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Interview with Larry Timbs Sr.

Lawrence C. Timbs

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview VHP #015
TIMBS, Larry**

TIMBS, Larry

Enlisted: 1940 - 1965

Interviewed: November 27 2003

Interviewer: Larry Timbs Jr.

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 00:42:50

Abstract: In his November 27, 2003 interview with Larry Timbs Jr., Larry Timbs Sr. recounts his career in the army during WWII and the Korean War. Timbs explains why he entered the service, his relationship with civilians while overseas, and comments on the Iraq War. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Air Force, Pacific, Japan, New Guinea, Career, Iraq, basic training, draft, Afghanistan

Interview Session (November 27, 2003): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview/Interviewer's Introduction*

00:00:18 *Question:* How old are you now, how old when enlisted, and where did you serve?
Answer: 82 years old at time of interview. Enlisted in Army at age 19 July 16, 1941. Basic Training in Virginia. Member of 33rd Division Infantry at Camp Forest Tennessee – here when Pearl Harbor happened. Camp Stoman, California. Went to Mojave Desert in California for 8 months. Went to Fish Haven, New Guinea and secured the area.

00:02:34 *Question:* Where did you grow up and why did you join the military? *Answer:* Tennessee. Lived on a small farm in Fish Springs. One of eleven children. There were no jobs in the area – decided to make a career out of the army. Didn't expect the war.

00:04:05 *Question:* First pay check? *Answer:* \$21/month. Had to pay for laundry and insurance – ended up with \$16/month. Didn't send any money home at that time until LT got his overseas assignment.

00:04:35 *Question:* Were you homesick? *Answer:* Never knew what that word meant. It was

- like a vacation compared to his home life. Enjoyed until combat. LT didn't have anything to come back home to.
- 00:05:30 **[no question]** First time in combat in 1942 in New Guinea. Went to the East Indies and made another landing. That was when LT had his first scare. LT on guard duty one night – a few Japanese planes would bomb the area every night. LT saw a Japanese plane with landing lights on and looking for places to bomb.
- 00:08:15 *Question:* Did you kill the enemy? *Answer:* In the jungle when the enemy is firing, you don't know who you killed.
- 00:08:44 *Question:* Living conditions in the jungle? *Answer:* "Tough going." No showers. Soldiers took baths in the surrounding ocean.
- 00:09:40 *Question:* In contact with Natives? *Answer:* Got along well with the Native people. LT shares story about Native language.
- 00:11:20 *Question:* When and why were you in the Philippine Islands? *Answer:* Worst journey made. Half way, soldiers got caught in a bad storm, while simultaneously being shot at by Japanese planes. Survived the attack. Landed in Philippines and marched through mountains. Burned Japanese out of caves in mountains. LT says he will never forget the smell. Capturing lumber company. Got an ice cream maker – Red Cross took it away.
- 00:15:25 *Question:* WWII monument at Washington DC? *Answer:* LT saw the Vietnam Wall in Washington DC. LT couldn't figure out why there isn't one for WWII and Korean veterans.
- 00:16:10 *Question:* Do you think that WWII and Korean veterans get enough recognition in your state? *Answer:* LT says veterans/soldiers only get recognition when there is a war going on.
- 00:17:05 *Question:* Most memorable superior? *Answer:* Captain Gleason from Chicago. Took LT under his wing.
- 00:18:13 *Question:* Korean War? *Answer:* When it started in 1950, LT stationed in Tennessee in a C1-19 outfit. Unit received orders to go to Korea. When LT left the states, his wife was pregnant, but LT volunteered to go anyway. "One of the coldest places on God's creation."
- 00:20:23 *Question:* What were the Korean Natives like? *Answer:* The Korean and Japanese Natives treated LT well.

- 00:21:12 *Question:* Why make the military a career? *Answer:* No worthwhile jobs in Tennessee at the time. LT knew he would always have a paycheck in the service.
- 00:21:45 *Question:* Do you regret giving all that time to the military? *Answer:* No. LT says he would volunteer and fight in Iraq.
- 00:22:00 *Question:* How do you feel about people questioning our presence in Iraq and questioning George W. Bush? *Answer:* People who don't support the President don't support the troops.
- 00:22:30 *Question:* When you got home, were you thanked? *Answer:* Never.
- 00:23:25 *Question:* How do you feel about WWII vets dying? *Answer:* LT doesn't keep in touch from war.
- 00:24:35 *Question:* Do you have a hard time remembering those years? *Answer:* LT says he will never forget his experience in the military. Everything he did then comes back to him so easily. Some things he would rather forget.
- 00:25:05 *Question:* How did it make you a better man? *Answer:* Made him more responsible. LT says he learned to make do with what he has.
- 00:25:58 *Question:* Reinstitute the draft? *Answer:* Yes.
- 00:26:35 *Question:* What do you think about pay change? *Answer:* LT glad soldiers are getting the money they are worth.
- 00:27:20 *Question:* Did you ever think about church? *Answer:* LT thought a lot about dying in combat.
- 00:28:10 *Question:* Drugs and alcohol use? *Answer:* Plenty of drugs in medical supply tent that soldiers could take with them. LT not aware of fellow soldiers taking drugs. Once and awhile, soldiers would drink a little.
- 00:29:05 *Question:* Greatest American General? *Answer:* General Clarkson.
- 00:30:05 *Question:* Who were the best people to serve with? *Answer:* LT with a lot of Chicagoans. One of LT's best friends enlisted the same day and served the same place.
- 00:31:03 *Question:* Serving with black soldiers? *Answer:* LT says there were no black soldiers in his division.

- 00:31:55 *Question:* How was it raising a family while in the military? *Answer:* Married in 1946, LT and his wife have moved 43 times. LT moved his family to Japan. One of LT's Japanese friends built him a house.
- 00:33:30 *Question:* Hard to pay bills when home? *Answer:* Not much trouble while in service. When LT retired in 1962, LT didn't get much for retirement. Worked as a ranger for five years. Worked in a shipyard. Worked in law enforcement.
- 00:34:45 *Question:* Why are you so invested in the military? *Answer:* Last five years of military service was the best. Called to be the editor of the Norad newsletter.
- 00:36:00 *Question:* Adjectives to describe WWII veterans? *Answer:* Bravery would describe every WWII soldier.
- 00:36:55 **[no question]** Interviewer shares the similarities between him and his father in the military.
- 00:39:45 **[no question]** Medals and battle stars. LT earned three battles stars in WWII. Earned four battle stars in the Korean War. Awarded 18 awards and decorations. Interviewer reads off select awards. Interviewer reads off where LT served and for how long.
- 00:42:50 *End of interview*