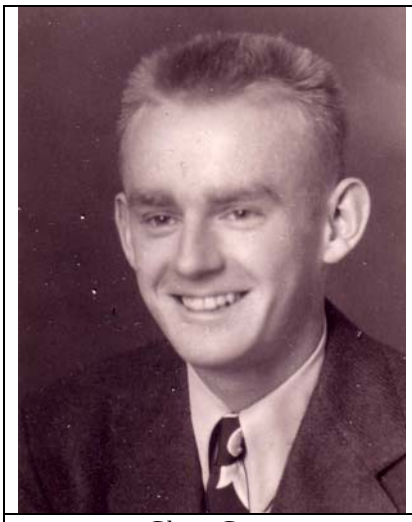
Crow: No, a kid just don't [follow international events], I don't think they pay that much attention to it. They realize it, but they don't pay the attention to it.

Packard: As long as it stayed over there, I didn't care.

Hantsbarger: We was concerned, you know, because my dad was in World War I. I thought sooner or later us kids would have to go, if it would have happened that it kept on going, which it did.

But it just seemed like, you know, when you're a kid just something you read in the funny books and stuff and you don't really get so involved with it. But I heard the older people talk a lot about it, what they thought and stuff. Didn't really think about me being in it at that time, you know …

[My friends and I didn't talk about it] too much, we was too busy playing basketball and baseball and girlfriends, and all that stuff, you know. No we didn't talk about the war much. … A lot of the older people would talk a lot about it. When you're kids you didn't really worry too much about things like that, it will take care of itself, you know.



Glenn Gregg

Glenn Gregg: I was still a youngster in 1939, I was just in high school. Why September 1st, I can remember it yet, that my grandfather came into my room one morning and said "Well, the Germans attacked Poland." That was September 1st, 1939. I think the history books will say that that was the real beginning of World War II. I was very much involved with international policies for a kid that age anyway. So that was very interesting to me. Little did I ever believe that that would ever affect me.

But I wanted to read about it and see how the Poles could do against that big, big country, that big war machine that Nazi Germany had going for them. And the way [it went], why they were no match at all. Germans did just about whatever they wanted to in Poland and then to top it all off

Russia decided that they would also come in from the other side of Poland. And so Poland had the Russians coming from one side and the Germans on the other and it didn't last very long at all.

Iverson: I can remember exactly what happened in September 1939, I think. Nazi Germany marched into Poland. I was on my bunk in the basement of the administration building. The twenty-three students in that basement, we got the facilities free if we'd just clean up the coal bins and sleep in there. I remember lying in the bunk and the war broke out.

We knew that eventually we'd have to go. I was going to join the National Guard immediately for a little money, but that day I guess I had sinus trouble and couldn't get down for the physical. The twenty-three boys who did go down and sign up, they were shipped about a year later to the Philippines and made the Bataan Death March. I'll tell you, it was just because I had a cold I didn't get in to enlist in that group.

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live on in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Address to Congress
Dec. 8, 1941

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It started out like any other Sunday for Hawarden's veterans – church, work, time spent with friends. By the time Sunday turned into Monday, it was clear the United States would be headed to war. The country as a whole made sacrifices that have not been matched since. It was not long before Hawarden's veterans left their civilian lives to begin their service to America in the military ranks.

Skogman: I was playing poker in a garage in Chatsworth, Iowa. That's when I heard it. That was December 7th, I heard that…. We never thought much about it, I don't think. We didn't think we'd ever do what we did.

Clarence Harms

Harms: I was driving in a car, and I had the radio on, and I heard about the war … I think it was a '36 Chevrolet Coupe … I remember exactly where I was when I heard it on the radio. I never thought too much of it. I figured I'd probably have to go yet. I never gave it too much thought. Until they [call you]. You've got a draft number, you know. When they called that number you had to go.

Slife: I was at my friend Dave and Millard Gearharts'. This was on a Sunday. We heard the news that Pearl Harbor had been attacked. I can remember that very clearly … I don't remember how we spent the rest of the day, but that was how we knew that there was a war on … Of course we were shocked that they would attack us that way. Kind of stabbing us in the back. The world, the United States was of course terribly upset by all of this … I've never forgotten that.

Packard: I just came home from work. My mother had the radio on. My buddy that was living with us, he came in. I was getting undressed getting ready for bed, because I slept during the day. He came and told me what happened. I didn't believe it at first, but couldn't very well disregard it, it was on the radio …

Iverson: I was at the University of South Dakota and one of the professors drove up to the filling station I was working there on Sundays, and he said "Did you hear the latest news?" This is one o'clock Sunday afternoon, and he told me that we had been attacked. I think that everybody, we didn't go to school that next two days, we just, everybody just took off … People just kind of dropped their books because they knew what was happening.

Gregg: In 1941, I was a senior in high school. And everything changed that one Sunday afternoon. We all of a sudden - America all of a sudden was not content with an isolation policy anymore …

A lot of people were shocked. I don't know if we were scared, but we were - I guess you would call us "fighting mad." Even high school seniors like me was fighting mad. Then it was ready to go to war, and it was ready to do something. My whole senior year was involved - you know, sure I played basketball, I was in athletics and all of that, but the war was the underlying flow of every kind of conversation that there was. It wasn't what you were going to do when you got out of school. It was where you was going to go serve, where you was going to go to war. You know, I never even thought about what I was going to do when I graduated as an occupation, that never entered my mind because I knew I was going to go to war. And all the other kids did too. A lot of kids didn't wait until they graduated, they went to war right away. They could have stayed until, well until they graduated from school but they didn't even do that.

Hantsbarger: I thought that would really involve a lot of us, affect a lot of families around. And it did, you know. Most of the young guys in that age area was going off to the service. Of course, I was too young then yet. In fact I was only fourteen I guess when they attacked Pearl Harbor. It didn't take long until I was old enough to go.

Aldrich: I had friends in the military, and one of them was visiting at the time, and he was in the Navy. Of course he was called back to his ship immediately. I felt then that it would be necessary for me to go … I was the first one of my five brothers to be drafted. But eventually all of us were drafted. I think we all felt that we didn't have any choice. That we were designated to be Army personnel … I never doubted it, I never questioned it, I never tried to avoid it. I don't think any of my brothers did either. They all went when they were called.

Gene Aldrich, Age 25

Iverson: I'll tell you one fact: World War II is different from any other war. Because we were attacked, of course, at Pearl Harbor. But everybody wanted to be involved. You either enlisted or you enlisted in defense work. Or you stayed on the farm and of course you had rationing set in. They need farmers for food of course. The main thing is that the women were involved in defense contracts. The men who were disabled or had something wrong with their health could get into the defense factories, but it was almost a disgrace if you didn't do something …

It was quite a deal, and everybody wanted to be involved. The whole nation was drawn together.

Skogman: I really don't know [what led me to enlist]. Only thing I can think of, was everybody else [was], friends that I had around - all except one, he couldn't pass. They all went to the service.

Draayer: Well we knew we were up against it you know, that we'd have to go the service … I just felt we had to go and that was it. There was no if's or and's, you know.

June Slife (back row, second from left)

Slife: Well, I felt it was my responsibility to [join the military]. I didn't have any problem with that. I wasn't opposed to the war, or anti- anybody. I thought I'd have to do whatever I could do, that was part of my duty.

Clarence Harms, in Walla Walla, Washington

Harms: I never enlisted. My draft number come up, and my boss got me deferred for a few months, and then right away I got another notice. He said, "Well, I can probably get you deferred." I said, " Naw, they'll probably keep after me. I just as well go and get it over with." So that's when I went …

I had a brother older than me, he went in the Army, too, but a few months after I did. He left too. Had a younger brother, he didn't have to because somebody had to stay home and help farm, I guess.

People felt kind of bitter about it. A lot of people resented it … You had one guy in particular, he wouldn't go to that Army. He says, "I'm not going, I'm not going, I don't care what you say." Well, he didn't go. When we all got out, started coming home from the Army, he kind of ducked

aside. He didn't have much to say. He felt kind of foolish.

Ernie Packard

Packard: As a result of [Pearl Harbor], the National Guard was organized into the regular service. So the New England states all got together and formed the state guard of the different states. I joined the State Guard of Massachusetts. I was in that for about a year before I tried to enlist and they wouldn't take me because my folks were kind of dependent on me. But they said they'd get me when they want me, and they did.

I hoped that I'd get into the Air Force, somehow … We lived about a block from the airport in the town where I was living at the time. Ever since I was about twelve I'd been running over to the airport, and if I saw a guy heading to his airplane I'd want to know where he was going, and could I go. They started letting me take the controls a little bit, now and then.

[I was drafted] in April of '42 … I wanted to fly, but I hadn't finished high school so they wouldn't let me go to flight school. But as things worked out I landed in the Air Force and was a gunner on a B-17, and so I got what I wanted.

Wilbur Hantsbarger, age 18

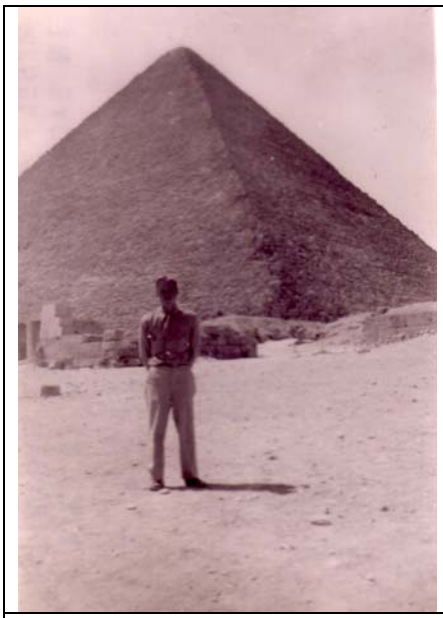
Hantsbarger: I enlisted in the Navy. That's where I thought I wanted to go. I don't know, I just kind of thought it'd be nice, just sailing around in a ship around the world. And my brother was in the Navy, so I thought that'd be a good deal. I probably could have stayed out and got deferred to that farm, but that ain't what I wanted to do. I'm surprised my folks let me enlist at [age seventeen], but they did.

Gregg: So I graduated [high school] in the spring of '42. At that time we were drafting our twenty-one to thirty-six year olds just about as fast as we could train them. In all our factories, where everybody was going to work in factories making tanks and guns and everybody was busy doing everything. Except people under twenty-one didn't have anything to do - I

Glenn Gregg

mean they didn't, we were too young. So I went to school. I could have volunteered. But I didn't because I thought, well I'm going to go to school one year and see what happens and maybe they'll draft or maybe there'll be an opportunity that I see that I wanted, the branch that I'd like to get in or something like that. So I did, I went to school. And the middle of that school year, why Congress passed the draft act and changed the years that they were going to draft young men, were lowered from twenty-one to eighteen. So immediately I was eligible for the draft. And immediately I got a draft notice from Orange City. I was still going to school down in Ames. Well then I got a deferment, I asked them then for a deferment. Okay this was in March. Just give me a deferment until I finish this year out. So just a couple, two or three months. And they did, they gave me that deferment…

This was in 1943 now. So I went into service in that spring with about eight other guys from Hawarden, all eighteen. This was the first contingent of eighteen year olds that went from Sioux County. And we went all over to Orange City, and there was about fifty eighteen year olds. And as I look at it now I just can't imagine young kids like that all in a group all ready to go fight someplace or other because it seems so young. But we were ready to go and we were happy and looking forward to it.



John Draayer, in front of the Great Pyramid

Draayer: Went into the Air Force … I didn't pick it. They put us there [without any method to it] … It was usually "Here you are." You know they told us what to do, we didn't tell them. They put us where they wanted.

Packard: I was a ball-turret gunner. Down underneath the airplane in a little three-foot nine-inch round ball. Two machine guns in there. We could go around three hundred sixty degrees and up and down a little better than ninety degrees. We were a spot that the Germans were advised to stay away from. Because we were the only part on the plane that had a gun sight that would compute. All I had to do was put in the wingspan and the fuselage length, and no matter what we flew or where we flew, I was hitting them. We

didn't have any tracers because the tracers didn't follow the right line if it was off to the side. So we just went by the turret.

Skogman: I was a machine gunner. Then I got a lucky break – I was right there anyway, with them all the time – got to be a maintenance man for fire control equipment … We were with our company all the time … All through Italy we was right up there with the big guns, and they were [loud].

Elwood "Whitey" Iverson

Iverson: The main job was being trained for air transport. Air transport was flying supplies, and picking up new planes at the factories and taking them to the proper air bases and modification centers, which would put new guns on them, install wing tanks, stuff like that. But it was a total effort as far as effort was concerned. It was just important for the air transport command in the states to get the planes where they had to be at the takeoff point to Seattle or Los Angeles for the Pacific or New York for the Atlantic.

Dallas Crow

Crow: I had a maintenance truck. I had a little bit of everything on there. Outboard motors, wrenches, and ropes and cable. Most anything you could use to build [a] bridge. I never really did much until they got done. Then I'd have to help lay the anchors, and tie all four corners off, and put anchors on. You anchored upstream and down stream both. Because them big tanks, they went across [those bridges]. Big old army tanks, they'd cross it. So you had to have it pretty solid.

Draayer: I was mainly a radio operator. But as time wore on we got used to each other's job, I even started flying. I could fly that airplane probably as good as the rest of them could. Well it really wasn't legal, but we

did it anyhow. The crew gets to be kind of a family, is what happens. And we did each other's job.

We hauled freight most of the time or ammunition or whatever they wanted us to fly. We'd pick up mail, and we flew beer into different places (Laughs). Wasn't supposed to be any beer over there but there was. You name it we flew it. Dead bodies. That was the hardest part.

June Slife

Slife: [In the weather service], we would send up balloons, and we would take temperatures, cloud covers, and wind directions every hour. We'd give that information to … a master sergeant and then we had a captain who was not part of our unit but he was also a weatherman. Then we would plot maps for them, giving them weather. The speed, the amount of clouds, the type of clouds, how much coverage there was. They'd put this on a weather map. They'd do several maps a day on a great big board. We'd give them that information that we got from our readings. From that they would plot this weather map.

Glenn Gregg

Gregg: So then we entered into basic training. Again I forget how long that was, either fourteen or seventeen weeks of intensive basic training. The sergeant says you guys, you're here at Camp Fannon because this is an infantry replacement training center. A-ha, so we finally know where we're at, we're going to be in an infantry. We're going to be in an infantry division. That's all right, we have no fear. We're ready to do that. The replacement part, we never knew exactly what that was and I guess we never even asked at that time.

But infantry replacement. If you think about it, why of course that's what it is. You're going to be trained here and you're going to be shipped overseas to replace somebody that's already been dead or wounded. They didn't tell us that at that time, but we got to know that that's what it was. So all the time we were going through basic training and our trips overseas, we were

never attached to our home company. We won't get to our home company or our home division until we actually reach the front line on the battlefield. That's where the 29th Infantry Division is, and that's what they're training us for. So we're going to be by ourselves. We'll just be a fragmented bunch of people that's going through infantry basic training.

But that's all right, we're ready, we're not - you know, eighteen year olds at that time with that war spirit, and that, the feeling of patriotism and all of that kind of stuff, you just weren't scared of nothing. You just were ready to get in there and get at it. Our biggest fear I guess, was that the war might end before we got to it. That was I guess our biggest fear.

The reason you storm the beaches is not patriotism or bravery. It's that sense of not wanting to fail your buddies. There's sort of a special sense of kinship.[9]

Unknown American soldier
"The Good War" by Studs Terkel

■ ■ ■

Numerous studies have identified a combat soldier's immediate comrades as his primary motivator. While few of the Hawarden veterans in this study participated in much combat, their comments indicate that their fellow soldiers were for the most part held in high regard, even well after their time together during the war. During a long and brutal war, it was almost inevitable that a soldier would lose a friend at some point. More likely, he would lose many. In this section it becomes clear that through the course of these difficult experiences, a soldier's reaction to death (his own, and that of others) can change noticeably.

[9] Terkel, 5.

Harms: I thought a lot of the guys [around me], you know. You made friends easy, everybody was in the same boat. As much as you was shipping around and knocked around, why it wasn't too hard. They always accepted newcomers.

Skogman: Well, I think every one of them was close friends. I think everybody was. You didn't have anybody dislike anybody. If we did, I don't ever recall it. Everybody liked everybody. We were all in the same boat together, same position.

Jim Skogman (right) in Sicily

Slife: We got along fine. Those guys were all good guys … We didn't have any problems.

John Draayer (in driver's seat) hunting gazelles in the Sahara

Draayer: We seen half of the world you know. We had our good times, we even went hunting in the Sahara Desert. We got about eight gazelles one day. We took out a whole case of ammunition and we had, I think it was three guns, and boy we used it all. (Laughs). We weren't very good shots but we got them … Ah, there was always a bunch of swell fellas. We got along real good.

Harms: The way we were, we was here, we was there. Shipped all different – you didn't really have any buddies for long. You had some buddies here. Then they shipped you out, or shipped the other guy out.

Gregg: Before I went to cadre school I had to say goodbye to all these guys, that these last seventeen weeks that I came really close to [during boot camp]. Because these are the guys that, we at least pretended like we were going to fight a war together. And we were going to fight a war together but we would be separated, [as replacement troops].

But anyway, you got pretty close to those guys. You did things for and with them. They all were excited about going overseas and boarded the buses to go down to the train depot to go to the port, and I was there by myself. That was tough, that was the first time that loneliness set in. It won't be the last time, but that's the first time that I was really lonely.

Jim Skogman

Skogman: We come to Fort Dix in New Jersey. Our commanding officer got up on the stage in this huge theater. He was with us the whole time. He cried like a baby because we were all going to be separated.

Gregg: So you walk into, here again, all by yourself. Lonely, lonely. You walk into a bunch of guys that had just landed on D-Day here six months ago and fought their way all through, done all this fighting. And here I was walking up to them and saying "Hey, I'm a replacement, I'm to take the place of one of these guys that was killed the other day." That makes you feel very inadequate. And I'm sure that those people of the 29th Infantry Division thought that jeez, a replacement is, you can't depend on a replacement very much. At least until he gets his feet wet… There was always training to do because there was so many new people coming in there all the time. You had to train to get some togetherness between parts of your platoon or parts of your company. Those kind of things are pretty important when you're actually in combat.

I never had any friends. I never had time to have friends. When I was on line and needed friends, why then all of a sudden I was shot, and I was gone again and I didn't have any friends then either. But I did, I just didn't know it. We were closer than I thought …

[Being a replacement is] what made it. That's why I was lonely. I would still have been scared even if I'd joined my company here in the States and trained with my company in the States and then went to war with the same guys, I would still been scared. But I wouldn't have been lonely. But I was lonely, you know there were times where I would look around and I couldn't find anybody I knew. And nobody knew me. I could look around and see somebody killed and I didn't know what his name was. That's

loneliness. It's something else I guess you get acclimated to, I don't know, I got used to it.

You know, you don't take long to make pretty close friends in those kind of conditions. I'm not saying that I never had anybody to talk to. There was always somebody there for you, and other people wanted to talk to you and be with you and all that, I'm not saying that. It's just that down inside you here it's lonely.

Harms: No, it don't take long to know your friends. You get along better with this one than that one. It don't take long to pick them out.

Draayer: We'd do anything for each other. I mean, it got to be a family … We got to know each other, and it was just like brothers … And one got hurt or those two that got killed it just was - it was bad … We lost two men over there. And it was - automobile accident is what happened. And we had to take care of them ourself. We welded them in metal containers. Put them in there and welded a cap over it, took them up on the hill and buried them.

Dallas Crow

Crow: We didn't get in the first day [of the Normandy invasion]. I think we was supposed to, but they didn't have a beachhead … Do you know how many casualties they had on that day? Somewhere in the neighborhood between ten and eleven thousand. It makes you wonder how they ever pulled it off.

But it was a mess. It was a mess when we went in, too … There were still guys floating in the water and laying on the beach and stuff. They had a colored outfit that was cleaning up beach. They was picking them up and stacking them like cordwood. It's pretty gruesome really.

[When we got up to the beach] the machine guns were rattling and rifles barking. Artillery was cutting loose. You knew you were there. That's when you got scared. Because you knew you couldn't go back. You knew you was there. Only one way to swim after that. You was stuck. That brought you around to your senses pretty fast.

Gregg: We're right at the German border and the Germans are in their Sigfried Line fortifications right there, too … It was probably about a mile we had to go. But in that

mile before we was actually on the front line, I saw our first stack of American soldiers that had died the day before or a couple days before maybe, that were stacked very neatly along the road. Ready to be picked up by the graves registration people. You saw a lot of that kind of stuff that made you realize, maybe eighteen year old invincibility maybe is not as prevalent in me as it was at one time. I could get hurt. I could, I could get hurt. Those guys did.

Hantsbarger: This ship took five [kamikaze] … They picked up the four of us and the officers and stuff, and we went in there. What you do is you take – we got two dogtags. You tried to tie one around the neck and one on their big toe, and lay them out and cover them up. If the arms were missing and stuff, you'd have to try to find what went to what and so forth. So there was about fifty-six men we sorted out. Then got them in plastic bags, tied a tag around them.

I thought it was just futility, but some of the priests were giving last rites while we were doing that. I didn't quite understand that, but it was fine with me you know.

But they was burnt so bad from the explosions and stuff it was really hard to - but I think we did a good job, I think we got it pretty well figured out, what was what and who was who. I was nineteen years old. That was my nineteenth birthday, June 2nd.

Aldrich: A passenger plane flying thirty-nine Japanese interpreters tried to land at Naha and overshot the airstrip and crashed. The battalion surgeon and I were called from one of our artillery units to tell us about that and we went over to see if we could help. The plane was still burning. The flares in the flare box were going off. It had crashed in the coral, and bodies were just strewn all over the edge of the island. The tide was coming in. So the doctor and I worked for, oh it seems forever, but maybe two hours or longer, extracting the bodies from the coral up on to dry land. But there were no survivors. Nobody survived that crash.[10]

Gregg: We were stopped momentarily and an 88 hit above one of the guys not very far me, and hit a tree above him. He was in a foxhole, but nonetheless the shell exploded up there, came down and tore his stomach apart. I saw that happen and helped pull him out of there. That was kind of a bad time. I thought a lot of my mom then, I just, I knew what she was going through. She was scared and so was I.

He wasn't dead, and I often thought that he probably should have been or would be, I don't know what happened to him. The first aid people eventually came and got him and took him out of there. But that's what happens, I mean you know, guys die on the frontline. Just die without shooting a shot, why he is dead. I didn't want that to

[10] As a result of this action, Aldrich was awarded the Soldiers Medal, the highest military award for non-combat courage.

happen. I still wanted to get involved with it. Jeez, I haven't seen anybody I could shoot yet even.

Crow: We had one fellow who was on an anti-aircraft gun, a 90-millimeter anti-aircraft gun, setting off to the side of the bridge. He got nailed. First one. First shot out of the box, they nailed him. It's kind of scary …

Hantsbarger: I remember Hayes, we lost him. I lost a lot friends … It hurts. It hurts a lot, you know. This one guy, I got home and I called his parents from up in a town by Minneapolis there. Talked to his parents and told them what a great guy he was. You get pretty close to some of these guys. I was lucky, just one of the lucky ones you know.

Whitey Iverson (third from left)

Iverson: Wayne [Carbetty] was his name from the University of South Dakota. Young fella, nice looking. Ah, he had, he was going to go to law school and everything else like that. Just never had a chance. But I could name dozens of them. Wayne Smith, and just all of them in there. A lot of them were wounded badly, some of them lost legs and nervous breakdowns, you know. It's, like I said, the dark side of war is what's - when you end up, half it's over with…

I saw a B-29 bomber disintegrate a mile from me, right in the middle of the air. Thirty-five thousand feet, just blew up. And I saw parachutes come down and half of them didn't get down. Had a good friend of mine from Jefferson, South Dakota, Floyd Penn. He trained with us and he was killed in a training accident. Flew into the side of a mountain. We lost a lot of people in training. It was tough because at night, why the dead wasn't there, and that was it.

Crow: We was staying in a Catholic school. Of course, the latrines you know, they dig a slip trench about so wide and so deep, so long. Put a canvass up around it and stuff. There was a guy out there in that when we got strafed. They got him. I happened to be

inside the building at the time. I was upstairs, I was coming down the stairs…when they hit. But he was outside. I went out, I helped carry him out to the ambulance.

We lost another one, but it wasn't enemy. It wasn't an enemy deal. They have these, we called them Pollack houses. But what they were, they was Polish people that the Germans would take prisoners, then they brought them back in for labor. There was one of those places there. This was after the war was over. They had a ruckus over there at that house. The officer and one of the guards went over there to see what was going on. Here it was a colored boy was in there all drunked up and raising cain.

The lieutenant, he took his gun and told him to go back to his unit, and he'd bring his gun over to him tomorrow. Well, I don't know what happened but the fellow left, the lieutenant got things quieted down and everything else. Came down to leave the building and as he stepped outside, here's the colored boy and he had another gun and he pumped him full of lead. He was a guy that made second lieutenant from field rank. He took basic training with us guys. Pretty sad deal. Right at the end of the war.

Iverson: And I lost, talk about why you don't care for war, I lost – on the first football team at Springfield there was only four survivors, including myself. The coach even got killed in World War II. All those kids never – and University of South Dakota, I think there was three of us survivors from the football team I played with. All of them were killed in World War II.

A good friend of mine was killed in a surf off Okinawa coming in, and they never did find his body or anything else. It was just, it's nasty. You see the fun part and experiences you had, but really war is just a downright dirty mess. Because I've seen families that have lost people, and I had good friend died over in the Bulge.

Hantsbarger: [My friend] got hit … A shell hit the deck on there. I had just walked away from him going downstairs … But I got about ten steps down the gangway and the shell hit the deck. Tore him up all through the stomach and stuff. Then we got back, he was loaded on a stretcher and had a boat there, to take him and another guy hit in the legs. Taking them to a hospital ship someplace. He said, "I'm going home Hants." And I said, "Well, I'm glad for you, but I hope you get okay." He said, "Oh I will." I don't know, he was hurt pretty bad, so I never could find out if he made it or not …

But if I – oh, just two seconds would have made a difference, you know. I would have been there too. I was lucky I was always at the right place so I wouldn't get hit …

At Karama Retto we had, they were shooting at us off at an island and we took a unit of Marines in there. I had a carbine, we went up to this cave with a Japanese prisoner. He went into the cave and told them to come on out. Or we would kill them in there. We gave him so much time, and then he come back out and he was there waiting for them, and nobody come out. He talked to the interpreter and he told him they're not coming out. This Marine major, he just gave them the order to fire the flamethrowers in the cave. That was the end of them. I can't figure out why they didn't come out.

Surrender. But we weren't shot at anymore, from that island anyways. That where they was hiding, in that cave, then they come out in the night where nobody can see them …

[A flamethrower is a] terrible thing, really … You take a bush or some thing and it'd hit that bush, it'd just disintegrate it. Then they fired these into them caves, and you'd hear a few screams and that'd be all of it. And you'd smell flesh burning. That's something you never forget.

Crow: [Death], it's one of them things that happen. You kind of get hardened into it I guess. Which probably is good in one way, and another way it probably isn't. You don't have the feelings for it like you normally would. Just one of them things I guess.

Jim Skogman with an antitank gun

Skogman: You didn't think much of [losing friends]. Just like … fear, you didn't think much of that either … When I enlisted and everything and got overseas and everything, I was scared at first … Everybody that says they don't, they're lying or not telling the truth … But the longer you're over there, the less fear you have.

Aldrich: I don't think I had [much fear]. I accepted the fact that I could be in a position of danger. But I never really worried about it … I remembered this prayer: "Give me the grace to change things that I can change, accept the things I cannot change, and the knowledge to know the difference." That was my philosophy. I couldn't change anything.

Gregg: [At first] I didn't know whether I had guts enough to kill anybody. I worried about that … You know, I still can't understand how you can take someone like me, fresh out of Sunday School class, eighteen years old, and all of a sudden convince me that I should kill. That I should kill a person that looks like me. One of the motivations there is that you just damn well better do it or he's going to kill you. I mean that's a pretty good motivation right there. I think those training films make you realize that you can think about it if you want to, but you're going to be dead …

I got so that I could kill. I mean, I'm not proud of that. I got so that it didn't bother me to kill … It's surprising, especially young kids, teenagers, can acclimate themselves so easily to wartime conditions. I was acclimated … I got used to it. It's hard

for me to say that because I can't visualize me doing that. But you do, you just get used to it.

Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.

Harry S. Truman
Radio Address
August 9, 1945

Not surprisingly, those who would become Hawarden's veterans were generally fond of the men who served as their Commander-in-Chief. They appreciated the leadership of Roosevelt and Truman in the difficult times the country faced, through the Depression and World War II. More specifically, they approved of Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb. Despite the controversy around that complicated decision, the most important factor to the veterans was quite simple - the atomic bomb brought them home.

Crow: [Roosevelt] done a lot of good things, come up with a lot of good ideas. Far as I could see, I was pretty young most of his presidency, but I'd have to say he probably did a pretty good job under the circumstances. Circumstances make a big difference on what you're doing. I think he did all right under that.

Slife: In his era, we were in an economic crisis, the country was, when he became president. He closed all the banks, then opened them again under strict controls. He did a lot of things that helped us recover economically from where we were.

Iverson: So Roosevelt come out with this PWA, WPA, CCC camp … Put the country to work again. Of course what salvaged his deal was World War II broke out. And then everything started to get a little bit better. People were at work and they saved money and bought homes afterwards, and cars.

Aldrich: What really saved our country, I think, was the war. Because it brought everybody together, and we all had a common goal, and we're all willing to sacrifice whatever we had for that victory that we had. They sold war bonds to finance it. Everybody was either in the service or working in an industry of some kind related to the war. So I had a lot of respect for him …

I remember when I heard that President Roosevelt had died. I thought, "Oh my God. Truman's president. We've lost the war."

Gene Aldrich

Slife: Well everybody was really concerned about Harry Truman because he was an uneducated guy. He'd been in a clothing shop, he owned a clothing store. But it turned out to be, he's probably one of the best presidents we ever had. "Give 'em hell Harry."

Harms: "The buck stops here." That boy had guts. (Laughs). I think he was all right, yeah. It's either them or us.

Crow: He was down to earth. Black was black and white was white. He didn't beat around the bush or give you a story. He told it like it was, and I go for that. I like that.

Skogman: We had a guy from Georgia, Sergeant [Godwin]. He always said that Roosevelt was the greatest man since Moses. I said, "No he wasn't. Harry Truman was, he brought me home."

Gregg: So then one day we heard about this thing, this big bomb that they dropped some place or other and that it killed a whole bunch of people in Japan, and didn't know much more about it. But it certainly was a big one and in a day or so why then another great big one dropped, and it killed, jeez, more people yet.

Slife: I think of course it was a shock to the world when they first dropped them. They dropped two, you know and they literally wiped out Japan. But that brought an end to the war. They might have been fighting for quite awhile after that if they didn't. But it just obliterated their country. Thousands of people were killed and maimed.

June Slife (second from right) at the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin

Aldrich: I felt that President Truman's decision to use those bombs saved my life. Because we were preparing for an invasion of Japan. If you've seen Japan from the ocean, you know it's just a jungle, and it goes almost straight up from the ocean … It would have been almost impenetrable. They would have been up on the higher levels, firing down on us. And they told us when we were in training that they anticipated that there would be over a million casualties in the first wave if they had to invade, and they were training us to invade Japan at that time. So I figure that President Truman really saved my life.

Gregg: I suspected that I might be shipped overseas, over to Japan, seeing as I had combat experience they would send me to Japan when they invaded that country. Because that was going to be a bloody invasion. So I was very concerned about that.

Jeez, I didn't want to go someplace and start all over fighting again. I'd just about had enough of that. And fighting in Japan would be worse than in Germany anyway, I'm sure.

Hantsbarger: Well, if we hadn't used it I wouldn't be here. Probably a million guys wouldn't either … They told us where we was going to land, and the unit I would be in had been north of Sasebo. I looked at it after the war was over, and I doubt if we could have got one out of ten in there alive … It'd be such a small percentage that would live through it, that it would have took a lot of men.

Of course the Japanese would have had everybody fighting then. The old people and even the kids and women would be out there fighting if we tried to invade. No, I think it was a terrible thing, but I don't think I would have been here. Probably even a couple million other guys wouldn't have been either. Because there's just no way we could have invaded that main island of Japan, without losing a terrible amount of men.

Wilbur Hantsbarger, September 1945, Sasebo, Japan

Draayer: They was getting us ready to go to Japan at that time. We'd have been gone in about a week … It'd have been an awful fight getting into Japan. We figured that we would die there, is what we figured. Because they were fighters, boy they were really fighters.

Gregg: So I'm one of those people that, when you get into a discussion whether they should have dropped the bomb or not on Nagasaki and Hiroshima - whether they should have dropped that bomb and killed all those people - I'm one of those people that firmly believe that that was the thing to do. Because I would have had to been a part, I felt like I would have been a part of that invasion. At least I would have known that there would have been a lot of American life lost in that invasion. It might not have been me but it'd have been a lot of them.

Packard: When the European war was over with Germany, we were being trained to go to Japan, and we never got to go. We got to go home instead.

Skogman: I wish [they] would have dropped that bomb two years quicker. Then I would have got home quicker.

Crow: Well, I say when you're at war, you use anything you can to win. That was one of them. You can say its good or bad, but look how quick the war ended after they used it. And it only took two. There's a lot of things about it that ain't good, all this fallout and radiation and everything else, but think how many lives it saved. So maybe the good points outweigh the bad points. Hopefully. Use it if you got it.

Iverson: Well, I [flew] over the place where the atomic bomb was tested in New Mexico, and we didn't know it. We'd saw this huge, glass-like bowl out there. The sand had turned.

I don't know. I suppose it was all right to save a lot of American lives during that time. But boy, maybe we'd been better off in this world if [nuclear weapons] hadn't been ever developed … I'd hate to see them used again. Because with the knowledge we have of atomic energy, I think it could blow this world apart practically.

Draayer: I think it was a good thing. Some of my kids, they kind of question that fact and I say "Well, if they hadn't used that you wouldn't be here today." Because like I just said I figured we'd die there. And that wasn't only my thoughts, everybody else was thinking the same thing. Boy we liked it when that bombed was dropped.

War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good.

Jimmy Carter
Nobel Lecture
December 10, 2002

■ ■ ■

Hawarden's veterans did not return home as proponents of war. They had seen too many comrades killed and too many cities destroyed to ever consider war the best option for the United States. Their views on subsequent wars vary, and many have considered themselves critics of U.S. foreign and military policy throughout the decades. Like many Americans, they are apprehensive about the threat of terrorism and are unsure of the best way to fight it. In short, their political views are complicated and cannot easily be generalized.

Elwood "Whitey" Iverson

Iverson: I think [Vietnam] was a big mistake. We didn't get enough troops in there to curtail the deal. It's too bad, it's just a lot of good people – come home, they were spat on. We had a terrible time during the Vietnam War here, demonstrations. The country was split wide open …

I think it's just too bad it had to happen. Now France was, they were in there for awhile and then they left, you know, early in the game. I guess they're probably smarter than we were, I don't know. (Laughs). But it just was one of those places that we shouldn't have been I don't think. [They talk about] containing communism. I don't know, I think the people solved that question for themselves later on. Maybe not, I don't know. Maybe it was worth it, time will tell. But I don't think it was, myself.

We lost a lot of wonderful people. I lost four or five students over there, and it was tough. Right here in town.

Draayer: I don't think Vietnam was necessary either. I think they just got trigger happy. At least I couldn't see anywhere any good results there. But I'm no expert at war.

Aldrich: I feel … that the war in Iraq and the war in Vietnam were wars that had good intentions. We wanted these people to experience democracy as we know it. But these people are probably not ready for democracy. The Vietnamese, we were too far away to conduct the kind of war we tried to conduct in Vietnam. Too far and too difficult for us to do that.

Slife: I don't really understand [the Iraq situation]. I shouldn't say [Bush] made a mistake in what he did, but I think we've carried it beyond what he ever expected to do. It's getting worse now than it was. They had peaceful situation there for awhile, and now they're all anti-[American]. They were cheering us on when they freed them from what they had, and now they're our enemies again. So I don't think we're getting anyplace. That's the way it appears to me anyway. That thing could drag on and on. We expected those guys to be home by now, when they first started over there.

Draayer: I have a question about going into Iraq. I just, I think we should have taken more time there. Got more prepared. And what he used, I think [Bush] went in a little quick. Hussein had to get kicked out, there was no two ways about that. Somebody had to do something, and I guess we had to do it. But it hurts me to see all these young men getting killed. That's bad.

And I got a grandson who's going back over there again, you know, and it just worries you. Funny part about it, when I was in there that didn't worry me much. I just took every day as it came … Like Jesse being over there now, I know he's doing good. Somebody's got to do it.

Aldrich: I think our intentions are of the best, but I don't think we ever contemplated that those people would kill themselves to avoid democracy. And that's what they're doing, they're killing each other because they don't want democracy to take hold. I don't know what the solution to that will be. If those people who want democracy are strong enough, they'll probably survive. But it's taking a terrible toll on them.

The toll on our military in Iraq, to me, is really very, very small. We're talking about, I think eighteen hundred killed and quite a few more injured. But compared to our other wars, it's very incidental.

But I don't know what the solution would be, and I sure don't have one. I'm just hoping that those people, if there are enough of them, and they have enough backbone to resist this and overcome these terrorists that are killing so many of them. That worries me. I worry about that.

When the war started I felt that it was a mistake. That we had never really started a war before. We'd always gotten involved, even Vietnam, there was a war going on and we got into it. But now, we really started that war. I didn't feel we should do that. Then after I read more about it, and read what our intentions were in going in there, and what we were planning to do was to go in, get that ruler out of there and his group, and have the people take over. But it didn't work. And now I'm not sure that it wasn't a mistake. I'm just not sure.

Crow: Makes you wonder why can't they stop that car bombing? Why can't they stop the supply of ammunition and stuff that they're getting? Why can't they shut that down? There's something wrong there. There's something wrong. Why they can't close them borders down to keep all that explosives out. They shut that off, then they ain't got nothing to build a car bomb with. Kind of starts slowing things up.

Hantsbarger: Wars are really kind of a terrible thing … I suppose some people think they're a hero or something, or some heroes come out, and they probably are. Heroes are the ones that don't come back, I think. It just doesn't seem necessary. It just doesn't seem necessary at all …

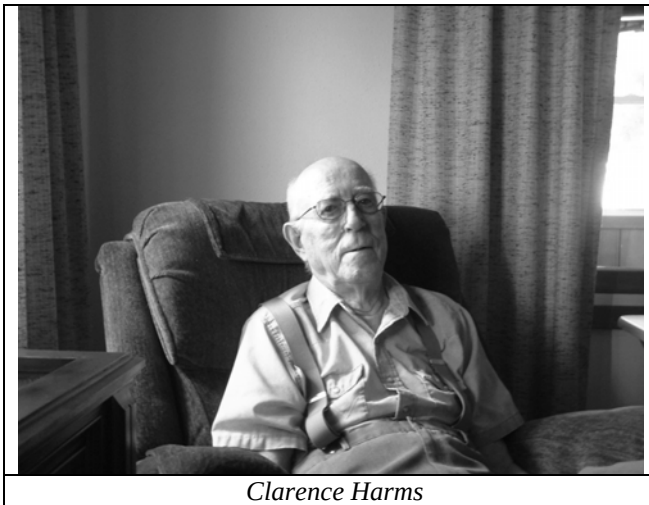
Just think about in Iraq over there, them people getting killed. They're innocent people, they don't have no axe to grind or anything. No, war – there just ought to be a better way to settle stuff than that …

I don't like what we're doing over there in Iraq. I can't see where we're gaining anything over there. Maybe we will. Takes time I guess.

Iverson: Boy, war is very expensive and as far as I'm concerned it's just a fallacy. That's the reason why I guess I'm kind of bitter about this Iraq war. I don't think it was necessary myself. And I'm a pretty strong Republican but I don't know anymore. (Laughs) …

Well, I just don't feel that they made the right decisions. I don't think that they - the first pre-emptive strike we've ever made in our life in this country on another country. Looking at it right now you can just absolutely see the – here we lost I think close to eighteen hundred Americans and we've lost about twelve, twenty thousand as severely wounded. We've lost … over a hundred thousand Iraqis that have died one way or the other, it's hard to count. I think, you know you look back, for what? I think we've stirred up a hornets nest over there. I think we're going to see it for a long time.

I really feel sorry for these kids over there fighting. I think they've got guts to go over there. It's a different war. You can't use the twenty million dollar airplane over there hardly. It's on the ground fighting. When I think of the cost, the estimated five hundred billion dollars, and I think what we could have done with that – housing, education, buildings, everything, just absolutely shot. I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, but I just feel that we made a mistake. I really did.



Clarence Harms

Harms: They grumble, Bush is doing this wrong, he's doing that wrong with the terrorists. I think that he sticks to his guns, and he isn't persuaded to do it any other way. Maybe it's a little bit too much that way, I don't know. But there's one thing, they don't push him around ..

So I don't know if Bush is on the right track or not, I think he was misled on starting it maybe. But he's got to get the blame, you know, somebody. I'll give him credit, he sticks to his guns. Nobody's going to change him on that. I think he's all right for a president.

Skogman: This war in Iraq has got to be a little different because they don't know who the enemy is now. But eventually somebody's going to come up with the knowledge of where they can pick this bomber out before he does his damage. They're going to be able to pick him out right away. That's what has to be done, too …

[I'm a] Republican … I voted for [Bush]. I haven't anything against him. I think probably one of the reasons he went after Saddam was after his dad was pulled back in Desert Storm. I think that might have helped influence him, and that might not have helped a bit. I think he's a smart man. Of course, all them guys are, that get up there.

Earl "June" Slife, Jr.

Slife: [Internationally], I think we've been concerned for a long time about North Korea. That there's some danger there, you don't know what they're going to do. The Chinese as well, you're not sure what they're going to do. I think the world is reasonably safe knowing that any action like [nuclear war], the retaliation would just be horrendous. We couldn't stand by and let them do that without retaliating some way. Hopefully we won't have to do that. So far we haven't had to. I can't believe in today's society that anybody would be stupid enough to try to attack us.

Crow: Well, right now a person kind of wonders when are we going to have a year that we're not in a war. Look how many years we've been at it. Here and there and down there, and now over there. When is the United States going to settle down and be peaceable? Not have troops setting around the world someplace fighting a war. It's been a long time when you really get to thinking about it.

It'd be nice if they could get it all straightened out and quit trying to be the peacekeepers. But somebody's got to do it.

Harms: I tell you, a lot of these people against a lot of this stuff … I say, "Let's keep them over there, don't get them over here. We don't want them over here."… As far as this terrorist deal, I don't know what to think … I think we're doing the right thing,

getting rid of them, if that can be done. I don't know whether it'll ever be done. But what I can't figure out, all those guys that volunteer to go bomb. To give their lives.

Slife: Like [the suicide bombings] in London … This is just really crazy. But you got those kooks and you can't really control them. They're out of their mind. Whether that will happen here or not, of course we don't know. But we hope it won't. The retaliation would be great if they did it. It'd have to be, we'd have to defend ourselves.

Gregg: They'll never fight a war like I was in before, it won't be fought that way. It will be different and I guess it will be more deadly yet than this … It's too bad that we can't live in peace …

I guess I fought a war where military experience showed me what unconditional surrender means. Our governments since that time have discontinued the use of that completely. I don't think there is such a thing as a compromise peace … I think we did it right in World War II.

In conclusion, the contributions of Hawarden's veterans were much the same as millions of Americans of that time period. Although they had markedly different pre-war, wartime, and post-war experiences, Hawarden's World War II veterans feel their service had a positive effect on their lives. They were generally fond of their fellow soldiers, their political leaders, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb. Yet these positive remembrances of World War II have not necessarily led to their approval of subsequent wars.

■ ■ ■

There are millions of stories like those of Hawarden's veterans. Without the contributions of oral history, thousands of those stories would have already died. Without further expansion of oral history as a discipline, millions more stories will never be recorded.

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Appendix 1: Literature Review

In his oral history of World War II entitled *"The Good War,"* Studs Terkel provides a broad perspective on the war from numerous angles through his one hundred twenty-one interviews. There are narratives from soldiers, sailors and airmen mixed in with those from people who were left on the home front. There also are interviews with Japanese survivors of the atomic bomb as well as German civilians. Through this wide range of interview subjects, the reader has the opportunity to see how soldiers viewed death on the battlefield, how real-life "Rosie the Riveters" viewed the war effort, and the effects of the various economies that flowed out of the war.

Through Terkel's selection of interviews to include in the work, one gets a sense of his view on the war, and henceforth the book's argument. Through the lenses of subsequent wars and the political controversy surrounding them, World War II can seem, in a word, "good." However, Terkel's argument is that although there were innumerable good results that came about because of it, war by definition can never be considered good. For example, in a note at the beginning of the book, Terkel explains his rationale for using quotation marks in it's title: "[S]imply because the adjective 'good' mated to the noun 'war' is so incongruous."[11]

This particular work has been significant to the study of Hawarden veterans because it provided an example of how oral history can be presented, particularly with a diverse sample that had not necessarily experienced the same events (i.e. a particular battle). Additionally, the responses of Terkel's subjects were helpful in brainstorming question topics for the Hawarden veterans. The book also proved helpful when comparing the results of the study of Hawarden's veterans with the experiences of other veterans who were in similar circumstances.

In *Citizen Soldiers*, Stephen E. Ambrose examines American soldiers in the European theater, seeking to delve into their motivations, the conditions they faced, and to understand how they emerged victorious.[12] The book is based on hundreds of interviews, many of which came from a collection of oral histories at the Eisenhower Center at the University of New Orleans. Because of the rather specific nature of the book – roughly following the U.S. Army in the European Theater for the eleven months from D-Day to VE Day – Ambrose was able to assemble the various accounts into an overall narrative of the military advance. *Citizen Soldiers* provides another example of how oral history can be presented. The format of the Ambrose book would be difficult to match with this particular study, however, because the Hawarden veterans participated in few (if any) common battles or even campaigns.

Probably the most relevant section of the Ambrose book for this research is "Part Three: Life in ETO [European Theater of Operations]." This section provides more personal accounts of the war, including chapters entitled "Night on the Line," "The Air

[11] Terkel, Studs, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two*, (New York: Random House, Inc.) 1984.

[12] Stephen E. Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, (New York: Simon and Schuster) 1997, 13.

War," and "Jerks, Sad Sacks, Profiteers, and Jim Crow." While the other sections were helpful in drafting questions, "Life in ETO" was of great usefulness when comparing the day to day experiences of soldiers, at least in the European theater. Additionally, Ambrose touched on soldier motivation, which he said was driven by cause and country as much as anything else.[13] In addition, the bibliography lists references to a number of other works on the topic.

The main focus of *The Deadly Brotherhood* by John C. McManus is the motivation of the American soldiers on the frontlines. Based on mostly primary sources (including oral histories, letters, diaries, and surveys), McManus ultimately argues that "To a great extent [soldiers] fought for one another; to a greater extent they fought because of one another."[14] In essence, the main motivator for soldiers was each other - what the author terms the "deadly brotherhood," as opposed to fighting because of belief in the Allied cause, patriotism, fear, religion, or any other motivator.

Although the McManus work is not perfectly relevant because it focuses primarily on the motivations of combat veterans, while the Hawarden study is dealing with other issues of both combat and non-combat veterans, there are some helpful sections in the work. Most important for this study was "Part Two: The Soul of the Combat Soldier," which included chapters outlining feelings toward the German and Japanese enemies, the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness, in some cases) of low-level military leadership, and a chapter entitled "Motivation, Attitudes, and Effects of Combat." The bibliography and notes section of this book was also helpful in suggesting other works, and even survey data.

The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle, by J. Glenn Gray is a work based largely on the author's experience serving in World War II, as well as "contemporary novels, memoirs, letters, and personal accounts" of the war.[15] The objectivity of this work may be tempered somewhat by the idea that everyone is the hero of their own story. Take, for example, the following quote: "My friend wrote once late in the war that he often thought of me as *the soldier*. To him I had come to stand for the qualities that he associated with universal man at war."[16]

Taking this concern into account, Gray's work is certainly a revealing look into the thoughts of a soldier. Having received his draft card in the same mail delivery that he received word that he had been awarded a Ph.D. from Columbia, his reflections are backed by an uncommonly deep thought process. This could perhaps allow him to put certain thoughts and feelings to words more effectively than the common soldier. More valuable is that he was attached to three infantry divisions in Europe as part of counter-intelligence units over the course of nearly two years, making him familiar with the realities of frontline warfare.

The main focus of the Gray work is the lasting effects of war, including such factors as the personal transformation that can take place in war. As he states in a chapter entitled Remembering War and Forgetfulness, "So often in the war I felt an utter dissociation from what had gone before in my life; since then I have experienced an

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[13] Ibid., 14.
[14] John C. McManus, The Deadly Brotherhood: The American Combat Soldier in World War II, (New York: Random House, Inc.) 1998, x.
[15] J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle*, (New York: Harcourt) 1959, *x*.
[16] Ibid., 25.

absence of continuity between those years and what I have become." Included in the work are chapters on guilt, death, love, and "The Enduring Appeals of Battle."

The Bedford Boys by Alex Kershaw is in part based on a number of interviews with veterans and widows. It is the story of the men of the small town of Bedford, VA – nineteen of whom were lost on D-Day alone. While the account is essentially an historical narrative of their experience which does not draw many broad conclusions, this book was helpful in comparing experiences with Hawarden's veterans in terms of joining up, training, and entering a war zone.

It would be foolish to fail to mention Tom Brokaw's masterpiece, *The Greatest Generation*. It is generally believed his book was the source of increased interest in the World War II generation nationwide. In that sense, perhaps the study of Hawarden's veterans is also an indirect product of that nationwide trend. Based on interviews with his subjects, Brokaw presents his information in a similar manner as this research – collecting stories around similar themes. Some important differences are that Brokaw wrote each person's story in his own words, and he tells each person's entire story all at once. In comparison, the study of Hawarden's veterans largely leaves their story in their own words and tells each individual story in small pieces.

As far as journal articles, there are a number of resources available on the emotional and mental health of veterans after their return home. Studies that were helpful in examining the experiences of Hawarden veterans include: "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms in Korean Conflict and World War II Combat Veterans Seeking Outpatient Treatment," by Edward W. McCranie and Leon A. Hyer;[17] and "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Coping in Veterans who are Seeking Medical Treatment," by Dudley David Blake, Jerome D. Cook, and Terence M. Keane.[18] Because these studies were essentially comparative in nature, it was interesting to see how the postwar reactions of Hawarden veterans fit in to the studies' findings of the effects of war on World War II veterans as compared to Korea and Vietnam veterans.

According to the Thompson book, oral history can be presented in four ways: the single life-story narrative; a collection of stories; narrative analysis; and reconstructive cross-analysis. Most relevant for the study of Hawarden's veterans appears to be the collection of stories, which Thompson argues, "allows the stories to be used much more easily [than the life-story narrative] in constructing a broader historical interpretation, by grouping them – as a whole or fragmented – around common themes."[19] The study of Hawarden's veterans is based primarily on the oral history interviews conducted in the summer of 2005. In combing through the transcripts, the researcher identified major topics in each interview. In effect, this created a topic index or table of contents of sorts, which helped to identify common themes. Such an index was an important aid in comparing the differing (and similar) experiences among the veterans.

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[17] Edward W. McCranie and Leon A. Hyer, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms in Korean Conflict and World War II Combat Veterans Seeking Outpatient Treatment," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 13, no. 3 (2000) : 427-439.

[18] Dudley David Blake, Jerome D. Cook, and Terence M. Keane, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Coping in Veterans who are Seeking Medical Treatment," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 48, no. 6 (November 1992) : 695-704.

[19] Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 270.

Appendix 2: Pre-interview Questionnaire

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Place of birth:

Birth date:

Branch of Service:

Battalion, Regiment, Division, Unit, Ship, etc.:

Highest Rank:

Enlisted or drafted:

Service dates:

Wars in which individual served:

Location of military service:

Were you a prisoner of war?

Did you sustain combat or service-related injuries?

Medals or special service awards:

Appendix 3: Interview Question List

WWII Vets Oral History Interview Questions - Adam Gregg

1. Date and place of birth.
2. Where did you live growing up?
3. Where did you go to school before the war? Where did you work before the war?
4. What was your experience in the years before the war as the country fought through the Great Depression?
5. What were your thoughts as war eventually broke out in Europe, before the US was involved?
6. What were your thoughts when America was attacked at Pearl Harbor, bringing the US into the war?
7. branch of service, rank, where served.
8. Were you drafted or did you enlist?
9. Where were you living at the time?
10. Why did you pick the service branch you joined?
11. Do you recall your first days in service?
12. How did you feel about joining?
13. Tell me about your training experiences.
14. Did you feel you were well-trained tactically for combat?
15. How did you get through it?
16. Where did you serve during the war?
17. Do you remember arriving and what it was like?
18. What was your job/assignment?
19. Did you see combat?
20. What was it that influenced you to fight, to keep going day to day? In other words, what motivated you?
21. What was your single greatest fear?
22. What was it like to be faced with an attack (infantry, air, artillery, etc)? What did you do to survive?
23. What were your feelings toward the enemy?
24. Were there many casualties in your unit?
25. What was it like to have friends missing or killed? Can you describe how you felt?
26. How did you personally handle killing the enemy?
27. Tell me about some of your most memorable experiences.
28. Were you a prisoner of war?
29. Were you awarded any medals or citations? How did you get them?
30. What are your thoughts on the use of the atomic bomb?
31. Did you sustain any injuries? What were the circumstances?
32. What were your thoughts on FDR? How did you feel when FDR died and Truman became president?
33. How did you stay in touch with your family?
34. What was it like to spend a holiday at war?
35. What was the food like?
36. Did you have plenty of supplies?
37. Did you feel pressure or stress? How did you handle it?
38. What was it like at night?
39. How did you get sleep? How did you handle going without sleep for periods? What effects did it have?
40. How did people entertain themselves?
41. Were there entertainers?
42. What did you do when on leave?
43. Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual event?
44. What were some of the pranks you or others would pull?
45. What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers?
46. What were interracial relations like? Was race a factor in your unit?
47. Did you keep a personal diary?
48. Do you recall the day your service ended? What were the circumstances?

49. What did you do in the days and weeks afterward?
50. What was the readjustment to civilian life like for you when you returned?
51. Did you suffer nightmares or flashbacks upon your return home?
52. Did you make use of the GI Bill? In what ways?
53. Did you make any close friendships while in the service? Did you continue any of those?
54. What did you go on to do as a career after the war?
55. Do you feel you took part in the postwar economic boom? In what ways?
56. Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?
57. Did your military experience influence you politically in any way?
58. How did your service and experiences affect your life?
59. Do you ever watch today's war movies? What are your thoughts on them?
60. How might your life have been different had you not served in the military?
61. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?

Appendix 4: Interview Legal Agreement

HAWARDEN'S WORLD WAR II VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Senior Honors Project by Adam Gregg
Central College; 812 University, Box 161; Pella, IA 50219
1519 Ave. I; Hawarden, IA 51023

Tape recorded interview and transcripts to be archived at:
Hawarden Public Library
803 10th Street
Hawarden, IA 51023

We, _____ (narrator) and _____ (interviewer) do hereby give to the Hawarden Public Library this tape recorded memoir and transcription as a donation for such scholarly and educational purposes as the archives shall determine. It is expressly understood that the full literary rights of this memoir pass to the Hawarden Public Library. This gift does not preclude any use which we may want to make of the information in the recordings ourselves.

_____
(Signature of narrator)

_____

_____
(Address of narrator)

_____
(Signature of interviewer)

_____

_____
(Address of interviewer)

_____
(Date of Agreement)

_____
(Subject of Interview)