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U.S. Navy
World War II

I was doing clerical work for the Cotton Belt Railroad during World War II and getting deferments because of the type of work I was doing. After so long a time, I decided that one lady or man could do my secretarial work, and I went to volunteer to go into the service. In 1945 I asked the draft board to quit getting deferments for me, but they wouldn't do it. I went to the office and signed up. I was called up when the next draft came, went in for an examination, and passed it.

I wanted to go into the Navy. The day I was examined, only one of every twenty inductees was taken for the Navy, and I was that lucky one. At thirty-eight I was one of the oldest ones who went into the Navy. They sent me to boot camp in California. After I had gone through the training and gotten the first leave home, the officer told our group to enjoy the leave

because he expected the war to go on for another five years. He said, "You may not be home before then."

After I finished boot camp, they gave me an examination and found that I qualified to go to storekeepers school in New York. When I got home on leave, I made arrangements for my wife and nine-year-old son to go to Columbus, Ohio, to stay with my sister. I thought that while I was in New York I could possibly come down on weekends and be with the family. Well, when I got back to boot camp, an officer told me there that they would like for me to stay at the camp in San Diego. He said, "Do you want to go to the school rather than stay here?" I said, "No, I just want to get this war over and get back to my job. I don't care anything about going to school." I stayed there.

My job was to work in stores and to outfit the new recruits that came in. I measured their feet for shoes, and I had a lot of fun out of it. When a boy came through from Tyler, I would usually give him either a real small shoe or a large shoe first to get his attention. They were so afraid when they came through that they didn't recognize who was measuring their feet. I got a lot of fun out of that.

The war suddenly stopped, and they began to release the men according to the points they had. When they averaged up the points for my age and service, I was one of the first ones to be released. Another man was released the same time, but he was a young fellow. He'd been in for five years and he got points on his years of service, and a few on his age. The two of us were released first.

I came back to the Cotton Belt and worked a total of thirty-eight years. The company transferred me to Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in 1954 and I worked there for twenty-one years. I retired and came back to Tyler in 1975.

I was too young for World War I, but I remember all about the war. We lived in Oklahoma when it started. I remember the trains going out with men standing in the cattle cars because the railroad didn't have passenger cars to take them to the service. When we moved to Tyler, the Court House had sand bags and there were cannons on every corner, manned by the National Guard.

On Armistice Day this November 11th, I told my son about the end of World War I. I remember very well that I walked two miles to school and, just as I got there, I met some classmates coming back. They said, "We're not going to have school today. The armistice was signed." So I went back home. We lived on a farm northeast of Tyler. We had to stay in the house because so many bullets were landing outside. People were shooting their guns and the bullets were landing on our farm out there.

I had some cousins who were drafted in World War I. I remember that my mother and my sisters knitted garments for the army. The Red Cross furnished khaki thread and they knitted scarves, socks, sweaters and things like that for the men. My dad wanted to go into service, but he was too old.

I was just nine years old when the troops came back. There were four schools in Tyler, and I went to Douglas School. We had to go down and march around the square every so often for patriotic parades and things like that. Any time there was a celebration of any kind or something patriotic, they'd have a parade. All of the schools participated in the parade when the troops came home.

I became a member of the First Baptist Church in 1917. When I was just a young boy, my folks asked the preacher to come out to our farm and talk to me. The preacher's name was Sam Campbell. We sat on the back door steps and he talked to me about accepting Christ, and I did. I was real interested in the church work. In fact, I started with Sam Goodman who lived in a grand building. In 1954, when I was transferred to Pine Bluff, I was an ordained deacon. They accepted me on the deacon board and then, after a couple of years, I was made chairman of the deacons. I thought that I needed to know more of the background of that church, so I got the book that told its history. I read that there was a man who worked with young people in the church who also worked for the Cotton Belt. His name was Sam Campbell. In a few years, he surrendered to preach, and he was the first man to be ordained in that church. I had the privilege of serving as chairman of the deacons in a church with the pastor who had led me to Christ.

I am ninety-three years old, and God has blessed me in many ways, including good health, good friends, and a good church. Before I came for

this interview, I went bowling. I bowled 172, 176, and 139.

I'm not real active as far as the church is concerned. I'm in Ramsey's Class. We've got about twelve or thirteen old men in there. I participate in the exercise program, I'm in the Gloryland Singers, and I bowl. My hobby at home is doing counted cross-stitch. That's my therapy. (Note: His intricate designs are consistent prize winners.) I went to my doctor this week and told him I'd come in for my annual checkup. He said, "What do you mean, annual? You haven't been in in over a year." That was the first time I'd been to the doctor.

I married in 1932, and I lost my wife nine years ago after 62 years of marriage. I have a son, his wife, two grandsons and their wives and four great grandkids.

My time in service was satisfying, and I felt that I did the right thing. Before I went in, I was doing clerical work and one of my bosses, Maurice Strown, had served in the Marines for a number of years. I kept saying to him, "I have a feeling that I need to volunteer and go in the service. Would you tell me what you think?" He said, "No, I'm not going to say a word." After I volunteered, I came back and told him, "I volunteered for service. I'll be leaving pretty soon." He grabbed my hand, hugged me, and said, "That's the right decision you made. You'll never regret it."

