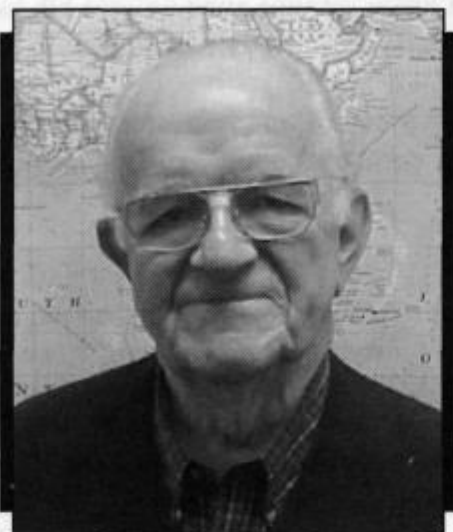




WALTER JOHN CHILSEN

Enlisting in 1942, Chilsen was trained as a bombardier. He saved an B-24s in the Pacific and flew missions against Iwo Jima, Saipan, and the home islands of Japan.

What did you experience during WWII?

I use the three names because many people know me by three names because I was on radio and television for about ten years from 1954-1964 as a television anchor man and then I sold television advertising for a couple of years. In 1966 I was elected to the State Senate and I served in the State Senate for 24 years until 1990- as a Republican. I was born in Merrill, Wisconsin and I graduated from Merrill High School in 1941. In September of that year I went down to Lawrence College. It was there, in Appleton where I had the intention of getting my degree in four years, but with the event of Pearl Harbor and the WWII that started in 1941 changed all that. In 1942, the summer after Pearl Harbor, my brother Thad, who is three years older than me, and I both went down to Chicago and enlisted either in the Navy or in the Army Air Corps. I got into the Army Air Corps at the time. He enlisted for immediate active duty and I enlisted to be deferred until I graduated from college, unless the President of the United States saw fit to call me up sooner. Thad was called in December of that year to active duty and I was called two months later (in February) to be in the Air Corps. We had both enlisted in the Air Corps. He eventually became a sergeant radioman and started in the Pacific and bailed out over in Japan just at the end of the war. I became bombardier on a B-24. We took our training in south California. We eventually planned the crew in California to train at Nuroc Air Force Base in the ROC and then we went over seas, first to Hawaii and then we flew from Hawaii to Saipan, where we were stationed for a while and then we eventually went to Guam and then Okinawa. While we were in Saipan, one of our principle targets was Iwo Jima. Eventually, the bloodiest battle of WWII, in the Pacific anyway, took place there with some 20,000 Marines losing their lives. Our principle target was Iwo Jima trying to soften it up but the Japanese were really entrenched. They had caves like the Taliban fighters do now in Afghanistan. So the bombing, in truth didn't do a heck of a lot of good in softening them up but it made it impossible for them to use their air craft because they couldn't get them off the ground. We were flying in a tight formation, usually as a bombardier, I operated the bombsight that took over control of the airplane on the flight and then they would be released when the bombsight had indicated if I had operated it properly to hit the target. In this one they wanted to have a solid pattern, so we were just watching the lead plane. The Major bombardier dropped his bombs, then we would just hit a little title switch and our bombs went as well. He dropped his bomb and I hit our title switch. Immediately after that we figured that our (what they called cluster bombs) anti personnel bombs were hit by their anti-aircraft, exploding our own bombs right beneath the airplane and we just went "Woomp!" I could hear the crackling of all kinds of stuff hitting our plane. It appeared as though we were going to crash into the water because we found out later that the

explosion of our bombs had severed our elevator ailerons and all controls, rudder controls, so we couldn't fly it the normal way. Our pilot said to bail out but that would have been a disaster. Our copilot added fuel to the right engines to stabilize the plane and we flew all the way back to Saipan that way, with the planes hovering around escorting us. However, on the final approach as we were coming in for a landing we didn't have any breaks, no hydraulic system. I was in the tail so I convinced the pilots to let me go back and rig up two parachutes that we would pull when we hit the ground and that would act as our breaks. Another crewmember was back there with me. When we were back there they tried to hulk down again with a little toggle switch (not a normal way) to pump down the flaps on the plane and slow it down. They estimate that what happened was that all of a sudden one flap came down on the right side. So instead of going in to land we just peeled off into the water and did a kind of a cartwheel, according to those who witnessed it. I have no idea how I got out of the plane. The pilot, copilot, engineer and navigator were all able to climb out the windows in the front. I think our plane just broke in half when we hit and I had the crewmembers up against the bulkhead and I ran up to join them. "Come operate, lets go" We just laid down there. We didn't have a vest on and when the plane cracked in half we were thrown into the water. Just about recently I thought a life raft had been

accidentally thrown out into the water and inflated but I just found out lately from eye witnesses that they had had dropped a life raft down into the water for us. So when I came up from under the deep water I looked around and saw this life raft and immediately swam to it. I was the first one to get to it. It was upside down. We were taught how to turn it over but I didn't want to bother with that; you had to climb up onto it and then pull it over on top of you. I just thought we'd hang onto it. I recall one guy from Georgia who was hanging on to an oxygen canister and throwing up with every wave that went over him. He called out in his deep southern accent "I Can't Swim! I Can't" I paddled to him first. We paddled



Chilson, 2nd from right, back row, with B-24 crew in Saipan in 1945

around and picked up six other crewmembers. Some of them had life vests on and didn't need them. In a very short time the PT boats were there because they were anticipating that had we bailed out over the island we would have/might have drifted into the water. So the PT boats were out there cruising anyway. At the last minute the commanding officer decided to give the orders to land when everybody was aboard if possible. Which was a great relief to me. One thing I'm deathly afraid of was jumping out of an airplane and pulling a rip cord, hoping that it worked! At any rate, there were eleven of us on the plane, 10 crewmembers and our radio officer of the squadron. It was considered 'bad luck' to have a tenth in the plane but he had decided to fly with us that day and get some air time in so that he could get home sooner. He did not survive as well as two other crewmembers. In the actual accident the only damage was that the 'ball gunner' got grazed in the leg by some shrapnel of some kind. That happens, not even as disabling of an injury, but he didn't survive and the fellow who was in the back of the chair with me didn't survive. The radioman, again, did not survive. I had a huge gash on my head and later on had some back trouble. We blew a couple of missions off then and went directly to Hawaii and then for Central Okinawa. The pilot of our mission had back problems I think from the crash. He didn't fly any once we got to Okinawa. I would fly with other crews on several other missions. He did fly one mission with us called SNOOPER mission, where we went out alone at night and bombed first Marcos Island and also bombed a bridge in Kyushu, the southernmost Japanese

island. Then the atomic bombs were dropped within a few days and the war ended. The negotiations patrol already on the way for peace before the bomb in August of 1945. I recall someone coming in and saying, "Chilsen, are you going to fly today?" and I said "What do you mean 'am I going to fly today?' Is that a question or an order?" and he said, "It's a question." And I said, "Well I know this war is over, General MacArthur may not know but I sure as hell do!" So I declined. Then, after that we were sent to the Philippines and took a boat home. (Two weeks on a slow freighter) That was in December 1945.

What did you do following the war?

I went back to Lawrence and got my degree from '46 to '48. I was short one credit and I picked that up by going to summer school in acting out in Massachusetts in Berkshire Hills. I thought about being an actor but I went back to Wisconsin and sold insurance for a year and a half and then decided I wanted to get some more education so that I could maybe get into acting. I went to Northwestern University for the summer of 1950. I went out to California, maybe to go to UCLA but my G.I. Bill ran out. I tried acting out in Hollywood, CA for a while but my career in TV started to develop about then. I eventually decided to go back to Wisconsin to get married in 1952 and we eventually had eight children... four boys and four girls. I sold advertising, print advertising in Milwaukee for a while but then I got a job at the Merrill radio station in January of '54 until September of '54. Then Channel 7 started on the air in 1954 and I made the first announcement on Channel 7 in October. Then I was the television newsman for ten years. I was elected into the State Senate in November of 1966 and started in Jan '67. That kind of concludes the WWII experience part of it.

So you were actually stationed in a bunch of different places you said?

Yes we were in Fresno initially for boot camp, which was a lot of close order drill and a lot of PT work like marching and running and carrying backpacks. They were trying to get you physically in shape for general military duty. I really think there was a partial stall to decide where they were going to put us because we were so unprepared in the beginning of 1941. Some of our troops had been training with broomsticks in Georgia. We didn't have any of the planes ready. The B-24, which I flew on, they had made more B-24s than any other aircraft in WWII. The reason was they were very versatile, but a pretty clumsy plane to get off the ground, but they had a longer range than the B-17. They could carry a little bigger payload than the B-17. They used the B-24 for troop carriers, for antisubmarine warfare and dropping depth charges.

We took training at Fresno in California was the first and then Victor Bill for the Bombardier training. We had taken tests to see if we were qualified to be a pilot, copilot bombardier or navigator. You had an option to choose. I didn't really care. I wrote 'pilot OR bombardier, the latter my preference' and so they assigned me. My brother had gone out to be a pilot but got 'washed out' or so they call it and eventually became a sergeant radioman. Some guys got washed totally out of officer training. They didn't think that they were good officer candidate material. Others didn't have the necessary skills to become a pilot. Some maybe had better skills for a navigator or bombardier. I was very pleased to be in bombardier training. We learned how to use the Nordon Bomb Sight in a contraption that was rather interesting and high-tech at the time. It helped to guide the plane to



Walter and friend Pendelis Lazarus Camesas in Hollywood, CA in 1944.

the target at the proper angle so that when you released the bombs they would take into consideration the ground speed of the plane, the weight of the bombs, the angle at which you had to have the plane in, in order to fly it against the wind and so forth. They had an actual bombsight that you were operating and then they had an elevated platform that had wheels on it that would be driven where you were telling it to go by the Nordon bomb sight. Then they had a little box that was the target with a marked paper target right in the middle of it. It was your goal to follow that little thing with the bombsite. All you did was follow it through your bombsite scope, which could see that target. Then you would move that contraption with yourself and a bombardier trainer trying to tell you what to do but he couldn't tell you where to go. If you hit the target they were elated, they made kind of a game of it sometimes. Betting with other trainers saying that I would do better hitting than he at hitting the target. It was a lot of fun! I had a lot of confidence in my abilities as a bombardier. I know one time we were supposed to, again, hit the toggle switch to drop the bombs right when the other planes did and I was tracking the target a lot of times when we went *mission evil*, the bombs would wind up going in the water instead of hitting on the island even. I recall one time when I was tracking the proper target airfield and the pilot said "Bombs Away Walter!" which meant that the lead plane had dropped its bombs and I was supposed to hit the toggle switch and I said "Fagen, Mother..." we called him Mother Fagen because he was two years older than us he was an old guy and bald. I said, "Mother they're going to go in the water again!" and he said "God damn it, come on!" He had a control switch as well and he actually flipped the switch that time, they all went in the water. I was right but couldn't do anything about it.

We went to Las Vegas, which wasn't much of a town then. It had only one gambling joint in town, which was more like a supper club. I know because I won an award for marksmanship in Skeet (which taught us to lead in gunnery purposes which was part of gunnery school). I got a blind date with a whack and they paid for dinner that night at this Frontier place. Anyways, we went to Reno, Nevada for CTD (College Training Detachment) to take some general courses in navigation and aircraft history. I think it was more of a stall because they weren't ready to take us to other places in the training process. The United States was woefully unprepared for WWII. I think the classic example was that some soldiers in 1940 were training with broomsticks because they didn't have real weapons with which to train. We changed rapidly when we got into the war economy and started having places to train people, especially the Air Corps, which required more sophisticated training for bombardiers and pilots and such. From Victor Bill we graduated and everybody then was sent to various staging places to make up your crew. The first place where we got together as a crew was in Nuroc; North of Los Angeles, California in the desert. It was extremely hot in the Mohave Desert; so hot it was like

"I would definitely say being a pilot was more difficult training to go through because you had to learn a lot about the aircraft and then how to operate it."

110-120 degrees on the airfield, which made it more difficult with the air being so thin. We lost some planes there because they couldn't get off the ground as efficiently in the thin air and they flew into the mountain at the end of the runway. After Nuroc, we flew from Fairchild, CA to Hawaii. We stationed there for a month or so before we went to Saipan.

You said you kind of got to pick what you wanted... but was it more difficult to become a pilot? More tests you had to pass?

I would definitely say being a pilot was more difficult training to go through because you had to learn a lot about the aircraft and then how to operate it. You went through a lot of training in smaller planes. I know we took training in smaller ones before it was decided if we were going to be pilots or not. I didn't really solo, but you got to fly the plane by yourself if

"We were a bunch of survivors. There were eight of us crewmembers at the reunion. There were some replacements but all of the four officers were still alive."

the instructor thought you were qualified and I did get that far but we didn't get to take off or land it. So, yeah, its safe to say that the most people got washed out of pilot training but then most of those became bombardiers or navigators.

Do you remember how old you were when you enlisted in Chicago with you brother?

I was born in '23 and it was the summer of '42... I would have been 19 years old.

Was that considered the normal age?

No, I think I was younger, especially for the Air Corps. I was one of the younger people that I served with. When we went to become bombardiers, pilots, copilots, navigators, you were an officer or second lieutenant, who all eventually became first lieutenants. You got automatic promotions after flying for a while. As a bombardier I was in charge of the enlisted men and I think some of the guys when they got to be officers were really haughty about it but in our crew it was more of a family relationship. It still preserved that officers had to be saluted, you had to keep up with protocol but I'd joke around with them. Some of them were considerably older, in there late 20s but others were quite young as well.

Most memorable experience?

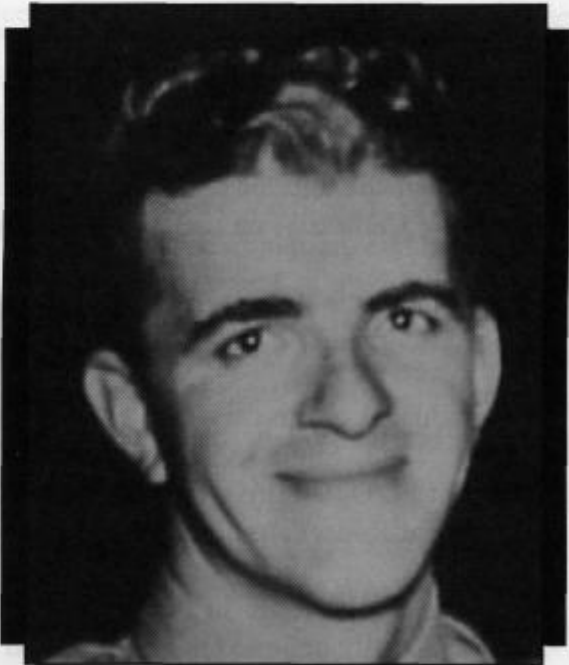
The incident I described previously, the mission in Saipan when our plane went down over the water. We've gotten together several times (our crew) as little reunions. We were a bunch of survivors. That guy from Georgia eventually drowned because he couldn't swim. He was a fishing guide in Georgia and NEVER learned to swim apparently. Another fellow enlisted in the Air Force for another 20 years or more. He died just a couple of years ago. But we were a bunch of survivors. There were eight of us crewmembers at the reunion. There were some replacements but all of the four officers were still alive. That was the most memorable since I can tell you a humorous story when liquor was available. We did some heavy drinking at parties and we had an Officers Club. There was one fellow, a navigator for another crew, whose nickname was 'Pick' Paffetti who often drank to excess. He got very very drunk. We thought that maybe we could help cure him of that by devising this story. We decided to get him very inebriated so that he would pass out, which he did. We all coaxed him and offered him drinks. We took turns doing that. Then we went over to the flight surgeon who was part of the plot and put his arm in a cast so when he woke up he had his arm in a cast. He woke up and goes "What happened?" "Don't you remember? You were crossing the street and got hit by a Jeep!" Pretty soon, the next day, instead of being shocked by it he was bragging about it! "Pafetti, what happened to your arm?" "I got hit by a Jeep!" Then, that afternoon we said 'Come on, we have to go take you to the flight surgeon, he wants to see you.' The flight surgeon looks at it and says "Well I think I'm going to take the cast off" and Pafetti goes "You cant take the cast off yet! I gotta broken arm!" Despite his protestation he sawed the thing off. Then the surgeon asks, "Can you move your hand?" "Of course I can't move my

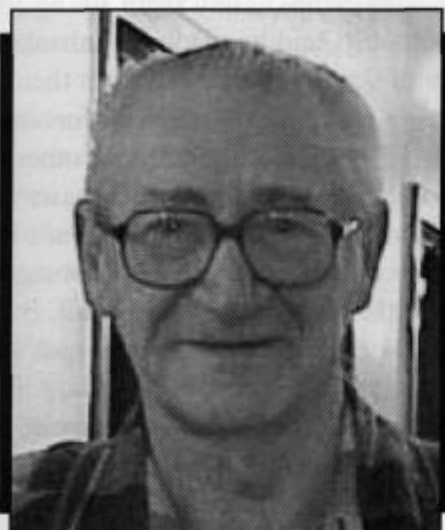


*Chilsen receiving his purple heart
in Okinawa 1945*

hand, I have a broken arm!" "C'mon try it!" So the doctor SLAPS his arm. I think Paffetti almost fainted. We all burst into laughter! After it died down we told him the whole story. So that was another memorable thing.

Immediately following the war Walter attended and graduated from Lawrence University. Walter became a Radio and Television Newscaster, and then a State Senator for 24 years. Following that he was the Senior Policy Advisor for the State Gaming Commission. He has 8 children and 11 grandchildren.





NORMAN KASPER

Arriving in Europe in 1945, Kasper served with an artillery unit until the end of the war. He was part of the occupying forces after the war.

I was born in 1926, but I'm still just a kid, at heart. I was born and raised on a farm. I went to Colby High School. I was starting my sophomore year in 1941 when the war broke out, after Pearl Harbor. I graduated from high school on a Tuesday night the ninth of May. I was 18 on the 22nd of March. The 13th of May, I was in Milwaukee for my Army physical. I was lucky enough to pass it. Thirty days later I was notified to appear for induction into the service. At that time we were told we would be drafted for the duration plus thirty days. That didn't mean anything. The thirty days were up a long time before we got home. I went into service in June of 1944, and Christmas day I spent on the water in a boat heading for England. When we went into England, we crossed over into France, and at the time that we landed into LeHarve on New Years Eve. We were warned because some of the French were still very angry because of the invasion and the damage that we had done there. There were a few snipers that would take shots at us, but we were lucky enough that we got in. I rode around in what we called a 40MH. They were nothing but plain boxcars and we were trying to find where our outfit was and of course it was right smack in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge! So, they had one heck of a time trying to catch up with our outfit. They were running around and didn't know where they were- right in the middle of the Bulge. Finally, right close to the middle of January, I couldn't tell you the exact date, I caught up with my outfit and they had just liberated the 101st Airborne from Bastogne and circled in Bastogne for some time. Have you ever seen the movies where they asked them to surrender, and the commander says, "Awe, nuts!" and the German commander says "Vashitstov, nuts?" He couldn't understand what he meant by that, but they would not give up. Anyway, from there I was with the outfit. We slept in snow banks, six feet deep. That was the best place there was. In the bottom of the snow bank with a pup tent over the top -that was the warmest place there was. You talk about camping out, well we really did! The winters were just about the same as they are here in the middle of Wisconsin. There was a big blizzard the night before I joined my outfit on the way up. The outfit that I was with was the 776FA 155 mm artillery and we were what we called the 'bastard outfit.' We were assigned, but not attached, to anything. We'd get a command to an outfit that needed support and we were yanked out of there, traveled half the day and night, set up waiting there for a different outfit entirely. It was the ninth of March and the war ended on the ninth of April. Then I spent a month in occupation down in Germany and not quite a year in Antwerp, Belgium doing more, such as occupation and rehabilitation, sending troops back home. I could work in the office there, and I got a lucky break and I was able to go home to Cargo Security. There were only nine GI's, three Officers, and two war departments other than the regular crew, so we lived the life of royalty when

"We slept in snow banks, six feet deep. That was the best place there was."

royalty wasn't home! We did run across a couple of different prisoner camps. They were living like a bunch of gophers, holes in the ground. We had one Polish fellow out there, and he made the mistake. He yelled out something in Polish, and they mobbed us. We had an awful time getting away from them and getting in position to do our job! Then, we were set up right next to a camp that was set up for women that were there to be breeders to raise the "super race" for Germany. They had nothing to do other than to produce children for their superior race, and as soon as they were born, they were taken away and trained to be part of the superior race. And these were women that were well built. They weren't Hedy Lamar[actress of the time], but they were well built women and all very attractive. That was something that kind of shocked us, I guess. We weren't allowed to go within a little ways of the camp at all. But we were right close near it.

This is back tracking a little bit, but getting back to before you went into the war, how many of your fellow schoolmates do you know that went into or wanted to get into the war?

We only had nine boys in our class. And out of the nine boys, one of them joined the Merchant Marines, and he died in a boating accident up between Alaska and Russia. I think two or three of them were in the service. A couple of them never got in the service. They were either farm boys that got deferments or they weren't physically fit. But out of our class, there weren't that many but, and there weren't any of them from our class who were killed in the service during World War II. I had a friend that I went into service with that went through a Sicilian camp. His unit was getting ready to go home, and he got caught between two trucks and was killed, just when he was ready to go home. Not any immediate friends. No, I didn't have any that were killed.

What were the emotions going through your head at the time? Did you think you were going to come out alive? Did you know what to expect?

I'll tell you. At that time, you're young and stupid - just eighteen years old, and you just don't give a damn. Put it that way. So it's a job, and you've got to do it. And whether you like it or not, you're stuck with it. I think back to the fellows that I was with in the unit that were in their mid-thirties; they had family at home. And I just often wondered what they were thinking about all that time. You know when you're younger, you're always more careless. You don't think quite as you do when you get older. A lot of stupid little stories here and there.

When you were in England, where was the first place you went to?

We started off, and we landed at Glasgow, Scotland. We got off the boat there and got on a train and rode over to Southampton. We got off the train there and boarded a boat that went across the English Channel to the harbor.

What kind of train did you ride in?

Strictly a little old steam engine.

What about the boat?

We had good going both ways. When we went over, we had a converted British tiger ship. In fact a model of it is setting in at the import out there at New York, Ellis Island. On Ellis Island there is a model of the ship that I went over seas on. And that was converted because they even put in a bunch of pipes and hammocks there. When you crawled in your hammock, you laid with your head off to the side because that's all there was room for. The guy on the top of you climbed on, and he laid on you. So if you're the guy way on the bottom, you really got squeezed down pretty good. Christmas Day, I spent twelve hours guard up on the gun stirrup on the Aquitania when we were going over.

Did you see any combat, or were you in battle at all?

Yeah, we saw a little.

What was that like then?

You watched out for yourself. Dug the hole deeper and just crawled in if you could. I was rather fortunate, however. We had a couple of guys killed one night with chills, but you're lucky enough when you don't get hit.

What important message would you want kids to know?

When you hear anybody talk about this business about the Holocaust being a bunch of bull, you better not believe them because it was real. That was very much so. There was no two ways about that. We went back to Germany on a visit when our son was over there. There was very much of that stuff that was destroyed and gotten rid of by the time we got back over there. There were still one or two of the furnaces used in the camps that you could see, but we never did. We never went back to them.

How was Germany?

It is a beautiful country.

Where were you while your husband was in the war? (Question directed at Mrs. Kasper.)

I didn't meet Norman until after he was out of the service a few years. But I was born and raised right here in Spencer. We built our own home across from the school, and we've been here ever since. Now we were new comers to town. It was only 52 years in the middle of September that I moved here to Spencer.

What did you do, what did you see? Anything you want to share with people.

A lot of death and destruction. I saw cities over there that were all blown up along the Rhine River to the north part. And there was one town in particular that I remember. I don't think there was a whole building left standing other than a church. That church had a few broken windows, but otherwise not damaged. And the rest of the town was all bulldozed up and piled so that people could get through it. There wasn't a whole building standing anywhere in the town. Other than this church set off in a field a little ways away. And many other cities were extremely badly damaged. When I think back to that, I sometimes think that it's too bad that they didn't have all the movie pictures, movie machines and cameras they have today, that could have recorded the death and destruction that was left over there. Believe me. I think our younger people are becoming more able to realize what the world is about. They don't understand and much less they just don't give a damn about what happened before them. So what? It's gone behind. And we aren't ever going to see that; it can never happen to us. It will. It's going to come back. The only thing that bothers me is it comes back again in our country and they are going to get some of these here bombs. You look back; every single war that we've been in has been on foreign soil. There hasn't been one, other than our Civil War, in the United States. Any of the World Wars, the major wars, they have all been on foreign soil. I think this country is going to feel it too someday. I don't think I will be around, and I hope a lot of you people will have a long life and will never see some of those things.

What are the emotional effects the war had on you?

I don't know. I think I missed out on some of the kid days I could have had that a lot of the kids had because I was right in the gas rationing and the beginning of the war. Food rationing. I saw that. And before that already, I got in the Depression a little bit.

"When you hear anybody talk about this business about the Holocaust being a bunch of bull, you better not believe them because it was real."

What was it like growing up with the rationing?

Today, you don't worry about it. But at that time, sugar was rationed. I remember butter and meat was rationed, but we didn't worry about that too much because we were on the farm out in the country, and we made our own butter, and we raised our own meat. So we didn't have quite that problem. But there was no sugar. That got rationed.

What about after war? Did you feel like you made your contributions?

I hope I was a part of it, yes. I won't say I did a whole lot, but I was there. Filled in a spot. "There is no way they could talk me into going back through it again, but there is no way they could buy away from me what I saw." I just hope none of you have to go through any of that.

What did you do after the war?

I got out of service and I was helter-skelter. At that time jobs were plentiful. If you didn't like the job, you said, "The heck with it. I'll go take a different job." I guess I tried everything from farming where I was born and raised, cheese factory work, construction work, heating and plumbing work, mechanical work, and finally we went after my wife and I was married a number of years. I think we were married 17 years and we bought the shoe store here in town. Ran our own business for 21 years until we retired.

I want to thank you for letting us interview you.

Bring something to the public that maybe someday they'll realize is a lot more important than they think today.

Norman has been married for over 50 years since the war, and also had 3 children. He worked in the Dairy Business for awhile, and also worked at his own business in shoe repair for 21 years. He has been retired for over 15 years and spends his time relaxing.



AL HIDA

Hida and his family were sent to an internment camp outside of Sacramento and then transferred to one in Colorado.

In August 1944 his father moved to Milwaukee and the family followed.

How long were you in an internment camp?

Well let's see, it's roughly two years, two months and twenty days.

How did you feel when FDR announced the internment?

I was shocked. I was in the seventh grade at the time of the beginning of World War Two and on that particular occasion, we were in seventh grade studying about the constitution, U.S. history, the law, you know that type of thing and how the constitution was supposed to guarantee us due process. Therefore, I thought in the wildest dreams people like Grandpa, Grandpa was an alien. He was born in Japan and plus the fact that he was not a citizen but one of the things that perhaps you may not be aware of is that Asians were not allowed to be citizens at that time. They could not become naturalized. I think that you know that today your relatives came from say Germany, to live in Milwaukee or in Wisconsin. After about five years they can become naturalized citizens but people from Asia were not allowed to become naturalized and that was true well...there were some exceptions. In 1952, the Walter McCarren act allowed them to become citizens. If they applied. So as I said I was quite shocked that citizens were being picked up and so I kept on saying that I don't believe this is happening. But as the old saying goes, they had the Army there and all the weapons and so forth and we did not have much choice.

Where did you live and what did your parents do before you were relocated?

We lived in Sacramento, California and I lived in a single-family residence in the inside of the city area. At that time, my father was a Ford Automobile salesman and he sold Ford cars, new cars, used cars, and so on. As far as this concerns, we sold cars and lived in the city.

What kind of transportation did you take to get to the camps?

Ok, a friend of my dad's picked us up at our house with what we could carry. We were allowed to go to the camp with what we could carry, in otherwards, what are two suitcases roughly. And there were some people who took more than that but we were told we could only take what we could carry. So we went through the Sacramento Auditorium, which is in the city of Sacramento, at about seventeenth and Jay Street and we got to that location with our stuff and then we got on buses and large military trucks. In the military, when I was in service, they were what we called a six by sixes, which meant they had six wheels and six wheel drive. Some of us rode those to the camp, which was outside of Sacramento and to what they called an assembly center. In our case, it was called a Walargo. That's where we went to.

It was a barbed wire enclosure with guard towers, etc. Well that kind of gets you an idea how we got to the first camp. We were in three different camps.

What three camps were you in?

Well, from May 15, 1942 until about the 20 of June, we were in this camp called Walargo, which was just outside of Sacramento. Roughly, the twentieth of June they put us on a train, one of the old trains. They had Army soldiers that accompanied us on this train and they were scattered throughout the train. In this particular case, they went to northern California near a city called Newell. Near there is an old reclaimed lake, which was a sandy area, a lot of sea shells in the sand, etc. and a little grass growing. There's a lot of land especially out west that is owned by the US government, it's reclamation land and usually land that nobody wants. It's very difficult to grow things and frequently these are very dusty areas. That was the first camp. Then we were separated in 1943 and this was approximately about June 9. We went on another train but the big difference was that in the California train ride they had to ride with the shades down and this was a very difficult trip. It took several hours. We went from Sacramento to northern California. The second trip was different because we were able to open the blinds. We went from northern California to southeastern Colorado. We stayed there from June of 43 until August of 1944 and which in time in August of '44 my father had left to go east to come to Wisconsin. We left in August of 1944 and came to Milwaukee with our train ticket money lined up. So that gives you where I was.

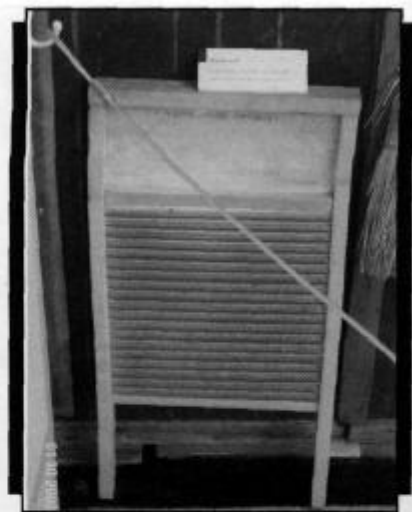
In what ways were you discriminated before the camps and in the camps?

Well, actually it all began from the 1800's. The Asians that came to this country, with the Chinese that came to work on the railroad. They came to go mining and so forth. They were not treated very well anywhere. There were restaurants we couldn't go to, there were hotels we couldn't go to, there were certain cities even we could not go to. There were restaurants that would tell us plainly to get the hell out, that type of thing. Or sometimes they would pretend that you weren't even there and they won't serve you. In other cases, you might get some service but very poor service. The newspapers and the radio were never supportive of Asians in California, especially from 1800's through World War Two. It was always a case of you have to worry about where you were going. Churches for instance, there were certain churches that would tell you "maybe you would be happier if you went to a another church and they would name a Japanese church on the other side of town. Other things, you would get on buses and people would sit behind you and remark about your ancestry and how stupid you are and all of those types of things. The other things that they did especially in the West Coast were things like they would pass laws that were directed to you. They had what they called an "alien land law." The alien land law would say that if you were an alien you could not buy a house or land in California. This land could be just a sole resident's or could be many acres so as Japanese Americans became citizens, like my mother was a citizen. Her father was born in Japan so he could not own land but my mother was born in California therefore she could own land. There were a number of different kinds of laws like that. Every property might have what they call an abstract, which is a pile of papers that are the history of your location. You know if you live on 10th street or whatever there is a pile of papers that describes your property and in it sometimes they will have different kinds of restrictions in it. For instance, maybe you can't have a farm, raise cattle in the middle of your city. On the other hand, like in our house that I live in here in Wawatosa, has the restriction that the front of the house has to be at least half brick. Now that's a



June 1944

covenant. Now there are covenants in various cities regardless if whether you are a citizen or not that would not allow you to live in this particular city. They say that no Asians are allowed to live in this city, one in particular is Atwater, California. Other laws that they passed were at times the sick Asian law, which is intermarriage. For instance if I lived in California in 1920, and I decided that I would marry a Caucasian girl and she wanted to marry me, which was against the law in California at that particular time in 1920. That is just two or three of them, but there were many laws like these that were discriminatory, so it was not just people saying bad things or beating us up but they managed to pass a lot of laws that were meant to make us feel uncomfortable. We could not get certain jobs. Even the military, prior to World War 2 had many restrictions of our going into the military. For instance, Filipinos weren't allowed into the regular part of the Navy, but they would use Filipinos to be butlers to the admirals on aboard the ship or something like that. They would use Asians say, minimal tasks, and then of course in World War Two, there were about 30,000 Japanese-Americans in the military during World War Two, and they received more declaration for time served than any other unit in the history of the United States army. So things did change finally. There were about 8,000 of us in the military in the pacific war. Many of them served as interpreters the individual troop units throughout the Pacific. They read documents and translated them for intelligence purposes and they were also at the trials that were held in Tokyo. There were war for crime trials held in Tokyo after World War Two and Japanese-Americans were involved in a lot of interpretation and helping the communities get back on their feet. I could cite many other cases.



Auto Washer

What were your barracks like and what kind of food did you eat? What was it like to live in the camp?

The barracks were large and constructed by 2 by 4's and 1 by 12's. They were about 100 feet long. They put a wall between about every 20 to 25 feet. So they take a barrack that is 100 feet long and cut it into about 4 or 5 units depending upon who it was for, say a family or whether it was for couple and their children and so forth. These barracks were 1 by 12, on the outside they put black tar paper, then they put strips of wood to hold them down, and then they had rolled roofing on top. There were these assembled buildings, about ten on each side of the block and one large one which became a mess hall, where we ate, one was left vacant as a recreation hall and that recreation hall was empty incidentally until we did something with it. It would have been nice if they had all kinds of electronic toys, but they didn't. For instance, we all chipped in to buy a ping-pong table, so that helped to make it a recreation hall. Then in between these barracks was one building for ironing, we had to iron our clothes in those days, it wasn't pre-pressed materials. Another building was a laundry building. I might mention the laundry building and stationary tubs, the cement like tubs that were side by side, they had hot and cold water and that was it. It was quit a shock to my mother because in 1935, or so, we finally, she got so she didn't have to use the wash board anymore, she used the wash board until 1934 or 35, then she got an electric ringer washer, then here we go into 1942, she goes into this place and say wow that's the laundry room, so she had just two tubs and nothing else. She had to buy soap and so forth and then we finally had to go back and buy a wash board again and she had to do her laundry that way. Women in those days used to do laundry sometimes, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, spread out, whereas your mother can probably do the family laundry in one morning, by running it through the washer. Wednesday and Thursday were frequently spent ironing. Another building they had was a women's shower and a lavatory. They were very little, with 4 to 8 toilets that were just side by side with no separation, nothing in front of you and they had troughs, galvanized troughs to wash your hands, and an old fashioned, hot and cold faucet there. The showers were open; with just pipes hanging out of the ceiling, so to speak, you could make them hot



Men of 522

or cold. This is kind of a great shock to a lot of the people who did not participate in school showers and that type of things. I think some of you already have school showers that have separation in them, whereas there was nothing. We had a lady that was in her 70's who used to go take her shower at 2 or 3 in the morning when nobody was there. That allowed her to shower in privacy. The other thing I might mention is that when we went to northern California, it would snow there. As a result, if you had to use the facility at 2 o'clock in the morning, you had to walk outside in your bunny slippers to the lavatory. If there was three inches of snow on the ground, I think you could see where this might not be the best thing for you. So as a result, many of us ended up purchasing a chamber pot. If you wanted a description, you might ask your parents, they've probably heard of it. All it is, is a pot that you do your business in and somebody gets the chore of cleaning it the next day. The other building was a men's lavatory and shower and then there was a building that was more or less the boiler room somebody had to put coal in to

fire up the boilers and the boilers would heat the water for the two showers and mess hall and the laundry. That was basically the block, one other thing I might mention that in the barracks rooms, we had 150 watts bare light bulb in the center and we had four or five cots depending on how many people were there. It was an army cot with a mattress. For awhile we had a straw bag that was shaped like, a mattress and we had to stuff straw inside them. It was kind of interesting is that the beginning of the week you had a mattress that was very high in the center and then by the end of the week later the straw would collapse and with a big dent in and so forth. As far as food was concerned there were military rations, and food was not that plentiful during World War II. Food was military style about the only thing that was different was they added some rice to the diet. They also added some soy sauce to the stuff the cooks could use. But basically it was that it was military style trays, military cups, military stainless ware, and so on. Food was not big, believe me. I also know what military food can be like, and it was worse than what we had when we were in service.

What was a typical day like?

Boring. Basically there wasn't much going on for people like me and I was an eighth grader, but when school started we did have some resemblance of school, but otherwise you had to be creative. We sit and did a lot of walking. This is a necessarily large complex in terms of area so we did a lot of walking and obviously on meals that are at a prescribed time, so we would meet at that time. We would have to eat in our own mess hall, like we were in block 35 so we ate in block 35 mess hall. My father at the first camp was the block manager, which led itself to good and bad, the good part was that he received all the mail for the block and had to distribute it and so forth, so we sometimes helped with that kind of thing. Sometimes we were able to get a hold of a basketball. We did play some ball or basketball, there was not a whole lot going on. Every week or two they might have something like a talent show somewhere and somebody would play piano and somebody would do some singing or dancing and that type of thing and everybody would go in there. Sometimes they would have block games to play softball with each other. We didn't have anything like radios, television, or any of that stuff. Occasionally we'd get an outside newspaper to read, then when school started well obviously we had things to do, we had 3 or 4 classes a day and a very subpar school that was set up for us. We didn't have paper, we didn't have a lot of pencils, books, it was the whole nine yards of stuff, even teachers were short. That kinda gives you an idea what the days were like and operation in camp that occupied my time a little bit. It was not a fun filled period.

What was the hardest part about living in an internment camp?

Boredom. The other thing was that we were in the camp with many people that probably we weren't used to being with socially. They were not necessarily people that you might normally do things with. The other thing about the camp is that we were all suspended in time. I'm talking about school and so forth. Many young people were trying to go to college and no colleges were available therefore they were delayed anywhere from 1 to 4 years in terms of getting a career started or if they were in a career they had a period where they couldn't develop their career so it was wasted time. Plus it gave people time to think about how they didn't adjust. That was always an area that created problems.

When you did return home, were you able to go back to your original home, or did you try to?

When my father came to Milwaukee in 1944, we could not go back to California, Washington, or Oregon. The 300-mile zone from the Pacific Ocean was prohibited as far as allowing us to go back. We went to high school here in Milwaukee and my father found a job and we lived in Milwaukee since then. 1948, they told us that if we wanted to go back to the West Coast, that the army would pay our way and ship our stuff, and so forth. At that time, my mother decided that we would sell the house in California and stay a Wisconsin resident. That's for things like college time and military time and other things for a Wisconsin resident. The irony of the whole thing is that at the first time our daughter in Sacramento is a bridge designer for Caltrans, which is the California State department of highways and bridges. She is now a senior bridge engineer and she has 3 degrees in the area of structural engineering and works for the state of California. Her house is near where my grandfather used to have his chicken farm. He used to raise chickens and raise vegetables in the area, which has now become a residential area and my daughter has her house there. Her office is near the hospital that I was born at. So it's kind of interesting that she has been in Japan, she's been in Oregon, New Jersey, Germany, she attended school in Princeton and also went to school in Lafayette, Indiana. So it's been interesting that we stayed here and then right now there's some thought that we will not stay in Wisconsin. We will go back to California.

Do you feel any kind of anger toward the US now?

Well, I wouldn't say anger because of that particular incident. One of the things that I studied in psychology, that if you're in anger for long periods of time, it's very hard on your mental health and so quite frankly, I put it aside and haven't really thought about it, the fact that it goes to justice, however we did finally in 1988, we did get a bill through Congress after 3 or 4 tries through Congress; we were able to get a bill that caused the government to give us a statement of apology as well as some financial confrontation. But it only applied to those that were living in 1988, but it didn't compensate for people like grandfather and my other people in the family that passed away before 1988.

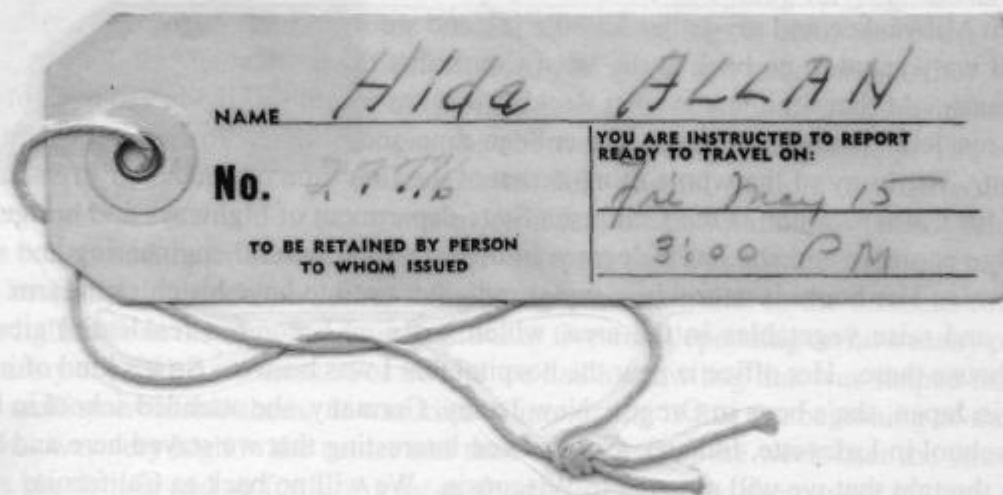
Is there anything else that you would like say?

Well, first of all, I would like to say that I have been appreciative of the fact that you are pursuing this topic and secondly, I am certainly glad that it is going beyond.



Below is documentation of the Incarceration of Allan Hida by the US Government.

On May 15, 1942, this white tag was shown to enter the bus to:
 Wartime Civilian Control Authority Camp: Walerga in
 Sacramento, CA. for approximately one month.
 Tulelake Relocation Center, Newell, CA one year
 Amache Relocation Center, Granada, CO about a year



This green card authorized the below named individual to leave Amache Relocation Center in Granada, CO on August 20, 1944. Between the two dates were days of incarceration.

