

Roy Hood

Seaman Second Class, United States Navy
Sea Plane Tender (USS Kenneth Whitting – AV14)
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I took my boot camp in California. From San Pedro, California, I headed for the Marshall Islands to participate in atomic bomb tests. We went from San Pedro to Hawaii and resupplied. We sailed to the island of Bikini where on July 6, 1946, they had the atomic bomb test. I was the last person to leave the island before the atomic bomb was dropped. We spent the night there and brought the last of the Navy and natives back aboard ship because we could not leave anyone of the island during this test. The target ship was the battle ship Nevada. They missed it. The bomb hit out to the stern of it and it was painted red lead but it looked like it was painted black after that bomb dropped. It was so huge that it completely covered the island. You could not see the island when they dropped the bomb. We were all required to wear shades. When the bomb exploded, it lit the skies just like you would light a match in front of your eyes. It was so bright and we were 12 miles from it. We sank a number of ships. One of the main ships the bomb sank was one of the battleships of the Japanese, the Nagato, which was a ship the US had captured during the war. It was a German cruiser, the Prince Eugene and it was also sunk. One of our own aircraft carriers, the Sarasota, was sunk at the same time as a lot of other small vessels. It is amazing that the captain on the Sarasota was on another ship and when his ship went down he cried like a baby. It was a wonderful experience, nothing like we realized it was going to be, because it was so terrible, this bomb was so powerful. It was a horrible experience realizing what damage the atomic bomb could do to human life. There was so much radio active. The Salt Lake City Utah Cruiser had some scientists we carried aboard to do some inspection on how much damage the bomb had done and it was so hot with radio activity they couldn't do any experiments and they couldn't stay on it so we had to immediately pick them up off it and carry them back to our ship, the USS Kenneth Whitting, AV 14. Ours was an 800 to 900-foot-long seaplane tender that carried fuel to refuel the sea planes. We went to Bikini the spring of 46, had the test in July and then came back to Washington state where the ship was put in dry dock.

We had some amusing moments over there. For one, I thought I had met my "waterloo" when I was going from Bikini to Anirito on a business trip and I slipped off the back of this boat, caught the hand railing, and couldn't get back over. I was so scared that I was going to swim back to the ship, but when I turned and looked back at it, it looked like a small row boat. I couldn't swim that far and the old boy on the boat couldn't hear me although I yelled and yelled. I guess I got so excited and scared that I gained some extra strength and I got back on that boat. When I stood up beside him, he said, "Where in the 'h' have you been?" I wanted to hit him but I just gave him a good cussin'. It was a horrible experience but we did have a little amusement

When I got out of the service, I worked in a number of odd jobs around Tyler until I went

to Texas City where I worked for a trucking company. I met my wife and we were married and had our child. We moved back to Tyler, and I started working for Texas Power & Light. I worked there from 1953 until 1990.

After some years as a truck driver, I became a lineman. Sometimes we did new construction, but my main concern was doing maintenance on high voltage transmission lines. I worked on a crew of four senior linemen and we had some pretty rowdy days. The most blessed thing happened to me in 1960 when I accepted the Lord and realized He had been watching over me in a lot of cases I had been in. The linemen I worked with could not believe that I had turned from what I was doing and started working for the Lord.

For years I went on church mission trips to Mexico, and we built a lot of churches. In 1990 some members from our church were organizing to do volunteer Christian building work. When I made my first trip and built the church, I felt like this is what the Lord wanted me to do. I have been doing it ever since. We have worked, and I will continue to do it as long as the Lord gives me strength. We can build anywhere in the U, S., but mostly we work in Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Colorado and a lot in Texas.