Bluebirds : an oral history of seven World War II veterans in postwar times, 1945 – the present

Nathan Timothy Ray

Follow this and additional works at: https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes

Recommended Citation
https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/11244

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of TRACE: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Nathan Timothy Ray entitled "Bluebirds : an oral history of seven World War II veterans in postwar times, 1945 -- the present." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Charles W. Johnson, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Bruce Wheeler, Charles O. Jackson

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Nathan Timothy Ray entitled "Bluebirds: An Oral History of Seven World War II Veterans in Postwar Times, 1945--The Present." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Dr. Charles W. Johnson, Major Professor

We have read this thesis recommend its acceptance:

[Signatures]

Accepted for the Council:

[Signature]

Associate Vice Chancellor
and Dean of The Graduate School
STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's degree at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I agree that the Library shall make it available to borrowers under rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this thesis are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of the source is made.

Permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of this thesis may be granted by my major professor, or in his absence, by the Head of Interlibrary Services when, in the opinion of either, the proposed use of the material is for scholarly purposes. Any copying or use of the material in this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature: Nathan Timothy Ray
Date: 25 April 1995
BLUEBIRDS: AN ORAL HISTORY
OF SEVEN WORLD WAR II VETERANS
IN POSTWAR TIMES, 1945--THE PRESENT

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Nathan Timothy Ray
May 1995
DEDICATION

This thesis is respectfully dedicated
to the memories of

Barbara M. Ray,
my mother,

and,
Nathaniel Ray,
my grandfather and World War II combat veteran
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At the conclusion of this project, I must extend my gratitude to many people who have been involved in it from its conception and have contributed to its successful completion. First, I wish to thank my major professor, Dr. Charles W. Johnson, Director of the Center for the Study of War and Society, for being an enthusiastic and insightful supporter of my efforts to collect the individual histories of World War II veterans. His sympathetic concern and friendship have buoyed me throughout the duration of this thesis.

Additionally, I want to extend my gratitude to Dr. Bruce Wheeler for helping me to first find this topic and for agreeing to be a member of my committee. His constructive criticisms and support throughout its development have given my final product a wider application. Dr. Wheeler fielded my sometimes-odd ideas about twentieth-century American history (like a connection between Henry Adams and Elvis Presley) with grace and good humor. I also wish to thank Dr. Charles O. Jackson, Associate Dean, Liberal Arts, for agreeing to serve on my committee despite his busy schedule. His presence and insights have been most welcome.

These three men together have supplied perhaps the best committee a Master's candidate could want. Their ability to relate to one another has created a secure and complimentary environment in which my thesis could grow.

I would also like to thank my non-academic supporters out there who have stood by me and encouraged me throughout this whole adventure. Specifically, I would like to thank Ms. Lisa Anderson, who has allowed me the generous use of her time and personal computer. Lisa's "stick-with-it"
friendship has carried me through the long days of fatiguing work and made my everyday life much more enjoyable. Also, I would like to thank my father, Dr. H. Gene Ray, who originally nurtured me academically and provided continuous and unflagging parental and financial support throughout my higher education. I want to thank my extended family for their love and support as well. Thanks must also be extended to the Archilla family in Tyler, Texas, who have taken me in on various occasions as one of their own, and provided me access to their family history. To the L4 gang: "personality goes a long way," but thanks for putting up with me anyway.

But above all, I want to thank each of the veterans I interviewed, because it is their willingness to share their lives with me that has provided the eloquence and immediacy of history to my thesis.
ABSTRACT

This three-part study deals with American veterans of World War II and their adjustment to postwar life, examining how such events as the atomic bomb drop, the passage of the GI Bill, the Cold War, and the memories of service affected the postwar life-course of vets. This thesis also seeks to examine some changes wrought on American society by the war, and to see how this society has been shaped by and experienced in the lives of individual veterans.

Part I presents factual background information, from a variety of primary and secondary sources, about World War II veterans. The military demobilization process, from its inception to implementation, is explored, along with the origins and provisions of the GI Bill. Both government measures arose from the widespread fears of another depression and of possible veteran agitation because of it. Part I concludes by looking at some of the immediate challenges facing World War II veterans after discharge, such as psychological readjustment, securing work, and using GI Bill provisions, and at the prosperous society they eventually created. World War II veterans became the backbone of strong postwar middle-class.

Part II consists of transcripts of oral interviews with seven veterans (one Puerto Rican, one African-American, and five whites, all of differing backgrounds and professions). Procedures and questions guiding the interviews are found in the Appendix. The different chapters of Part II reexamine from the individual's perspective on events such topics as race relations, the arms race, and the effect of the GI Bill. Part II reconfirms in all cases the upward moving, middle-class nature of veterans described in Part I.
Part III critiques the interviews, finding that better results could be had from a larger interview pool, follow-up interviews, and a better balance of service branches and theatres. Also the results of a mail-in survey are measured. Five of the seven interviewees responded and basically their individual responses mirrored many of the characteristics and trends described of vets in Part I. Part III concludes more general study of veterans is needed, as American veterans comprise a sizable minority of American society. In the particular case of World War II veterans, they are so well-integrated back into society they are solid components of middle-class America. Finally, as this study of World War II veterans indicates, more inquiry is needed to better understand the historical role of the American middle-class since 1945.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION: THE GREAT QUESTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. DEMOBILIZATION AND THE GI BILL</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression Psychosis</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demobilization: Plans, The Point System, And Procedure</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demobilization: Criticism and Backlash</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The GI Bill of Rights: Origins and Provisions</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. &quot;ON WHAT WE DO WHEN WE GET OUT&quot;</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disappointment and Delight</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grave Decisions</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Days</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building the Present</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Interlude</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. FALLOUT</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CAREERS AWRY</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. GETTING STARTED WITH THE GI BILL</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. KOREA AND VIETNAM</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. TOO MUCH, TOO SOON?</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. FAST FORWARD: THE COLD WAR, MCCARTHY, AND THE ARMS RACE</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. REMEMBERINGS</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. LAST WORDS</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART I

There'll be bluebirds over/
the white cliffs of Dover/
tomorrow. . . when the world is free. . .
INTRODUCTION

THE GREAT QUESTION

Near the end of his life, Henry Adams stated in a letter to a friend, "Behind all the killing comes the great question of what our civilization is to do next...."¹ He was talking about the Great War in Europe, and it seemed to him a confirmation of the dismal prophecies he had written of earlier in his book, The Education of Henry Adams. Throughout this book, Adams writes again and again of his own search to find a way of relating his human existence to a rapidly industrializing and utterly changing world.

In the end, Adams came to a pessimistic conclusion that men had set in motion a historical process of voracious mechanization which would soon outstrip their attempts to control it and eventually shatter society into nothingness after exhausting all sources of energy. As this happened, man progressively would lose social cohesion and refinement in his desire for technology. Adams symbolized this progression, or digression, by contrasting the medieval veneration of the Virgin Mary with the modern awe of the electrical dynamo.

A month before his death in 1918, Adams confided in another letter to a friend:

...I am quite sure that if I were fool enough to live ten years longer, I should find myself in an atmosphere stranger still....Already I can see ahead quite far enough to satisfy my wildest desires and even the temptation of seeing more, does not tempt me to go on.²

Possibly, he saw the growth and use of atomic power; but in any case, Adams was right, for by 1928 everyday life was considerably different, featuring the growing use of the radio, the rapid urbanization in America, and the rise of fascism abroad. In addition, the world stood on the threshold of the greatest economic depression in history. And with another twenty years, Adams’ last days in the early 1900s were nothing but a pleasant memory—and as far away as the moon, or another planet.

Yet in the atomic age of 1945, the processes Adams identified around the turn of the century still ground on, and his question, "what is civilization to do next?" had even more import than it had in 1917. In 1965, John Brooks contended that American civilization had yet to give an authoritative answer. The bomb had been dropped, yes, and America was a bit more circumspect (if not outright paranoid) about a nuclear strike, but we were also moving toward greater prosperity and technological progress.

Or so we thought. Despite all the advances, something clearly had been lost. Echoing Henry Adams, Brooks felt that the confusion of modern American life stemmed from the fact that technology was moving faster than the average person’s ability to comprehend it. All too soon the feeling of progress would dissipate amidst the gunfire of Kent State and My Lai, in the flames of the "Days of Rage" in black ghettos across America, and Richard Nixon leaving the White House in disgrace.

Where were the bluebirds? Had they ever come back? They probably had not. The history of the United States since World War II can be viewed

---

2Henry Adams to Charles Milnes Gaskell, 19 February 1918, in ibid., 648.

as one long search for them. Although the bluebirds seemed close at times, say from 1945 to 1950, or in 1961, they still slipped away. We are still looking.

This thesis examines World War II veterans' answers, both individually and collectively, as to what to do next. As a group totaling around 15,000,000, World War II veterans (and their nonveteran relations) are important to modern American life because no other group "has left such a colossal lifelong imprint on America's political, social, and economic institutions." For the world after 1945, veterans in many countries beside the United States colored everyday life with their views and eventually became the heroic symbols of a generation.

An easily recognized example of this is the American presidency since 1961. When President John F. Kennedy took office, a celebrated hero of World War II himself and one of the few junior officers to become president, his ten-member incoming Cabinet contained eight men who were also World War II vets. Seven of these had been in combat situations, like Kennedy himself, and one had been severely wounded. The Cabinet members held a total of eleven decorations. In America, from this point on, the symbol of the World War II vet would dominate the political affairs of the nation for about thirty years, both veteran and nonveteran controlling the White House longer than any other single generation. Today, a presidential candidate's service record, or lack of, is considered a valid means of determining his suitability for the highest office of government.

---

6Strauss, 28.
The grandfathers of the 1990s are the sculptors of present political society:

From youth to old age, [members of the World War II] generation have been the confident and rational problem-solvers of twentieth-century America, the ones who knew how to get things done—first as victorious soldiers and Rosie the Riveters, later as builders of rockets and highways, lastly as aging Presidents in the era of democracy's economic triumph over communism.\(^7\)

One might talk about the Woodstock generation and its effect (now rapidly assuming a greater political position), but even in the midst of the unrest of the sixties and seventies, America turned to Richard Nixon—twice—and in the "malaise" of the late seventies and early eighties, to Ronald Reagan (not a veteran, except in film, but to many embodying the World War II spirit of veterans). Until the election of President Bill Clinton, a babyboomer, the World War II generation has been central to American life, and, as recently demonstrated in the 1994 Republican resurgence in congressional elections, probably still will be, because

World War II provided...a coming-of-age slingshot, a catharsis more heroic and empowering than any other since the American Revolution. Where World War I cheated the optimism of youth, this war rewarded it—and implanted an enduring sense of civic virtue and entitlement.\(^8\)

Throughout the last fifty years, the symbol of the veteran has been prominent and looked to as the means by which to explain the World War II generation. Who can forget the prominence of such symbols on American TV? Some of the most famous fathers in television history have been World War II

\(^7\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^8\text{Ibid., 263.}\)
veterans; in each case, these characters often act as a foil to their Silent or Boomer generation children, providing a dramatic representation of the supposed gaps between youth and established cultures. Ward Cleaver (Leave It to Beaver), Howard Cunningham (Happy Days), and the most prominent, All in the Family's Archie Bunker, have been popular and widely-recognized World War II veteran TV Dads.

This thesis wants to examine through the eyes of the veteran, the architects of post-1945 society, the world these vets created and shaped. At an individual level, veterans experienced a variety of personal changes as a result of their service, some extreme and painful. As one wife of a former paratrooper said:

*My husband was a paratrooper in the war, in the 101st Airborne Division. He made twenty-six drops in France, North Africa, and Germany....Until the war he never drank. He never smoked. When he came back he was an absolute drunkard. And he used to have the most awful nightmares. He'd get up in the middle of the night and start screaming. I'd just sit for hours and hold him while he just shook. We'd go to the movies, and if they'd have films with a lot of shooting in it, he'd just start to shake and have to get up and leave. He started slapping me around and slapped the kids around. He became a brute.*

Other changes were more positive. One vet, now a middle manager in a large corporation, remembered, "I had matured in those three years away. I wanted to better educate myself more than, say, hitting the local factory. Fortunately, I was educated on the GI Bill. It was a blessing."

Second, this thesis examines some of the changes rendered by the War on American society as a whole. The passage of Public Law 346, the "GI Bill of

---


10Ibid., 12.
"Rights," was important to the veteran and to the nation. A vice-president and sales manager of a Chicago trade magazine, and former vet, remarked, "The GI Bill made all the difference in the world to me. I could never have afforded college. I don't know if I'd have been a blue-collar worker. Certainly not what I'm doing now.""11 The passage of the GI Bill, a limited form of New Deal social welfare, helped create a new, strong middle class, fundamentally altering the outlook of a generation and a society: "We set our sights pretty high. All of us wanted better levels of living."12

Lastly this thesis examines how veterans and American society, both tempered by war, interacted to ultimately give birth to the fluctuating American society of the past fifty years. As with the changes wrought by the War, some effects were positive. Much public good came after the War, with vets leading the way to the dreams of the "Great Society" and trips to the moon, or the success in removing legal segregation and widening the acceptance of American society towards minorities. Likewise, there were veteran-led failures, notably the expensive nuclear arms race, and the mire of Vietnam. An ex-admiral noted,

World War Two has warped our view of how we look at things today. We see things in terms of that war, which in a sense was a good war. But the twisted memory of it encourages the men of my generation to be willing, almost eager, to use military force anywhere in the world."13

Yet the search for the promised bluebirds went on, and this thesis examines the individual vet's response to the search, with all the

11Ibid., 48.
12Ibid., 12.
13Ibid., 13.
aforementioned consequences. The individual vet is vitally important. Although one acknowledges the planners of World War II, the successes and failures of American involvement in World War II ultimately rested on the individual soldier's performance. Likewise, the World War II veteran as voter and member of American society has had a singular effect not easily quantified, but present in both the elections of national leaders and the formulation of governmental policy.

Yet owing to considerations of time and space, this thesis must discriminate in its search. Although nonveteran counterparts are important too after 1945, except where necessary this group will be excluded. Additionally, because of the unique perspective inherent in this group, disabled veterans will not be examined. Finally, because of space and limitations of accessibility, this thesis will not make a concerted attempt to be proportionally balanced about minorities or women. However, there are singular representations of various ethnic minorities in the study.

A series of oral interviews, concluded with a mail-in survey (see Appendix), have been conducted, sampling the diversity of World War II service experiences: Airmen, Navy personnel, Army combat infantrymen, officers, enlisted men, tankers and bomb-armormers all grace these pages. Each has a unique perspective shaped by his individual place in the massive American war effort. In part, this thesis is, as Studs Terkel writes in the preface of his Depression-era oral history, *Hard Times*, "a memory book" about "Time as well as a time."14 However, unlike *Hard Times*, "precise statistic" is given in three chapters preceding the interviews to lend perspective on veterans of World War II and their times.

In using oral history for exploration, especially with regard to World War II, several problems face the interviewer. One is "the tendency to present the past experience in a variety of romanticized modes," based on "the interviewee's desire to create a positive image" of himself, and on the fact that "'real' history has been doubly filtered by time and subsequent experience."15 About World War II, Paul Fussell in his book, Wartime, laments the "real war will never make it into the history books," because the War was too vast in scope and size to be comprehended by the individual, and those on the homefront only saw sanitized images. Likewise, only a fraction experienced the ferocity and futility of combat; according to Fussell, out of eleven million men in the American Army in 1945, only about 700,000 were in the actual fighting infantry of 90 combat divisions.16 This fact alone will account for different perspectives about events and life-course. Finally, class position will distort the picture given to the interviewer, as different classes, like combat veterans, have distinctly divergent perceptions of events.17

But oral history does have advantages. It can provide significant and unique detail of the past and give a strong perspective of the "long term meaning in history." The primary strength of oral history is that it can show insights into cultural and historical processes and can track the workings of collective consciousness and culture.18 Oral history is one of the best tools to

---


17Miller, ix.
measure the effect of the impact of World War II veterans on modern American life. As Marc S. Miller notes, the war was

...a traumatic experience for Americans, and its effects can only in part be reduced to apparently objective facts and figures. World War II influenced [people] in subtle and personal ways that are often revealed only through the memories of those who lived those years [italics mine].

Moreover, oral interviews of veterans preserve a unique narrative and a part, however small, of American "society's collective historical memory." This brings one back to Studs Terkel and Hard Times. Although the resulting stress on oral interviews makes this thesis in part a "memory book, rather [than] one of hard fact and precise statistic," it will capture some of the memories and emotions of World War II veterans, co-authors of modern times. Is this the truth? Yes, because for the veterans, "in their rememberings are their truths [italics mine]," and these "truths" have become prime motives for important actors in the history of modern America. These are the individual answers to Henry Adams.

---


19 Miller, ix.


21 Terkel, Hard Times, 3.
CHAPTER 1

DEMOBILIZATION AND THE GI BILL

1. DEPRESSION PSYCHOSIS

Before he could return to full civilian status, the veteran of World War II had to pass through the whole process of discharge from the service, and then weigh his future options in relation to the government’s assistance given in the form of the GI Bill. Since both the topics of demobilization and the evolution of the GI Bill have been fully explored in other works, such as Davis Ross’s Preparing for Ulysses: Politics and Veterans During World War II and John Sparrow’s official History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army, it is not the purpose of this thesis to re-state these works.

However, some knowledge of demobilization and the benefits of the GI Bill is necessary to understand the history and effect of World War II veterans on America.

Several notable currents of thought surround the development and evolution of both demobilization and the GI Bill. First, and most basic in the minds of government and military planners, was the fear of another Depression after the massive wartime spending stopped. As Ross sums up:

[For Americans, both civilian and soldier, t]he belief lingered that [the country] had not righted itself from the economic blow of the depression, except through heavy defense and war spending beginning in 1939. Removal of the war-created federal fiscal activity when peace came would lead to widespread unemployment; it was "likely to be one of the most serious in American history." The "Depression Psychosis" provides part of the intellectual setting for the period [surrounding the planning of discharges and the GI Bill]. In brief, fear of a postwar
economic collapse impelled Americans...to plan for [the GIs'] return.\(^1\)

The first, basic step toward preventing another depression was to plan rationally for the return of the millions of men scattered across the globe. Historically, Americans had quickly discharged troops after final victory, and this pattern had been followed in 1918-1919. However, the negative effects of World War I demobilization and the veteran agitation which followed were still vivid in the minds of governmental planners (some of whom, like Bernard Baruch, were involved in both planning attempts). This time around, faced with even a larger amount of men, the government hoped to learn its lessons and avoid the failure characterizing the experience of World War I vets.\(^2\)

Basically the government and military wanted to uphold agreements concerning postwar occupation and avoid dumping millions of men on the civilian labor market after a long period of absence: "What would happen...[if] millions of discharged servicemen flooded the labor market...at the same time that millions of war workers were displaced?" After the experience of the Depression, the thought of so many displaced workers was frightening. Due to a lack of planning during World War I, men were discharged rapidly and had to compete with displaced civilian workers, resulting in a recession in 1921. With considerably more men in uniform in the 1940s, and unsure of how solid economic recovery was, leaders in the government and military had to act on demobilization.\(^3\)

---


\(^3\) Ibid., 10, 11, 15.
But what to do with the veterans after their return? The Bonus Marchers and the debacle at Anacostia Flats also haunted the government. The size, scope, and duration of World War II demanded a new approach towards veterans. Hence, at the instigation of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and others, a program of benefits beyond traditional cash bonuses aimed at "restoring the individual to the community" was legislated.4

Implicit in this government program, eventually passed as Public Law 346, or the "GI Bill of Rights," is the discarding of "the nonsense of attempting to 'reward' men [for] deeds for which there can be no adequate reward except in terms of a healthy nation and peaceful world." Rejected was "the sentimental theory that [the nation] must 'do something for veterans' in favor of the sound theory of helping [America] achieve...national objectives by making sure the veterans [took] their places in the community as productive citizens..."5 Although speaking later, a Luce editorial in the 5 August 1946 issue of Life echoed the same theme: "Veterans do not need...grab bags of poorly thought-out gratuities. They need genuine rehabilitation, to be trained and helped into good jobs and into stations in society...." There were simply "too many" World War II vets for old methods of bonusing and old-age pensioning to work.6

These trends in American postwar thinking indicate a broader shift in national thought begun in the travail of the Great Depression. Americans now seemed more accepting of federal government protection and economic

4Harold M. Hyman, American Singularity: The 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the 1862 Homestead and Morrill Acts, and the 1944 G.I. Bill (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1986), 64; "Baruch on Veterans," The Nation, 15 September 1945, 244.

5Nation, 244.

6"The Veterans," Life, 5 August 1946, 36.
guidance in national matters.

Therefore, although couched in terms of patriotism, the GI Bill represented a continuation of New Deal ideas, although Congress by this time had discontinued many New Deal programs and agencies. Many of the GI Bill benefits, like unemployment compensation and accessible loans for vets, were similar to benefits provided by such agencies as the Farm Credit Administration, the Federal Housing Administration, and in reforms like Social Security. Yet, despite its New Deal heritage, the GI Bill "was so confined it its coverage as to suit even a conservative Congress, whose members, after all, felt no less indebted than did their constituents to the nation's men in arms." Unlike the New Deal, the GI Bill never directly attempted broad social reform.

2. DEMOBILIZATION: PLANS, THE POINT SYSTEM, AND PROCEDURE

Before GIs could reap the bounty of government benefits, they had to get home. Because of the memories of World War I, demobilization planning for World War II began almost as early as mobilization. Although the efforts were uncoordinated, both the Navy and the National Resources Planning Board separately investigated the discharge process in 1942, but no definitive action was taken until 1943.


This first obstacle to planning was the lack of joint interdepartmental dialogue between the government and the service branches, and within the service branches themselves. A most glaring example of this was the fact that postwar foreign policy in the State Department did not factor in the demobilization of the Army when occupation commitments were promised to the Allies. Only after the establishment by Congress of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion in the summer of 1944 did some measure of cooperation evolve among all parties involved.\(^\text{10}\)

Overall, four basic assumptions guided demobilization planning:

1. [The United States] would emerge as the world's foremost military power and would be prepared for action in many parts of the world.
2. The war in Europe would terminate before the Japanese surrender.
3. The United States would furnish an important share of large-scale occupation troops [however, this figure rapidly fluctuated, and eventually slowed down the discharge process, as definite troop ceilings could not be readily determined].
4. [American] Public Opinion would demand rapid demobilization.\(^\text{11}\)

Additionally, planners believed that to achieve a Japanese surrender would take at least one year beyond V-E Day, coupled with a massive amphibious assault. With the year between V-E and V-J Days, the Army could begin partial demobilization, and building a 400,000 man European occupation force, while reducing the number of all non-essential troops from abroad or withdrawing them completely.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{10}\)Sparrow, 38-40, 380.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., 45.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., 57.
The Army and Navy faced a multi-faceted problem. With the capitulation of Germany, three processes would be launched: a shifting of men and material from Europe to the Pacific (for the final offensive), a parceling out of occupation troops for Europe, and a discharge of long-term servicemen. Therefore, a system for determining priority among the troops for post-V-E Day roles was necessary. For the Navy things were a bit simpler, as most ships and men were needed in the Pacific. Consequently, although the Navy would continue demobilization planning (which would essentially mirror the Army's system, with a few minor differences), no mass discharge was scheduled to begin before V-J Day.\[13\]

Faced with numerous post-V-E Day tasks, the Army and its various planners rapidly discarded the time-old tradition of discharge by unit (letting a whole battalion or regiment, regardless of duty or time spent, go as a whole), out of fear for massive civilian unemployment and an inability to cover all promised postwar roles. Planners wanted discharge to be as fair as induction (planners even went so far as to reject first-in, first out suggestions, because they felt it might disregard actual duties performed by servicemen, and be unfair also to fathers), and to reflect the system of replacement of combat casualties. Combat units stayed continually on the line in World War II, and replacements were brought in as needed, creating in the end a patchwork of veterans with different amounts of combat exposure. Those with more combat experience, it was felt, should have more seniority over those with less when determining priority of discharge.\[14\]

\[13\]Ibid., 29.

\[14\]Ibid., 89-90.
Finally, planners decided to go to the men themselves, as "[t]he fairest way [to demobilize] would be to plan a program that would discharge first the men whom the soldiers themselves thought should be discharged first." A system then developed out of a series of surveys conducted by the Army's Special Services Division,\(^15\) called "the point system."

When at last unveiled to the troops and the public on 6 September 1944,\(^16\) the point system provided a simple method of determining a person's individual discharge status. The system, based on GI recommendations, favored combat vets, fathers, and long-term men, and rewarded each of these groups with points. Simply, for each campaign star or decoration, five discharge points were awarded to the holder; twelve points per child (up to a maximum of three children) were awarded to fathers; and each GI received one point for each month in service past 16 September 1940. Finally, all overseas GIs got an additional point per month spent overseas. Each GI tallied up his points on his "adjusted service rating" card he was issued to determine his status. Higher point-men had greater priority than lower point-men. On V-E day, eighty-five points was declared the limit--those with eighty-five or more points were eligible for immediate discharge.\(^17\)

Initially, the system was to last only until V-J Day, which was expected to be at least a year away. During this period, high-point men could be mustered out, but enough experienced lower-point men would be left for leavening incoming green troops, occupation duties, and a massive Japanese beachhead. After V-J Day, a new plan, based on the old point system but more

---

\(^{15}\)Ibid., 90.


\(^{17}\)Sparrow, 96-114.
streamlined, would be enacted.\textsuperscript{18} However, V-J Day came nine months early, and the Army remained saddled with the old system, flaws and all.

By midnight of 12 May 1945, when the point system first went into effect for the Army, 1,981 soldiers individually holding eighty-five points or more were on their way home. By the end of May, the Army discharged 30,000 soldiers; by the second week in June, the "step-up" in the weekly discharge rate reached 20,000 men.\textsuperscript{19} What awaited the men "in the pipeline" for home was an odyssey of separation centers, check-ins, check-ups, paperwork, and long queues. From the European Theatre of Operations, the dischargee's route home boiled down to a rather straight-forward process.

Upon approval for discharge, the individual progressed first to a port reception center in Europe, like one of the camps around Rheims or Le Havre, France, to await a berth back to New York. Upon arrival in New York, the individual was trundled out to one of nineteen different separation centers. At this center, for each veteran there was a repeated sequence of uniform-equipment inspection, turn-in, the uniform replacement if necessary; a physical examination; careful completion of personnel records...including discharge certificate; separation counseling; pay record review and payment of all money entitlements; finally a departure ceremony where the men received [their] papers and the eagle lapel insignia [known informally as the "ruptured duck"]...\textsuperscript{20}

As originally designed, the final separation process was to last only forty-eight hours, and to be very personable and friendly toward the outgoing veteran. Yet this well-meaning desire was soon sacrificed to speed, because too many men began filing through the centers. The sheer numbers of men

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 118.

\textsuperscript{19}Ballard, 78.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 76-8.
forced the Army to increase hours of operation and the numbers of lines, until finally the whole separation process went on twenty-four hours a day.\(^\text{21}\)

In the 2 July 1945 issue, *Time* profiled the discharge of Phillip W. Small, a private from Burnham, Maine, tracing his journey from New York back to his home. His journey was representative of many vets. One day in late June, Small deboarded the USS *General Brooke* in the early afternoon, and along with several buddies, rode a train from New York to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, arriving there in the late afternoon. At 6:15pm the next day, Small entrained for Fort Devins, a separation center outside Boston, arriving at 2:00am the next morning. At six the same morning, Small went for his physical, but later a "slight snag" developed—the finance office broke down, after serving 2000 men in the last twenty-four hours. But by 9:00pm, Small received the $15 owed to him in backpay, and after a short liberty in Boston, he boarded a bus bound for Burnham at 1:00am. Small got home just in time to eat breakfast.\(^\text{22}\)

Demobilization rapidly picked up steam during the summer of 1945, taxing management and transportation facilities. In Europe, sixty-eight divisions, plus large amounts of supporting personnel at many levels, about 3.5 million men, faced some sort of redeployment or deactivation, thereby necessitating the opening of the "cigarette camps" outside Le Havre, France to handle the horde of men bound for home or the Pacific. These new camps alone handled 343,733 men before V-J Day. A total of 300,000 men left Europe in June 1945, and another 400,000 left in July; of seventeen divisions scheduled for redeployment to the Pacific, by V-J Day, fourteen had reached

\(^\text{21}\)Ibid., 76.

the United States, where the men got thirty-day furloughs (many were still on furlough when V-J Day came in August).23

3. DEMOBILIZATION: CRITICISM AND BACKLASH

Despite all the attempts at fairness, military planners knew a certain amount of criticism would be leveled at the discharge system by both servicemen and civilians. What the planners did not factor in, particularly among those in the Army, was the severity of the censure. Eventually, enough pressure mounted against the Army that both servicemen and civilians staged protests over the slowness of demobilization.

Other branches of service, such as the Navy and Marine Corps, did not experience as much reproach as the Army, in part due to the fact that their demobilization system was not scheduled to begin until after V-J Day.24 The Army, on the other hand, had planned to replace the post-V-E Day point system with a more streamlined one formulated during the anticipated year-long hiatus between V-E and V-J Days. When V-J Day arrived in August, only three months after the surrender of Germany, the Army had to stick with the discharge system already in place.

Although the Army had increased its discharge rates after V-E Day, by the first of September, 1945, it still faced an enormous task. Army forces totaled about 8,020,000 men world-wide: 46,000 men in Alaska; 3,400,000 in

23Ballard, 79.

24The Navy's demobilization system mirrored the Army's point system. At V-J Day, the total discharge level for the Navy stood at forty-four points, with the men receiving one-half point for each year of age, one-quarter point for each month overseas, and ten points for each dependent. No credit was given for combat. The Navy created eighteen separation centers for enlisted men, and fourteen for officers, with a goal of completing discharge in seventy-two hours. Ibid., 19, 83.
North America; 86,000 in the South Atlantic and Caribbean; 15,000 in the North Atlantic; 2,312,000 in the European and Mediterranean theatres; 44,000 in Africa and the Middle East; 231,000 in the China-Burma-India theatre; and 1,565,000 men left in the Pacific. The Navy had by comparison 4,060,000 men left to discharge, with the majority located in the Pacific. In addition, millions upon millions of tons of surplus materials needed demobilization as well.25

Upon the decision to institute the point system, the Army also decided to commission director Frank Capra to complete a film, eventually titled Two Down and One To Go, explaining the origin, philosophy, and implementation of the point system. This film, to be released in conjunction with a pamphlet of the same name, was targeted at the men of the European Theatre (the first place where major demobilization took place) and the folks back home. The Army hoped by screening the film within hours, or at least days of the European armistice, it could forestall criticism and complaints among the men and on the homefront. Additionally, the Army hoped to get the film and pamphlets to all its outposts to introduce men outside Europe to the point system.26

In the end, the film was successful in deflecting certain criticisms. As a world-wide survey conducted in June, 1945 showed, 83 percent of the soldiers polled had seen Two Down and One To Go, with another 43 percent stating they had read the accompanying pamphlet (20 percent said they had seen the pamphlet, but had not read it).27 When army servicemen complained throughout demobilization, the most basic gripe was in the delay engendered

\[25\] Sparrow, 29.

\[26\] Ibid., 160-5.

\[27\] Ibid., 165-6.
by the whole process, understandable owing to the multiplicity of postwar tasks facing the Army.  

Despite its emphasis on including the troops in planning a discharge system and its desire to fully explain it to personnel and the American public, the Army failed to "establish [the fact the point system was] an objective basis for priority of discharge...[with] nothing to do with the rate of discharge." Therefore, "it [was] not surprising [that] the two concepts became confused in the minds of the public or...in the minds of...the soldiers." With this in mind, it is understandable that criticism rose against the Army both at home and abroad.

Demobilization of the Army began on 12 May 1945, and ended on 30 June 1947. Never, at any time, did servicemen disapproving of the point system constitute a majority of all troops. The same can be said of the home front: in late June, 1945, when asked if the Army's point system was fair, 72 percent of the American public answered yes. Later, towards the end of September, a poll showed 56 percent of the general public agreeing the Army's release rate was "fast enough;" 55 percent of people with a relative in the Army said the same. Although the public's approval of the release rate did drop, and certain segments raised vocal protests, most Americans did not disapprove of the point system.

Criticism remained a constant both among the public and the troops, however, and reached a climax in January, 1946. Most critics among the

---


29 Stouffer, 547.

30 Stouffer, 547; Sparrow, 156, 197.
troops focused on the delay in returning home. One of the positive aspects of
the point system was its flexibility in setting point totals, and by 3 September
1945, the Army had dropped its V-E Day discharge total from 85 to 80 points.
This increased the number of discharges from around 4,000 a day on V-J Day
to about 17,000 a day by the end of September. However, the rising influx of
men had negative effects, resulting in a decrease in processing skill due to the
sheer number of men and to the fact that lower point totals drained off the
more experienced men handling separation procedures. Additionally, the
Army faced problems in finding enough shipping with adequate space for
transport (a real problem in the Pacific with its scattered outposts), and
coordinating enough rail stock to meet the disembarking men.\(^{31}\)

Symptomatic of this frustration over delay was the rise of censure
surrounding inequalities inherent in the point system. As early as 14 May
1945, complaints were raised about points awarded for combat. Edgar G.
Brown, head of the National Negro Council, charged in a press statement the
point system represented "the rankest kind of discrimination" against
African-American troops, because most blacks were segregated into work and
noncombat units. Therefore, these men could not receive campaign stars,
although they provided the necessary props for a successful campaign.\(^{32}\)

This critique over the awarding of campaign stars boiled over among
white troops too. For example, in the Army Air Force, service crews
complained they did not get campaign stars, whereas bomber crews serving at
the same base did. Moreover, ground troops groused about the inflated scores
the Air Force had due to a higher percentage of medals awarded.\(^{33}\)

\(^{31}\)Ballard, 80; Goulden, 24-6; Ross, 173.

\(^{32}\)Sparrow, 154.
Actual combat vets even complained about campaign stars, although a majority favored the point system. A bitter minority, accounting for one-third of all critics in the Army, protested the provisions given to combat vets.

These men complain[ed] (1) that a campaign star [was] not an adequate measure of combat, (2) that [combat vets got] little if any advantage in combat credit over troops in their theaters who [had] not been in combat, and (3) that the number of points for children [was] too high as compared with combat and overseas credits.34

For combat troops with less than 85 points in June, 1945, 42 percent thought the point system was "not good at all," or "not so good," as compared to only 27 percent of all soldiers with less than 85 points answering the same question. Additionally, the more campaigns a combat vet had survived, the more he disapproved of the point system.35

Furthermore, critics surfaced among men with more than three years service, married men having no children, and older GIs. As for African-Americans, although the point system (and the Army in general) discriminated against them, a June, 1945 survey showed only 27 percent of those blacks polled less favorable towards the point system, in contrast with only 25 percent of whites answering the same question.36

Apart from all the superficial delays which resulted in outbursts of protest, the key to understanding why people at the time felt demobilization moved too slowly lies in the United States' acceptance of the position as leader of the free world. Assuming the unfamiliar mantle of world leadership and power put Americans in an unaccustomed new role, and

33Sparrow, 474; Stouffer, 533.
34Sparrow, 474.
35Ibid.
36Stouffer, 534.
these new responsibilities, specifically in providing occupation troops, did not sit well at first with the American public. For the most part, Americans either did not or would not understand the implications inherent in America's new position.37

Determining the number of occupation troops necessary to fulfill American obligations in Europe and the Pacific led to the servicemen protests in the first two weeks of January, 1946. Throughout the whole planning process, and the final execution of demobilization plans, military leaders, particularly in the Army, constantly revised the numbers needed for occupation duties. Finally, by late winter 1946, the troop figures rested at:

Overseas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Troops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe (including Italy)</td>
<td>335,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>375,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Areas</td>
<td>87,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But before this announcement, the vacillation in public by military figures, from the Secretary of War down to Theatre commanders, over troop ceilings and final figures for occupation "created an air of uncertainty" for the average serviceman, not knowing "when he would return home."39

The low point troops (in addition to many with sufficient points for discharge) had to remain in place in order to give the Army time to train new replacements; the result in the meantime for the men was that they "languished" at various posts. Those with special skills, like translators and interpreters of Asiatic languages, radio traffic analysts, telegraph and telephone linemen, or diesel mechanics, just to name a few, had to be kept to

37Ross, 164, 186-9.
38Sparrow, 477.
39Ross, 180.
give day-to-day Army operations adequate support. But many did nothing worthwhile: "Any 15-year-old could do what I'm doing and learn it in 2 or 3 days. I have plenty of points but am classified essential and held," wrote one GI in a survey. Another bluntly said, "I have 92 points and have just been laying on my ass for three months doing nothing."  

Troop doggerel, like

Please Mr. Truman, won't you send us home?
We have captured Napoli and liberated Rome.
We have licked the master race,
Now there's lots of shipping space,
So, won't you send us home?
Let the boys at home see Rome.

quickly passed to near political threats, such as this letter received by a member of the House of Representatives:

My buddies and I hold you and other members of the House and Senate responsible for our predicament. You put us in the Army and you can get us out. Either demobilize us or, when given the next shot at the ballot box, we will demobilize you.

The discontent came to a head after the War Department announcement of 4 January 1946, which stated, "it will be necessary to slow down the rate of demobilization and in some cases to delay the return to the United States of men eligible for discharge until replacements can take their places." Coming on the heels of Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall's statement of 20 September 1945, which promised a "relax[ation]" of the point system in "late winter," the men felt betrayed. Although Marshall later said

---

40 Ross, 174-5; Sparrow, 481-2.
41 Stouffer, 536-7.
42 Goulden, 31.
43 Sparrow, 191.
he meant "late winter" to be around 20 March 1946, the troops' hopes had soared with expectations for all to be home by early-to-middle 1946.44

This hope-crushing communique sparked spontaneous outbursts among the troops, who massed together to express their grievances in the first two weeks of January. The largest gathering happened in Manila, on 6 and 7 January, where numbers estimated at anywhere from 8,000 to 25,000 men congregated at the City Hall. The protest rally was addressed by Lt. Gen. W.D. Styer, who calmed the men by stating that the Army had within four months of the Japanese surrender demobilized two-thirds of an organization that took two years to build. He further emphasized the men's duty to protect surplus property, and the fact the Selective Service was sending relief troops (albeit slowly).45

No violence occurred at Manila, or at any other rally, nor did the Army choose to label any protest a "mutiny." Chalking up the protests to homesickness, Douglas MacArthur commended the way in which the Manila outburst was handled, but General Dwight Eisenhower warned the troops against any future gatherings. Needless to say, the troops got the attention of President Truman and the Cabinet (Eisenhower actually got cornered by irate wives and mothers of servicemen on the Hill, the subject of Life's Picture of the Week for 4 February 1946), and soon Eisenhower ordered all men with "two or more years service" into the discharge "pipeline" by 30 June 1946.46

With Eisenhower's order, both civilian and servicemen pressure for rapid demobilization dwindled. The Army's discharge goal for June, 1946 was

44Ross, 181; Sparrow, 476.
45Ross, 183; Sparrow, 214.
46Ross, 183-4; Sparrow, 479.
a target\textsuperscript{47} of 5,500,000 men, and by June, 1947 the whole process had ended. Upon reflection, it is clear

...from a technical point of view demobilization succeeded magnificently. From a wartime strength of over twelve million in 1945, military leaders reduced [the Army] to a little over three million one year later—and by the summer of 1948 had lowered the figure to a postwar nadir of somewhat less than one-and-one-half million.\textsuperscript{48}

In the first year of demobilization, the Army reduced its strength by six million, or two-thirds of its total strength; likewise, demobilization between 1 July 1945 to 30 June 1946 exceeded any one year of mobilization by 31 percent. If any major failure can be contributed to demobilization, it must lie in the nation's inability to link its new superpower status to its postwar planning. From the perspective of fifty years of Cold War (now over), perhaps it may be surmised that if demobilization had not been subject to so much pressure, arising out of an unclear picture of postwar realities, perhaps the Cold War would not have begun as soon as it did in Europe. At any rate, enough troops could have been on the ground to back US rhetoric. Whether or not occupation troops could have made a difference did not matter—Americans did not yet have the perspective gained from fifty years, or even five years, of Cold War relations to govern demobilization. Conceptions of the US would change soon enough, but servicemen wanted to first savor the fruits of victory and peace.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{47}Goulden, 27.
\textsuperscript{48}Ross, 185.
\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 185-9.
Awaiting the returning GIs were the benefits of the GI Bill, and although the Bill was the definitive reward for veterans, legislated provisions for veterans had begun appearing as early as the passage of the Selective Service Act. Instituting the first American peacetime draft in 1940, the Selective Service Act also had postwar stipulations in Section 8, "requir[ing] employers (both private and the Federal government) to rehire their former employees to the same position or to one of like seniority, status, or pay." All applicants had to be honorably discharged, able to work, and they had to apply for rehiring within forty days of discharge (later changed to ninety days in December, 1944). Employers were protected from rehiring, if circumstances had "so changed as to make it impossible or unreasonable to do so."50

But with the magnitude and duration of the war effort, it became rapidly evident to government leaders, like President Roosevelt, and others that such a simple stipulation as Section 8 would not be comprehensive enough to cover all veterans. Since many feared a new depression and more veteran agitation, new plans were initiated.

President Roosevelt began the push for new benefits with a message delivered to Congress on 27 October 1943 entitled "[O]n the Education of War Veterans." Arising out of the recommendations of a presidential commission on the postwar education of veterans, Roosevelt went to Congress with acknowledgments, suggestions, and several requests:

We, at home, owe a special and continuing obligation to these men and women in the armed services....[A]fter the war shall have been won, the best way that we can repay a portion of that

50Ibid., 36-7.
debt is to see to it, by planning and action now, that those men and women are demobilized into an economy which is sound and prosperous, with a minimum of unemployment and dislocation; and that, with the assistance of Government, they are given the opportunity to find a job for which they are fitted and trained, in a field which offers some reasonable assurance of well-being and continuous employment.\(^5\)

Roosevelt recognized many veterans would want new jobs that required "special training and further education," and as a wider program of benefits, he asked Congress to begin legislation immediately to underwrite it. Roosevelt felt "that the Nation [was] morally obligated to provide this training and education and the necessary financial assistance by which they [could] be secured." He justified this stance by further stating his belief that the interrupted education of so many GIs constituted a threat to America's welfare, and that the news of congressional legislation concerning postwar educational benefits would be a great morale boost for the troops abroad.\(^5\)

Roosevelt asked Congress to appropriate enough funds to allow "any veteran of [World War II to equip] himself for the most useful employment...which his aptitudes and willingness qualif[ied] him." Roosevelt felt sure the "money invested in this training and schooling program [would] reap rich dividends in higher productivity, more intelligent leadership, and greater human happiness [in the future]." But Roosevelt sold this request to Congress, no longer the "rubber stamp" Congress of the First Hundred Days, by stressing

We must replenish our supply of persons qualified to discharge the heavy responsibilities of the postwar world. We have taught our youth how to wage war; we must also teach them how live useful and happy lives in freedom, justice and decency....While


\(^5\)Ibid.
the successful conclusion of this great war is by no means within sight, yet it may well be said that the time to prepare for peace is at the height of war.53

Roosevelt concluded his message by specifically asking Congress to allocate money for one year of either vocational or general schooling for men inducted on or after 16 September 1940. Additionally, he asked Congress to fund schooling for a select number of veterans for up to three additional years. Roosevelt also wanted both tuition and maintenance costs included in allocations, reminding Congress it was cheaper to send a man to college than to keep him in service. Also, with veterans going to college, a beneficial effect of draining surplus labor off the market would result. Lastly, Roosevelt felt the separate localities and states should determine standards of educational process and certification, but that the federal government should oversee the actual distribution of money.54

Roosevelt's timing was shrewd: an election was pending for the following year, and no congressman could deny such benefits for service personnel except at the risk of his own seat. Likewise, voters would identify such a program with Roosevelt's up-coming fourth-term presidential bid.55 The passage of such legislation was nearly assured.

But, owing to disagreements within the Administration, mainly between the Veterans' Administration and the Office of Education, worried liberals, and dissenting American educators, no guide for legislation reached Congress. The bill just fell apart.56

53Ibid., 451, 453.
54Ibid., 451-2.
55Blum, 248.
56Ross, 95-7.
However, on 10 January 1944, the American Legion stepped in to carry the ball, asking for "an omnibus bill" for veteran readjustment. Roosevelt let the Legion go to work, taking the heat off the Administration. The Legion was happy to do so because the organization sincerely wanted World War II veterans to avoid the problems faced by the veterans of World War I. The Legion also hoped that the ensuing publicity would boost its membership among the homecoming GIs.57

From January to June, 1944, when the GI Bill was finally passed, three principles guided the Legion's lobbying efforts. One, the Legion wanted all benefits handled by one agency, the Veterans' Administration, so "veterans would not be led from pillar to post." Two, the benefits for World War II vets had to be equal to or greater than the benefits given to veterans of World War I. Finally, the Legion thought any legislation passed should insure a quick return for the new veterans to prewar civilian status, at the point when the War "disrupted their lives." When the GI Bill of Rights, Public Law 346, was signed into law by President Roosevelt on 22 June 1944, it mainly reflected the parentage of both Roosevelt and the American Legion, but it also bore the traces of its passage by Congress which had trimmed here and added there.58

In its final form, the GI Bill reflected the concerns arising from "Depression Psychosis" and irate veterans, so it was not a simple cash handout. Rather, the Bill was a true attempt to allow veterans to reconnect to American society through generous provisions for loans, education, and un-

57 Ibid., 98.

58 Ibid., 99, 118, 123.
employment compensation. Probably the two biggest titles of the GI Bill were the two dealing with unemployment compensation (Title V) and education (Title II).

Unemployment compensation was a straightforward provision to help ease veterans back into a job market which was sure to be spotty immediately after War's end. Each vet who placed a claim for a "readjustment allowance" was compensated on this principle: one week of compensation for three weeks of service. However, no more than a total of 52 weeks of compensation was allowed.59

Qualifications and rules governing readjustment allowances were simple too. As printed in a government pamphlet issued to Tennessee veterans, a vet was entitled to an allowance if unemployment occurred within two years of discharge, or termination of hostilities, whichever was later, but in no case would payments be issued five years after war's end. Secondly, a qualified applicant had to be honorably discharged, and had to have served at least ninety days after 16 September 1940. The only exception to this rule was in the case of injury or disability "in the line of duty" before ninety days was passed. A vet was eligible if he was a resident of the US, US territory or possession and registered for work at and reporting to the local employment office. If a veteran was completely unemployed or "partially employed [but earning] wages less than $23 per week" he was qualified. Finally, a vet had to be able and available to work at the time the claim was filed, although a vet could still receive compensation if he became unable to work after filing the claim (strikers were excluded from any compensation).60


33
Vets received $20 a week if completely unemployed, or if "partially employed...$20 per week less the amount of wages received...in excess of $3." Self-employed veterans, like farmers, could also receive "$100 per month less the amount of...net earnings." All claims for Tennessee vets, as with other veterans around the country, had to be filed with the United States Employment Office, which had a special veterans' representative, or with the state unemployment offices.61

Claims to the VA for readjustment allowances peaked in fiscal year 1947, which began with 7,827,585 claims, representing the highest number in the program's history. Across the year, because of material shortages, labor unrest, and industrial re-conversion, 2,054,000 vets entered new claims for unemployment, and 209,839 entered new claims for self-employment compensation.62 The VA paid out in fiscal year 1947 (according to figures from its 1955 report) $1,167,589,391.05 in unemployment readjustment allowances, and $271,126,693.04 in self employment allowances.63 Additionally, the VA reported that a cumulative total of 494,905 applicants exhausted entitlements by the end of fiscal year 1947. 69 percent of those exhaustion occurred in the unemployment category. For fiscal year 1947 alone, 459,541 exhaustion, or 93 percent of the total figure up to that point, occurred. However, of the "nearly 7.3 million" participating in the program for one or more weeks, only 10 percent remained on the rolls in the last week

---

60Keeble, 8; Ross, 102, 106; Nora Gray Key, "An Analysis of State and Federal Programs For Veterans of World War II" (M.S. Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1945), 100.

61Keeble, 9.


of June, 1947. 6.6 million withdrew claims after taking allowances for only a few weeks.64

But the most far-reaching, most publicized, and best remembered provision of the GI Bill is Title II, allowing education benefits to veterans. It is certainly the most important in terms of future effects, for it not only educated a sizable minority, who would directly influence the postwar years, but it also helped to change the face of higher education. Most importantly, the educational provisions of the GI Bill fulfilled the goal of postwar planners by allowing the veterans of World War II to retake positions in the community and successfully "reconnect" with society, preventing any future outbursts of agitation similar to those by World War I vets.

As summarized in For Tennessee Veterans, veterans who were honorably discharged and had served at least ninety days since 16 September 1940 were eligible to receive vocational or general education for one full year. Beyond that, the GI Bill in its final form allowed additional training equal to the length of service after 16 September 1940. However, any time spent in specialized Army and Navy training (like their separate college programs) was subtracted from GI Bill education. Furthermore, a vet had to begin training within two years of discharge and conclude his studies within seven years of the War’s termination.65

Total education time was not to "exceed four years," and veterans had to attend VA-approved schools (there were hundreds of approved schools, both across the US and overseas). Finally, the GI Bill awarded veterans all tuition, laboratory, and other miscellaneous fees, not exceeding $500 a year,

64VA, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1947, 61.
65Keeble, 5-6; Key, 87.
plus a monthly subsistence allowance of $50 for single vets and $75 for those who were married.66

Despite its New Deal origins, and the fervent desire of Franklin D. Roosevelt to link veterans' benefits with a wider system of reform for the American public, the GI Bill remained solely a program for World War II veterans. This limited welfare aspect reflects the shepherding the Bill received from the American Legion, and the pressure Congress put on the Bill to rid the government of undesired welfare-planning New Deal programs.

Yet, as hoped, the Bill still had regenerative effects on American society and directly contributed to the widespread prosperity to come. With all its provisions—beyond simply education, like the passages dealing with loans—the GI Bill helped to further empower veterans already embued with a vigorous, can-do teamwork ethic; for many, the GI Bill provided the cornerstone for successful futures in a variety of careers. Bound for the top, veterans of World War II took many along for the journey.

66Keeble, 6; Ross, 105.
CHAPTER 2

"ON WHAT WE DO WHEN WE GET OUT"

1. DISAPPOINTMENT AND DELIGHT

Despite all the planning, and all the desire of mothers and sweethearts across America to see the boys home, as a whole, the American homefront worried about the imminent discharge of so many men. People wondered what kind of men would return, and what manner of moral, political, and physical ills they would bring with them.

Some civilians (and some of the vets) felt the new veterans would return possessing the drive and vision to reform society—either towards a more Utopian creation, or towards a fascistic one. Others, reflecting on the experiences of World War I veterans, expected emotionally dissipated men, lacking initiative and a sense of morals. Still others merely expected "[o]nce the job [was] done, a few months out of uniform [would] probably erase most of the marks, heal the bruises and scars, of...service...[M]ore resemblances [would] appear than differences."¹ Despite the divergent expectations, all of these points of view acknowledged that the experience of war changed the men who went away.

In the literature of the day, housewives and mothers appeared most worried about the emotional status of the new veterans. Army psychiatrist Edward A. Strecker recorded some of the questions asked of him by concerned women. Questions ranged from serious matters, such as "Will I find my

husband cruel when he returns? He used to be kind hearted. Will being in combat change him greatly?" or "Before the war my husband wasn't nervous, but he has seen so much actions he writes he is jittery now. Will this last long?" to more laughable ones, like "Will he be willing to help with the dishes as he used to do or will he be so sick of KP that he'll never do it again?"²

There were some actual emotional problems facing veterans in their adjustment to civilian life. As a Sad Sack cartoon (see next page) summed up well, many vets, despite their joy over Allied victory and the desire to get home, felt uncertain of the new world victory had created. Many wondered what was to come, and how things would be back home.

For many vets, the first months home, especially for those released relatively early, were "a mixture of disappointment and delight," as veterans complained about the drabness of civilian life. Until the wartime economy reconverted into a peacetime one, veterans faced shortages of clothing, food products, automobiles, housing, inflationary prices, and the loss of sundry creature comforts constantly dreamed of and promised in wartime advertising. The result of this let-down of sorts was to make veterans restless.³

Above all, the pacing of civilian life took adjustment for many. At first, for one vet, just being home was too much:

²Dr. Strecker went on to outline "The Philosophy of Helping" for women and others. It was list, given in a rather paternal tone, of do's and don'ts to help guide behavior and relations between veterans and nonveterans. He listed such rules as "don't make a big fuss; don't pity; don't argue, don't blame, don't criticize, don't tell them they are wrong; Be tolerant of frequent changes. . .[and] extremes of behavior." Edward A. Strecker and Kenneth C. Appel, Psychiatry in Modern Warfare (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945), 60.

Source: “Sad Sack Stumbles His Way to End of War,” *Life*, 31 December 1945, 10. The original caption from *Life* read, "Finally discharged after three-and-a-half years in the Army, Sad Sack meets his final disillusionment when he approaches the complexities of human reconversion." He next appeared in national newspapers as a civilian.
[The first night back, the folks had everyone in for a big party—sort of a welcome home I guess you'd call it. Well, everyone was around, and there was all the noise and excitement—people banging me on the shoulder and wanting to know how it seemed to be back. After a while I just froze up. I don't know what it was... I went outdoors and smoked a cigarette, and then I went back in again, and after that it was all right. But it just seemed like there was too much going on—too much pressure for me to take.4

Likewise, former Marine captain, George Hunt, head of Company K, a unit involved in the first wave at Peleliu, wrote of two of his former subordinates in 1947:

[T]hey were utterly bored. In their surroundings they saw no glimmer of a satisfactory future. Their livelihoods seemed inconsequential to the responsibility they had held in Company K, where they had first known a sense of personal achievement. So they wanted to break out from under, to breathe fresh air.5

Additionally, some men brought back resentment towards both civilians and the military. As early as August, 1945, an Army survey recorded that 12 percent of the men answering the question, "In general, do you feel you yourself have gotten a square deal from the Army," responded with "No." 54 percent answered, "In some ways, yes, other ways, no" (up from 47 percent in April, 1945). Those agreeing with "Yes, in most ways I have," dropped from 43 percent in April, to 33 percent in August.6

This survey also showed that 13 percent of the men interviewed said they would "go back to civilian life with a [very unfavorable] attitude toward the Army." 42 percent said they would return with a feeling of ambivalence toward the Army—"about 50-50."7 But Norman Mailer captured the hostility

4Ibid., 69-70.
5George P. Hunt, "Honorable Discharge," Fortune, September, 1947, 76.
6Stouffer, 581.
of some servicemen best in his 1948 World War II novel, *The Naked and the Dead*. In the last section, "Mute Chorus: On What We Do When We Get Out," Gallagher says, "All I know is there's a fuggin score to be paid off, a score to be paid off. There's somebody gonna pay, knock the fuggin civilians' heads in." His buddy Minetta echoes the hostility: "I'm gonna walk up to every sonofabitch officer in uniform, and say 'Sucker' to them, every one of them right on Broadway, and I'm gonna expose the goddam Army."8

The whole experience—the draft, interrupted lives, "chickenshit" officers, endless monotony punctuated with moments of extreme terror, and the let-down of home--created emotional problems and violence in some veterans, not to mention fright in civilians. But, perhaps the only time veterans confirmed civilian fears came in "The Battle of Athens, Tennessee" in 1946. Upset with the corrupt local political machine, which hassled World War II veterans and their desire to drink peacefully, vets decided to run their own slate of candidates for local offices. Tension mounted until it broke over voting violations and hostage takings committed by the machine. With ". . . you people wouldn't make a pimple on a fighting GI's ass. Get guns. . ." ringing in their ears, veterans broke into the local National Guard Armory, liberated automatic weapons and explosives, and then preceded to assault Athens's jail, seat of the local machine. Nobody was killed, although some were seriously wounded, and the vets won the election (both fairly and by force). But the national press seized on the incident as confirmation of the worst fears of "lawlessness" expected from World War II veterans.9

---

7Ibid.


While the latest figures suggest World War II vets suffered (and still do in some cases) from post-traumatic stress disorder in the same proportions as Vietnam veterans, around 5 percent of all combat veterans,\textsuperscript{10} for the majority of World War II veterans, readjustment to civilian life progressed rather smoothly, especially as jobs became more accessible and the benefits of the GI Bill began to be felt. As one observer noted in 1947, "[i]f it were not for the fact that Government issue clothing takes forever to wear out, there would be scant evidence that 10 percent of our total population has been. . .under arms." Indeed, the World War II eagle discharge pin, the very symbol of "veteran-ness," was hardly worn by veterans—in 1947, one had to wait twelve minutes in order to see one at the Forty-second Street station on the West Side of New York City.\textsuperscript{11}

Overall, the returning waves of servicemen were marked by a buoyant sense of optimism and a desire to do \textit{something}, to improve their situations and themselves. Later characterized as the "most upbeat generation of their time," the veterans and their nonveteran counterparts set out to "'bear any burden, pay any price' to accomplish whatever goal it [sought]."\textsuperscript{12} From science and engineering marvels, like the H-bomb and the Apollo moon-shots, community planning, to "technocrats" and B.F. Skinner's belief in a "technology of behavior," World War II vets led the way, as they had in battle, into the second half of the twentieth century. Jobs and education as a means for prosperity, not violence, topped many veterans' homecoming lists.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{10}Andrea Stone, "Some WWII vets fight enemy within," \textit{USA Today}, 11 November 1994, 6A.


\textsuperscript{12}Strauss, 263.
2. GRAVE DECISIONS

Robert Havinghurst identified in 1951 that the quickest method of reintegrating veterans into mainstream society was by the location and securing of a job. Veterans needed a job to feel truly "civilian;" for most veterans, a job was the way of life. Because World War II lasted so long, in comparison to the American experience in World War I, veterans of this war had more time individually to plan for the postwar period. At separation centers, only one in seven veterans said he was undecided about future plans.

Many veterans feared a postwar depression, and an inability to secure a "good" job, but as an Army survey in 1944 showed, most still planned a course of action. In a survey of 4,000 officers and 23,000 enlisted men, of which 19,000 were white and 4,000 were black, 64 percent appeared to have definite plans; 16 percent "had fairly clear cut but less than definite plans;" and only 18 percent had no plans at all or were unsure about what to do. The breakdown appeared like

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plans held definitely</th>
<th>Plans held tentatively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time school: 8%</td>
<td>Self-employment: 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment: 13%</td>
<td>Specific kind of work for an employer: 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific kind of work for an employer: 40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue in Army: 3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13Havinghurst, 91.

18 percent were undecided.\textsuperscript{15}

Racially, the survey showed that African-Americans basically mirrored whites in postwar plans. 51 percent had definite plans; 28 percent had tentative plans; and 21 percent were undecided. African-American breakdowns appeared as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plans held definitely</th>
<th>Plans held tentatively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time school: 5%</td>
<td>Self-employment: 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment: 11%</td>
<td>Specific kind of work for an employer: 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific kind of work for an employer: 34%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A follow-up survey by the VA in December, 1945 found two-thirds of the veterans interviewed carrying out future plans or still expecting to carry them out. 85 percent were "well-settled" in what they desired of the future: working at the prewar job, a different job (both hoped for), attending school, or just doing what they wanted to do.\textsuperscript{17}

Certain factors influenced veterans' job searches. Many felt like one vet who said, "It's pretty hard to know what you ought to do when you get back here. It puts a fellow at the crossroads. It's worth thinking about." A "grave decision" was at hand, one it was felt would decide the whole "pattern of [the] future."\textsuperscript{18}

Basically, vets wanted a "better" job, one with security and little danger of unexpected severance. For this reason, 600,000 veterans planned a career in the civil service, because its veterans' preference in hiring was attractive.

\textsuperscript{15}Stouffer, 601.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 602.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 640.
\textsuperscript{18}Havinghurst, 94.
Additionally, perhaps most importantly, vets desired jobs which had a "future"—a chance of promotion. Having recently experienced how it paid to move up the military chain of command, one in eight veterans desired a job which allowed upward mobility. Finally, many veterans wanted jobs with variety and excitement to avoid the monotony experienced in the service, or they wanted a job with little supervision and much independence.19

A survey of 416 veterans in a midwestern town showed that one-half "obtained jobs within a few weeks after their discharge from service." Figures provided by the local mill showed 114 of 177 employees who went to war returned to the mill. Those veterans who were older and married usually had to find work in order to support their families, and often the transition of this group progressed as smoothly as those in upper classes. One-quarter pursued education or job training at government expense, and the rest drew readjustment allowances from "a month to a year" before getting a job. A small number of men, essentially upper class, "coasted" into family businesses.20

Because the feared depression did not materialize, nor were there major problems in war-worker displacement, as soon as the peacetime economy picked up, most working veterans did well. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that from March, 1946, to November, 1946, veteran unemployment dropped, and working veterans earned an average salary of $50 a week, four dollars more than the average for all workers. Moreover, there was little job turn-over for veterans. 67 percent of 2,320 veterans were "employed for wages, salaries, or commissions" (including twenty-six part-

19Bowker, 184-5; Havinghurst, 94, 96.

time workers) in March, 1946. Eight months later this figure rose to 73 percent. Of 2,197 whites in the survey, employment status rose from 68 percent in March to 72 percent in November; African-American rates jumped too: employment status for the 123 blacks in the survey went from 66 percent in March, to 69 percent in November.\(^{21}\)

Those "unemployed and seeking work" dropped from a grand total of 14 percent in March, to 6 percent in November. Again, African-Americans had a slower rate of decrease, as their unemployment rates went from 20 percent to only 15 percent. However, more African-Americans went to school than whites, rising from 5 percent in March to 11 percent in November (whites went from 6 to only 8 percent in the same period).\(^{22}\)

A high percentage of postwar planning by veterans came about (see next page), although some, particularly farmers, self-employed workers, and re-enlistees in the Army, did not realize their plans. Yet, overall, the transition from plan to reality progressed well. In some ways, these figures illustrate the "can-do" ethic of the World War II generation, as many vets, no doubt convinced of the validity of their future plans, carried them out.

3. SCHOOL DAYS

Perhaps the most cherished and often remembered facet of postwar life is Title Two of the GI Bill of Rights, which dealt "with education and training of all types, at all levels." For most Americans, the term "GI Bill" is often associated almost exclusively with college and higher education for veterans:


\(^{22}\)Ibid., 63.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planned employment status</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Actual employment status</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Army officers and enlisted men</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Total veterans surveyed</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work for an employer</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Working for wages, salaries, or commissions</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Self-employed (except farmers)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Farmers and farm laborers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time in school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue in Army</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>In armed forces</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Unemployed and seeking work</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not seeking work</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The image of a veteran attending college...seemed more colorful, more in harmony with the nation's educational aspirations and easier to romanticize and publicize in films and writings."23 Precisely this image is captured on the cover of the 5 October 1946 Saturday Evening Post, which portrays former Sgt. William Gillis, pipe clenched in mouth, studying his new college texts in a cranny overlooking an idyllic college campus.

However, "[t]he veterans who attended college constituted only a minority of veterans who utilized Title Two's provisions."24 Many veterans used the GI Bill to learn a trade or finish high school. Nevertheless, the overall effect of the GI Bill, whether at lower or higher educational levels, was the same, for the GI Bill widened access to education, made education more a prerequisite for advancement in the job market, and helped veterans solidly reintegrate themselves back into society. Furthermore, these effects constituted a greater influence by creating a more widespread, homogenized, middle-class American society.

In 1956, the VA released these figures (see next page). The highest number of claims filed for education spanned about a two-year period from fiscal year 1946 to fiscal year 1948. The peak year is fiscal year 1947, where nearly three million vets applied for assistance.

As the table shows, the GI Bill awarded benefits for education in four areas: higher learning (junior college, college, graduate studies), high school, on-the-job training, and on-the-farm training. Although 615,094 veterans were attending college in the peak year of 1947, nearly the same number, 594,656, were enrolled in on-the-job training. Interestingly enough, while those


24Ibid.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total Applications Received</th>
<th>Total Accepted</th>
<th>Higher Learning</th>
<th>Below College</th>
<th>Vets in Training</th>
<th>Institutional / On-the-Farm</th>
<th>No Longer in Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1956</td>
<td>10,255,485</td>
<td>33,498</td>
<td>5,840</td>
<td>26,913</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>7,750,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 31, 1956</td>
<td>10,255,369</td>
<td>68,680</td>
<td>32,437</td>
<td>35,222</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>7,716,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 31, 1955</td>
<td>10,255,155</td>
<td>85,596</td>
<td>42,065</td>
<td>42,132</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>7,701,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep 30, 1955</td>
<td>10,254,848</td>
<td>54,518</td>
<td>8,041</td>
<td>44,459</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1,449</td>
<td>7,733,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1955</td>
<td>10,254,525</td>
<td>70,427</td>
<td>10,373</td>
<td>54,018</td>
<td>1,083</td>
<td>4,953</td>
<td>7,717,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1954</td>
<td>10,252,132</td>
<td>155,266</td>
<td>21,437</td>
<td>95,740</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>30,889</td>
<td>7,648,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1953</td>
<td>10,247,458</td>
<td>335,008</td>
<td>42,131</td>
<td>187,264</td>
<td>23,999</td>
<td>81,614</td>
<td>7,469,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1952</td>
<td>10,238,529</td>
<td>741,901</td>
<td>83,025</td>
<td>425,011</td>
<td>64,057</td>
<td>169,808</td>
<td>7,053,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1951</td>
<td>10,065,439</td>
<td>1,152,891</td>
<td>132,904</td>
<td>643,711</td>
<td>113,020</td>
<td>263,256</td>
<td>6,379,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1950</td>
<td>9,545,823</td>
<td>1,492,668</td>
<td>209,728</td>
<td>765,880</td>
<td>198,757</td>
<td>318,503</td>
<td>5,507,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1949</td>
<td>8,691,332</td>
<td>1,631,780</td>
<td>310,826</td>
<td>699,768</td>
<td>323,129</td>
<td>298,057</td>
<td>4,515,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1948</td>
<td>7,583,685</td>
<td>1,666,518</td>
<td>398,902</td>
<td>584,208</td>
<td>424,308</td>
<td>259,100</td>
<td>3,492,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1947</td>
<td>5,854,777</td>
<td>1,862,633</td>
<td>615,084</td>
<td>479,243</td>
<td>594,656</td>
<td>173,640</td>
<td>1,851,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1946</td>
<td>2,966,880</td>
<td>951,644</td>
<td>404,475</td>
<td>222,183</td>
<td>300,633</td>
<td>24,353</td>
<td>234,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 30, 1945</td>
<td>83,885</td>
<td>22,335</td>
<td>14,601</td>
<td>5,648</td>
<td>1,631</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>12,709</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

veterans enrolled in high school jumped in fiscal year 1947, their numbers continued to rise, reaching a peak of 765,880 in 1950. But, the numbers of veterans attending high school still stayed at high levels even after that, much higher than those going to college or getting on-the-job training. From these figures, it is apparent that high school completion was the largest, farthest-reaching, GI Bill educational program.

Trade school and on-the-job training were more popular with older veterans, who, often encumbered with families and other obligations, needed quicker access into the job market. As Robert Havinghurst noted in his study, of vets born in 1916, 1917, and 1918, while some actually went to college, one in eight took courses in trade school. There veterans studied such things as electricity, optometry, banking, and airplane piloting. But despite government help in advancement, married veterans complained “that the Bill 'gave the single guy all the breaks,'” because a couple, or family, could not live solely off allowances. Additionally, many veterans said checks were slow to arrive, thereby usually compounding an already precarious position.

Even more popular than trade school with older veterans was on-the-job training, which allowed both a present, higher income from actual work, and the future benefits of completing a course of study. For farmers in Havinghurst's study, this program was especially popular, because it gave subsistence payments while a person was enrolled, but allowed farming to be done during the day, while classes were taken at night at the local high school. As the VA figures show, like those enrolling in high school, farm-

---

25 The small surge of veterans seeking both college and high school education in fiscal years 1954–55 probably could be attributed to the discharge of World War II veterans from Korean service. VA, Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1955, 259.

26 Havinghurst, 121.
training numbers grew until reaching a peak in 1950, and thereafter declined like the other schooling categories.

However, despite its influence in other areas of education, the GI Bill is most often associated with college, and the effects that large numbers of veterans had upon the higher educational system. At first, some educators, like the University of Chicago's Robert M. Hutchins, feared government educational benefits would create "educational hobo jungles" of colleges, where veterans went because they were unwilling or unable to find productive work.28 While this did not happen, the large numbers of veterans forced open colleges to larger numbers of Americans than ever before, and began a change in the nature of college education.

The benefits of the GI Bill gave a college-bound veteran many options for schooling. For instance, at the end of April, 1947, 1,445 veterans opted to study abroad at 236 different schools in 35 foreign countries (Canada had the most veterans, with 571 studying at 75 different schools).29 Still, there were some restrictions faced by veterans which could not be overcome by government generosity.

For older vets, going to college presented major problems, because many of these veterans felt their lives and careers had already been interrupted enough. In November, 1945, an Army survey found 71 percent of servicemen twenty-five and over and having a high school diploma, agreeing with the statement, "On the whole, I think the Army has hurt me more than it has helped me" (55 percent of servicemen under twenty-five having a high school diploma also agreed with this statement). Likewise, 66 percent of

27Ibid., 122.

28"What Ever Happened To The Veterans?," Time, 5 January 1959, 24.

servicemen, twenty-five and over but having no diploma also agreed with the statement, as did 64 percent of those under twenty-five having no diploma.30

Going on to college for many meant giving up potential income to support spouses and children and the feeling of "moving on." Therefore, as a comprehensive survey by the Educational Testing Service showed in 1951, the GI Bill only was a major factor in decisions to go to college for veterans who were older, and usually had longer periods of service (especially those overseas). Of the thousands of veterans surveyed, only 20 percent were "apparently influenced appreciably by the GI Bill" in their decisions to go to college; of that 20 percent, 10 percent said they "definitely would not have come," and the other 10 percent said they "probably would not have done so without financial assistance."31

The GI Bill was more instrumental in getting older veterans to attend school than it was for younger vets. ETS found only 65 percent of older veterans would have gone to college anyway without benefits, as opposed to 85 percent of younger vets. Moreover, in a separate question assessing the effect of military service, ETS found the GI Bill primarily benefited those students who would not have gone to college if they had not entered military service. 90 percent of younger veterans surveyed would have gone to college anyway, whether or not they had been in service, as opposed to two-thirds of the older veterans.32 Of the seventy teenagers born in 1926 in Havinghurst's

30Stouffer, 611.


32Ibid., 36-47.
study, fourteen used the GI Bill to go to college. Nine said they would have
gone, whether or not they had the Bill’s benefits.33

Across the board, the incoming veteran freshmen of 1946, 1947, and
1948 were a bit older than their nonveteran counterparts, the average age
being 21 to 18 respectively (although there were individual variations due to
lengths of service). About half of the group surveyed by ETS reported last
attending school in 1943 or 1944, but 75 percent said military service "had
increased their eagerness to attend college." 80 percent of the veteran
freshmen held enlisted ranks above corporal or seaman first class, but less
than 10 percent held a commissioned rank. The majority of veterans
completed from one to three years of service (one-fifth completing three years
or more), and 75 percent had been overseas. A bit more than 10 percent of the
veteran freshmen were married.34

Other differences included more full-time work experience on behalf of
veterans than nonveterans, and veterans were more likely to come from
communities whose population was between 2,500 and 100,000 in size.
Interestingly, veterans' fathers on average had less formal education than
nonveteran fathers, and the family income of veterans at the time of high
school was lower than nonveterans (the influence of wartime prosperity).
Veterans usually provided their own housing, and worried more about
"making ends meet financially" than nonveterans.35

For the most part, however, veterans and nonveterans were more
alike than different. Both had the same vocational goals, although

33Havinghurst, 193.
34Fredricksen, 15-6.
nonveterans favored graduate school more. Both groups assigned about the same significance to grades. As for the belief that veterans tended to make higher grades and were better students than nonveterans, surveys by ETS concluded,

On the whole. . .from the studies of freshmen students. . .there [was] a tendency for veterans to achieve higher grades in relation to ability. . . .The actual magnitude of the difference [was] small, however. In the most extreme case, the advantage of the veterans would on the average amount to no more than the difference between a C and a C+. In other institutions the difference was much smaller. . .[or] even reversed in some colleges."36

Because of requirements often waived for veterans (usually PE requirements), nonveteran students spent on average more time in school, about two hours more per day. Veterans, however, spent more time studying. ETS concluded that on the average, although grades were similar, veterans were more serious about academic work.37

Veterans had to be more serious. 40 percent of veterans planned to graduate ahead of schedule, as opposed to only 10 percent of nonvets. Described as more "mature," and more sure of vocational goals, veterans "[frequently said they] attend[ed] college in order to get a better paying job. . . ." Veterans took accelerated college programs to get on with higher paying careers, and also because colleges had to accelerate them off campus to make room for more students. Still, veterans often complained they were taking "courses whose usefulness was not apparent to them" (read, no bearing on vocational futures).38

36Ibid.
37Ibid., 24.
38Ibid., 20, 26-7.
This attitude on the part of veterans marks a shift in the nature of American colleges, which, under the shock of so many veterans, gradually began the shift toward today's criticized "degree factory." If traditionally an individual in America rose through the acquisition of either wealth or education, the GI Bill accelerated that process. While the GI Bill "marked the popularization of higher education in America," it also made "a college degree...an essential passport for entrance into much of the business and professional world." Therefore, much of the American educational process, and the attitudes around it, has become a results-oriented system.

The educational effects of the GI Bill were enormous. From 1949 to 1950, 496,661 degrees were awarded, more than double the 216,527 awarded from 1939 to 1940. Breaking all prewar college attendance records, 2,200,000 veteran-graduates doubled the number trained, by prewar standards, for various professions: in 1959, there were 168,000 doctors, 105,000 lawyers, 93,000 social scientists and economists, 238,000 teachers, 440,000 engineers, and 112,000 scientists. Most importantly, "mass America, once the GI Bill afforded it a glimpse at higher education, demanded no less an opportunity for successive generations."}

---

39 Goulden, 67.

40 Goulden, 67; Olson, 44; Time, 5 January 1959, 25.
4. BUILDING THE PRESENT

The combination of benefits provided by the GI Bill, and the serious mindset of veterans upon return, contributed to the proliferation and growth of the American middle class after World War II. Although couched in terms of patriotism, the GI Bill's origins lay in the heritage of the New Deal; many of the Bill's provisions, such as anti-unemployment measures, accessible loans for homes and businesses, and educational provisions, mirrored New Deal programs and policies like the Farm Credit Administration, the Federal Housing Administration, the National Youth Administration, and Social Security policies.\(^4\)

Particularly with its educational and loan benefits, the GI Bill built on the middle class "culture of aspiration," and allowed this class to perpetuate itself. Providing an underpinning of higher education and easy home and business loans, veterans were free to pursue a middle class life unhandicapped by some fiscal or educational limitations. Spending around $50 billion, the GI Bill helped to buy 5,700,000 homes, 73,000 farms, and 237,000 small businesses (and by 1959, only 0.8 percent of veterans had defaulted on their loans). Likewise, the Bill opened up higher education to veterans and their children, the sheer numbers "democratizing" the system and forcing universities to grow physically.\(^5\)

Quite simply, "the bill did about as much as legislation could to help veterans to attain and enjoy a secure, bourgeois status in employment, education, and residence." Because of the GI Bill, it became more

---

\(^4\) Hyman, 64-6.

\(^5\) Hyman, 67-9; Time, 5 January 1959, 25.
"reasonable" for veterans to pursue "careers that, before the war, were unrealistic even if perceived, and that older siblings simply never aspired to." The GI Bill accomplished the desired goal to "re-connect" veterans back to civilian life and, in doing so, it fundamentally altered the outlook and composition of American society. For this reason, the GI Bill perhaps is one of the most far-reaching, important pieces of legislation passed in this century.

World War II wrought many changes on American society, boosting the confidence and broadening the outlook of veterans and nonveterans alike. Secure in victory and nurtured by benefits of education and accessible loans, veterans carried on various social and economic currents begun by World War II. For example, the 15.3 million reconnected veterans continued to boost economic growth: on the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II, *US News and World Report* listed the Gross National Product as rising from $100 billion in 1940, to $3.7 trillion in 1984, a growth of 3,563 percent. Disposable income rose too, from $570 per person in 1940, to $10,887 in 1984, a boost of 1810 percent.

Moreover, homeownership rose 174 percent since 1945; 65 percent of all homes in 1984 were owner occupied. Likewise, suburban populations had tripled by 1980, necessitating the creation of 600,000 miles of federally-funded roads. Correspondingly, automobile registration jumped 400 percent by 1984, totaling 130.1 million registered vehicles.

---

43 Blum, 250; Hyman, 70.
46 Ibid.
All of this happened with barely a disturbance on the part of World War II veterans. As early as 1947, an identified characteristic of World War II veterans was a lack of feeling concerning "themselves. . .[as] a special group distinct and apart from the rest of the community." Instead, some other symbol was put ahead of veteran status, such as "Sales executive," "business man," college grad," indicating a concern over what was actually being done, not what had happened.47

Unlike World War I veterans, who formed the American Legion, or Vietnam veterans, who created their own special groups, World War II veterans were never strong in organized veteran groups, because they never thought of themselves in that way. Of the Legion's 2,000,000 new recruits in 1947, it was suggested that "not [the Legion's] influence in politics, but the handsome clubhouse, social and business associations, [and] perhaps help in finding a job or a house" was the most important draw for World War II vets.48

However, the potential of World War II veteran political power was recognized, especially as the Cold War began and veterans assumed larger political roles. But the hope of the "veteran-crusader" virtually vanished after the war for several reasons. One is that service experience did not fundamentally alter the views of a majority of servicemen. An Army survey showed in 1944 that one-half of the men interviewed said there would be postwar troubles with African-Americans, and one-sixth said there would be trouble with Jews. Interviewers felt the effects of Army experience were

47Bliven, 10, 75.
48Ibid., 73.
difficult to determine, as some men felt the Army promoted tolerance, while the majority of men had prewar attitudes reinforced. 49

In August, 1945, another Army survey of 3,013 men found that of 42 percent agreeing with the question, "Are there any kinds or groups of people in America that will have greater difficulty getting along after the war," 32 percent felt African-Americans would. 12 percent said they personally disliked blacks. 9 percent of the men specifically said that Jews "have taken selfish advantage of this war;" 17 percent said business had, too. 50

Furthermore, of 1,700 men interviewed in September, 1945, 51 percent of the men thought that, "although Hitler was wrong in leading the Germans into war, he did do Germany a lot of good before the war." Additionally, 22 percent of the men felt "the Germans had some good reasons for being down on the Jews." Another 10 percent were undecided on this question. Therefore, it is not surprising that only one-half of servicemen interviewed in Europe and the US during the summer of 1945 felt there should be "a few" changes to society; only three-fifths expected "a few" changes. 51

The "veteran-crusader," more myth than reality, further diminished in the tenor of the late forties and fifties, where "a reputation as a radical, a reformer, or crusader lack[ed] chic. The veteran must have noticed that in some circles--even an entirely conservative interest--may be regarded as a sign that the young man, though his war record was good, [was] a little on the liberal or flighty side." 52 An exception to this is the celebrated "Double-V"

49Stouffer, 637.
50Ibid., 585.
51Ibid., 571, 621.
52Bliven, 74.
Campaign waged by black World War II veterans, which, coupled with financial gains made during World War II, helped to start the modern civil rights movement. Medgar Evers was only one of many early civil rights leaders who was a veteran of World War II.\textsuperscript{53}

The assumption of political power by John F. Kennedy, a World War II veteran, in 1961 did symbolize the passing of the American torch. The receiving generation, born in this century, already entwined in the workings of business and politics, pushed America towards greater feats and accomplishments. Throughout it all, World War II veterans remained the solid backbone for the "American Century," and its most visible symbols.

However, much hubris accompanied this rise. The United States was unsullied by World War II, not having experienced bombing or invasion; its men, although personally touched by fire in many cases, emerged on the winning side. America's industry grew by leaps and bounds during the war, becoming the most powerful economic force in the postwar world. All of this was a heady feeling for the nation, and in sum seemed a reaffirmation of the special and peculiar nature of the United States. America's postwar position confirmed its preconceptions about itself, its righteousness among nations and its God-given ability to lead.

Self-righteously convinced of its new role, Americans moved center stage in the postwar world with various, and sometimes dubious, gestures to counter-act "the evil empire" and other manifestations of communism. However, the "can-do" nature of the World War II generation was a double-edged sword: America put men on the moon, beating the Soviets in the space race, but it also beat itself into the quagmire of Vietnam. It is no small irony

\textsuperscript{53}Powell, 40.

60
of twentieth-century America that in 1969 the moon landings and the cover-
up of the My Lai massacre jostled for front-page space on the nation's
newspapers.

But, despite being blind and eagle-eyed by turns, a constant in the
nation throughout the last fifty years is the presence of World War II
veterans. For good or ill, as one veteran said,

Let me articulate an emotion that is the result of all this
experience: that the people of my generation made this world--
however screwed up it is--what it is, and gave you the
opportunities that you had and we owe you no apology.54

The World War II generation failed in its search for the bluebirds. They could
not adequately answer Henry Adams. Therefore it is up to us, the children of
World War II veterans, to continue to search and bring the bluebirds home.
This is the best way to deal with the legacy bequeathed to us.

5. AN INTERLUDE

To recap the introduction, while chapters one and two provide "precise
statistic," the chapters of Part II create the "memory book" portion of this
thesis. Chapters one and two provide a summarization of the collective
answers given by World War II veterans to Henry Adams' question.
Veterans moved from immediate postwar problems concerning discharge
and securing employment towards creating the most prosperous society
America, if not the world, has ever seen.

54Stanley W. Campbell of Waco, TX, interview by author, 22 December 1994, Waco TX,
tape recording, The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, TN.
Through transcripts of oral interviews, Part II provides an individual look at the past fifty years and the roles these veterans played in shaping the latter half of the twentieth century and dealing with the varied legacies and lessons of World War II.

A variety of questions were asked of veterans, trying to understand personal motivations and feelings governing political positions, economic status, and social standing. In short, these interviews were conducted to find single answers to Adams' question, to find, in an almost an existential sense, how seven individuals related, and still relate, to their modern world.

By examining these memories, "truths" about modern America, as given by the men who did much directly and indirectly to shape it, should surface. Likewise, hopefully, some light can be shed on where America is going in the future. Additionally, these interviews were conducted also to preserve the special voice of individuals before they are lost to time. While some might debate the validity of oral history as a proper record of the past, as long as the technology exists to collect this information, it should be done to provide for future generations a personal look at major events in history.
PART II
CHAPTER 3

FALLOUT

EDGAR C. WILSON

His slight build and quiet exterior belies his combat experience as a forward artillery observer with the 80th Infantry Division in Europe. As a young lieutenant, he won the Silver Star after personally directing artillery for two hours, stopping a German counterattack against his division's bridgehead across the Moselle River in France. He related this story about the bomb. Before going overseas, he delivered a group of non-commissioned officers from Ft. Sill, Oklahoma to New Jersey. On the way back, he bumped into somebody:

I had a compartment [on a "streamline train" going west], just luxury. . . . When I got on that train and got in my room, and washed my face and cleaned up, in fact I think I took a shower, while I changed my clothes, the train was stopping in Washington. A civilian, a gentleman, got on and had the room right across from me. Of course, I was at that time a first lieutenant, and he spoke to me, very courteously, and said, "When we get settled, come over and we can talk awhile."

Well, I really didn't feel like getting acquainted with anybody, but I hated to say no. So I went over and had a conversation with him for thirty minutes or so, and I know it was Harry Truman.

He didn't tell me his name, I didn't ask him, but he did tell that he was going to Kansas to inspect a new plane. He described the plane: the length, the wingspan, the length of everything and what it was capable of doing. I thought, "Well, that's interesting," but I was so worn out and tired that I just remembered some of the figures he gave me about that plane.

When I finally got back to Ft. Sill, and told the officers that I knew there, well, they laughed at me. They said, "He really strung you a line, didn't
he?" The day after, big headline in the paper, this new plane and it was the B-29. . . . The figures that I had quoted to them, which he had given me, were exactly the same as what came out of the paper.

I had no idea who he was, but he was someone from the Senate who was going out there to [inspect the plane]. And that fits right into what Harry Truman's position was at that time. That was in '43, middle of the year in '43.

. . . We had seen so much bombing, so much destruction from bombing, the idea that one bomb did all of that--it had an effect on us. Whether it should've been done or not, I guess we all agreed that was the quick way to get it over with. The damage done there was no more than some of the German cities. . . . When you go through combat for month after month after month, things like that don't affect you in the same way that they would you, because you've probably never seen anything like that personally. I think we agreed then, and most people that I know still agree, that was what needed to be done to get it over with.

I guess you were relieved by not going to Japan?

About that time I told the battalion commander that if there was any way to go ahead and transfer me to a unit in the Pacific that I'd like to go ahead now. I had seen a lot of combat. I had been successful in my responsibility, and, of course I wanted the war to get over with, [but] I felt the responsibility of doing my duty.
STANLEY W. CAMPBELL

Now currently a full professor of history at Baylor University, he is both a veteran of World War II and Korea. Like many World War II vets, he is very much an individual: he has been a cowboy, a steam-engine apprentice, a pastor, and a member of VMI’s faculty. His service in World War II was with the Navy as an aerial gunner on a PBY-2 plane. Although only a teenager in the war, he said, “I think I would’ve been insulted...at age seventeen, I think I would’ve been insulted if somebody had told me I was going off to defend the flag. Hell, I can tell the difference between the symbol and the thing. [I went off to defend the constitution,] which I had an obligation to do.

In 1945, I was a second-class aviation ordnanceman and I thought then that I knew everything about aviation ordnance. I remember asking, “What the hell is an atomic bomb?” (Laughs.) You know, nobody really knew at that moment. It just slowly began to come out as to what it was. I’m not sure eight months later when I came home that I still really understood atomic power.

Did you feel it saved your life?

Well, they sent us back to Hawaii in late August, so I didn’t have to go to Japan. (Laughs.) And I suppose that what had happened in the squadron, because we knew what we were gonna do, we’d essentially written ourselves off.

When asked whether he thought dropping the bomb was a military necessity or a policy maneuver--

What was the hurry in getting the war over? Every military target in Japan, as far as I knew, would’ve been destroyed by September the first...So what was the big hurry, unless it was to get the war over as quickly as possible to deny the Russians access to the peace table?
GEORGE M. VALENTINE
He is a former tank gunner of the 761st Tank Battalion, an all African-American unit which served in Europe with Patton's Third Army. They had a phenomenal success rate in combat, but owing to the segregated nature of the Army, and the prevailing prejudices of the time, their record was suppressed.

Oddly enough, when the war ended in Europe in May, we were in Austria. We [were] in the process of getting back to a staging area. At some of the little stops along the way, some of the officers would have classes or critiques where we would--still soldiers, we had to go through that--and he [an officer] just one day told us that one of these days they gonna build a bomb that would blow up a whole city. That was the day before the bomb [was dropped]. Yeah, he just came out and said it. And the next day, he came out all, (Laughs) "I told ya, I told ya, this was gonna happen." He had no earthly idea that there was such a thing as an A-bomb.

But, I guess that we were not really shocked or taken aback because it happened, you know. We just had no knowledge of such a bomb was in the making, 'cause we had seen the horrors of destruction of even just conventional weapons. In fact, the British had those, what they called "block busters," that would blow up just blocks of cities. I guess having one that blew up a whole city wouldn't be something that'd be really amazing.

HERSCHEL M. DOWNS
As he walked into the room, he looked like what he was: a graduate of the United States Naval Academy. Even after all the years, he still had the posture and cut of a service academy graduate. During the war, he served on a destroyer in the Atlantic, seeing action in the D-Day landings and against U-Boats in the Atlantic. Despite his imposing demeanor, a faint smile curls across his lips as he talks.

I had been transferred to shore-duty at Norfolk, and I was on the staff of gunnery school...and when we heard, first heard about the atomic bomb, my first thought was I remember that I had studied in school about a caloric
bomb, which tests food for the number of calories in it, and that was the only kind of bomb that I had heard of that was close to the atomic bomb. It was not 'til sometime later on, that I learned exactly what the nature of an atomic bomb.

Later, how did you feel about the growing nuclear arms race?

All of the scientists—not all of 'em--but several of the scientists were talking about what the result would be if they kept on with this atomic development, in particular directed toward bombs and explosions, and how one day that the earth maybe blown up because of somebody exploding one of these bombs.

Did that frighten you though?

It was just something that was looming in the background that you knew that might happen. [I] couldn't say [I] was particularly frightened about it, because it was all more theory to me than it was anything practical.

T.J. Weesner

Still, he is a man of slight build. However, as we talked, it became apparent that he was used to hard work and long hours, first as a boy growing up in the countryside around Frankston, Texas, then later as a flight engineer for the Air Transport Command in World War II. He flew all around the world delivering aircraft and carrying varied cargoes, once even delivering a dysentery-struck Marlene Deitrich to the US from a USO stop in the Far East.

. . .We got orders to transfer to Hamilton Field in California [in 1945], for a particular project—we didn't know what it was. It was called "the Purple Project." The Purple Project was that we would fly to Guam, and we would stay in Guam for some particular reason--we didn't know why. It was during that period that the bomb was dropped. . .Then we went on into Aksugi, Japan, just as soon as, I think, around September the second, 1945.

The Purple Project was related to the dropping of the Bomb?
It was related. Our job was to fly into Japan and start flying out the prisoners of war. American prisoners of war. 'Course they knew it was getting ready to come to a close. These were the real basket-cases, there were the American soldiers that had been in prison camps for years. They were the worst cases. And that's what we did for two or three months is fly prisoners of war out of Japan.

It was really...shocking, I guess would be the word. These guys that were so...well, they were strapped in their bunks. They were not able to move, or, you know, they had a doctor on board, nurses on board. These guys had been badly abused and mistreated for some reason or the other by somebody. Some say it was the Japanese, some said it was the Koreans... Even though Japan had taken over Korea, some of the guys in Korea were some of the worst offenders as far as mistreating the prisoners of war. I guess maybe for special favors—now this is hearsay.

But anyway, these guys, some of their ears were cut-off, their tongues were cut-out, they were just in terrible shape. We flew the worst cases first, and then toward the end they were prisoners of war that were just normal like you and I...

I did fly over Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the way to Shanghai, China not long after that [the dropping of the bomb], and could see all the destruction that had been done. It's a sad situation, but I think it did close the war down a lot faster--now that's my own personal opinion. However, our planes had bombed cities like Yokohama that I visited, and it was rubble, everything was in rubble. So that was just the finishing touch.

I think Truman had--he, you know, that was a decision he had to make, and he made it.
CHAPTER 4

CAREERS AWRY

Not everybody wanted to leave the service after the war. Some men like Herschel Downs and Eliel Archilla wanted to pursue a postwar career in the military. Despite what they wanted to do, circumstances intervened.

HERSCHEL M. DOWNS

I had been a regular officer in the Navy. Been to the service academy, and had a future, fairly well-assured, because all of the Academy graduates eventually—if you do your job and are diligent, you’re assured of a good career in the Navy, unless something unforetold happens. [In this particular instance, something did happen. I went before a Board of Medical Survey.]

I had some difficulty with my eyes, my vision was not good. So I had to report to a Board of Medical Survey. They were going to examine me to see whether or not I should be continued on Active Duty, or whether I should be retired with a medical disability. All that was wrong with me at the time was that I was nearsighted [with] myopia.

After appearing before the Board, it took them a long time to make a decision as to what to do with me. In the interim, they ordered me that I could return home, still on active duty in the Navy, but with no particular duty except to wait for the decision of the Medical Board. In the meantime, when I came home, I took a civilian job while I was waiting for them to make up their minds as to what to do. I had become so entrenched in civilian life, whenever I finally got [a decision in favor of] active duty, I wanted to just continue in civilian life. [He was ordered to report to a university to lead an R.O.T.C. program.] Besides that, having a medical disability on your record as
a regular Navy officer would certainly limit your potential for future promotion later on.

I felt like that would be a blemish on the record that would show up later on. When there was a choice in the higher ranks, between several people vying for the same position, the one that was completely physically perfect would get the nod. So, those things factored into my decision to resign when I got those orders.

ELIEL D. "ARCH" ARCHILLA

A member of a family of nine Puerto Rican immigrants, Arch grew up in New York City during the Depression. He dropped out of school at age sixteen in order to help support his family by working. However, always his dream was to fly: "I went into the military, and that was my life. 'Cause that was my dream since I was a kid--to fly. . .my whole life was around flying and I was dying to be a pilot. When the war broke out, it was an ideal situation for me. . ." When V-J Day came he was in the US training cadets. He held the Distinguished Flying Cross, twelve other Air medals, and two battle campaign ribbons. Soon, he went to Guam as part of the US occupation forces and planned to stay in the Air Force:

I was gonna make a career. I had applied for a regular career officer commission. I took an examination for that in California while I was stationed there in Stockton, prior to my going overseas to Guam.

I didn't hear about it until almost a year later when I was stationed at Guam. [He was assistant operations officer at the field, taking care of troop carriers to and from the US.] I was called in for [an] interview by the commanding general of the base and several of his staff. I was interrogated. Yeah, literally (with a sour look on his face). They asked me many, many questions about my life, and what. . .ambitions that I had for the future, what I felt I could contribute to the military, to the American people, by staying in the military as an active and full-time commissioned officer. I didn't hear a word from them until, I think it was sixty--ninety days later.
Then I received a letter that...they appreciated my attempt and my interest in becoming a regular Army commissioned officer, but they had had so many others that they had to glean only the most favorable to them. So, I was rifted out. I received then my request to leave active duty a little while after that.

His family was in the pipeline to be relocated to Guam, but Arch was released before that could happen. He was released three or four weeks after the creation of the Air Force in 1947.

Did you resent what happened?

I was very disappointed. Yeah, you bet I was. I wanted to stay in the military. It was a good life for me, and surprisingly I enjoyed it. I enjoyed all of my military experiences. People say, "Hey, you mean you enjoyed fighting, and...you know, killing people and dropping bombs?" And I say, "Well, I didn't enjoy that part of it..." But I was twenty years of age; it was an excitement. And I never one moment remember having a horrible fright that I was gonna be killed or I was going to not make it.
CHAPTER 5

GETTING STARTED WITH THE GI BILL

T.J. WEESNER

Immediately after discharge, T.J. went home to his wife Faye, and daughter Judy (whom he had never seen), in New Summerfield, Texas, where Faye was living with her father.

When I came back I decided that we would live at her father's house, move in with him and stay there until we decided what we were gonna do. Really, it was a situation where you had to kindly move in with your folks, then try to figure out what the next move would be, you see. So that's what I did.

We moved in with him, then at New Summerfield a few days after I moved in, I found out that there was a service station and kind of garage for sale. I thought, "Well, I might try that." So, I did--I bought interest in that. It was a Texaco service station, so I started to work servcin' cars and fixin' flats, and doin' all that sort of thing. People were looking for used cars because new cars had not been in production long, and you had to get on a waiting list. Everytime I'd find a used car that was good, I'd buy it, put it out in front of the service station, and I'd sell it.

That's the way I started. Then after I sold out the service station, I moved to Frankston. We were just constantly looking for things to do.

He didn't look long. Holding an aircraft mechanic's license, and years of experience working with aircraft before and during the war, T.J. and his family went to Dallas looking for work in the new aircraft plants. Eventually, he decided to get out of the business and try something else:

I told my wife, I said, "Look, got an opportunity; I think I've always wanted to get into something else that's more stable" [in the late forties, government contracts for aircraft were not as prevalent as they would become later]. If you
lived in Dallas, insurance companies and banks and that sort of thing was the biggest companies other than the aircraft industry. So, I thought I always did like accounting or math and that sort of thing, and I'd just go take advantage of the GI Bill and go to college. Learn another trade, get out of the aircraft business.

... I decided to go to a business college, because I felt I could sacrifice myself for two years, working part-time, going to school, taking care of a family, but I didn't know whether I could handle four years. That was a long time to work that many hours a day to get an education [T.J. was on a sixteen to eighteen hour a day schedule, with school in the morning until twelve, and work in the afternoon from one until about 9:30. Then he had to study]. So, that's what made me go to a business school, [from] which I got a certificate of completion of business administration of accounting.

It really was a turning point in my life, because when I finished, there was opportunities to go to work for different companies. It gave me an opportunity that I didn't have before and I never, in all of my life, went over maybe two weeks without a job. ... It [the GI Bill] gave us an opportunity to take care of ourselves, to better ourselves. . . .

HERSCHEL M. DOWNS

My problem that I had was trying to figure out what I wanted to do because when I had come back to Shreveport [Louisiana], I took a job as a draftsman in the city—which was just a menial-type job. I wanted to do something more. I was in the process of trying to figure out what it was that I wanted to do when I resigned.

Did you consider the GI Bill?
Yes, yes I did consider the GI Bill as a matter of fact. The type of training that I had made me look around Shreveport—there were not too many openings for what I could do. I had a bachelor of arts degree with a major in electrical engineering. In looking around at several places that I had inquired into in Shreveport, [it] did not look like that there was any particular advancement. I ran across a classmate from high school who was in law school at LSU, and it just suddenly struck me that I had for sometime—from when I was in grammar school—had considered becoming a lawyer. So, that was all it took. I saw that my classmate was down there. He was on the GI Bill and so that’s what I decided to do—take advantage of the GI Bill to go to law school.

*Being married at the time, were you happy with the allotments granted to you?*

[We] got the tuition paid, and as I recall, we got a little more than $75 because of being married. It seemed like I got something like $120... But we couldn’t survive on that, so going to law school, I took another part-time job, again as a draftsman with the Department of Public Works in Baton Rouge. [I] worked in the afternoons and went to law school in the morning. Worked in the afternoon to supplement the income. With close budgeting and watching our pennies, we were able to make [it] and were happy.

We were real fortunate. The first semester I left Margaret [his wife], and our daughter Margaret, here in Shreveport. We had a small, rented apartment and I lived in the Pentagon Barracks on LSU’s campus for the first semester. The American Legion in Baton Rouge was promoting a housing project, called Legion Village, in the north part of Baton Rouge. And a veteran could buy one of those houses if you were employed, [and] by signing a promissory note as a down-payment; and then, as I recall, there was a series of maybe two or three of these notes and as they became due, if you had paid
your rent, or made your house payments I should say, periodically and on
time, they would forgive these notes as they became due. But because I was
not employed full-time, I had to make a down-payment on this house that
we'd bought. But it worked out to be [that] we moved into a nice, new, little
home, and it was real satisfactory. I had no problems at all with it.

*How long did it take for you to complete your degree?*

We went through on a rushed program, where we went summer school right
on through. So it took something like thirty months. Normally, it would've
been for three years if you did not go to summer school.

It was something little bit different from what I had done, because the
reading assignments and the research assignment occupied so much time. I
was busy the whole time.

It was a very good [feeling] to get out from under that tight schedule
that we had been working [under]. It sure was.

The GI Bill, which enabled me to go to law school, changed the whole
direction of my life. That's right, because had I not gone to law school under
the GI Bill, my background would've been an engineering-type education and
I would've been off in another direction completely. But the GI Bill put me
into the law school.
EDGAR C. WILSON

He had earned a B.S. in education from the University of Tennessee in 1940, and did some graduate work in education before being drafted in 1941 at age 26. After the war, he worked for five years as an Instructor with the Veterans Farm Training Program, a GI Bill organization, in the Gibbs/Corryton Community located in Knox County, Tennessee. During this time, he took some agronomy course at the University of Tennessee to help with his work. Because of his involvement in the training program, he went on to work twenty-eight years with the Tennessee Farmers Cooperative.

I had the opportunity to teach in the farm training program, where I had twenty students and I had two, two-hour lab courses, two nights a week. Then I visited them on the farm, and helped them get their finances in order, helped to get their work planned and make their contracts if they were renting from other people. It was a very valuable experience for me.

At the same time, I was making contacts with the university people in agriculture, which helped me right on down to this very day.

I took groups on a pasture tour early in my experience there. There were some improved pastures. . . .We planned pasture improvement programs and we invited people from everywhere to come. . . .

I was elected as a local director in the Farm Bureau and in the Farmer's Cooperative, which was just being organized. All of those things fit right in, and after five years. . .in that work, the Tennessee Farmer's Cooperative built a new fertilizer plant and I had the opportunity to be the first manager of that plant. I hired a lot of the employees and managed that plant for sixteen years, and stayed with the company as a field representative [twelve years] until I retired.

The contacts that I had made in the communities that I worked with, and with the University. . .College of Agriculture, and [the] Tennessee Valley Authority, all—it just worked together for good. It was a wonderful experience.
GEORGE M. VALENTINE

Not everybody used the GI Bill. George wanted to, but he didn’t.

Did you take advantage of the GI Bill?

No. I wanted to. I wanted to go—I was married and had one child at the time. I couldn't get into the University of Tennessee, of course it was segregated. Knoxville College had no--I wanted engineering, and Knoxville College had nothing like that. And I said, "Well, if I get the GI Bill, I'd have to leave [Knoxville]; go somewhere else. . . ." By that time, I guess that I'd decided should I leave and try to get into college, or just stay with the job [at Alcoa]? I guess that [circumstances] actually decided for me whether I should or shouldn't. . . .The second child was born, and I didn't want to drag them all over the country. So, I just stayed with Alcoa. I was there forty-one years before I retired.

Was giving up that chance disappointing?

Yeah. Yeah. Definitely (softly). You know, its something that you've always had a aspiration for, and you let it slip through your fingers.

Even still, George became a pillar of the black community in Knoxville, well-respected and known among his neighbors and peers.

ELIEL D. ARCHILLA

I was a very romantic character when I was a kid. I had dreams of being a pilot, fighter-pilot, Navy or Air Corps--

Terry and the Pirates--

Yeah. Boy that was really, really rippin' to go. And it turned out quite that way for me. After the war, everything just. . .(makes a breathy hissing noise) you know, it fell down. It was a gross disappointment to me for awhile. You know, from excitement to--

Did you have a problem readjusting to civilian life?

78
Ah, there was a time when I had a problem. But it was just a psychological, mental situation where I had to just get away from that realm of excitement and—here I was a, you might say, a subhero type of thing where I had done... ninety-eight combat missions. I had got some medals, and got the Distinguished Flying Cross, and twelve air medals and all of that. I felt I was quite something. And then when you come out, you're nothing. You got to settle into that and it takes some time. Took several years for me to really... get into it.

Another thing is that I came out of service making good money. I remember so well my last pay-check was $466.20. It was excellent money. Well, I ended up starting to work at Montgomery Ward for $178 a month. That's less than half of what I was making. That was a depressing thing. Of course, I had a wife and a child by that time too, so she started working part-time to keep going... .

Arch decided later to go on to school using the benefits of the GI Bill.

See, I had no education. I got my GED on Guam as a matter of fact. I was thinkin' of goin' to Texas Tech when I come out of service in '47. I had a family, and it just... it just didn't appeal to me at the time. Well, we moved into Ft. Worth in the fall of '47, early '48; I decided I needed to get some schooling. I needed some business training... .TCU had a night course. I took public speaking, a business English course, math... , psychology, book-keeping—everything that[']d help me in the business world. It was a business institute and I did that for two-and-a-half years.

I appreciated the government supporting that. 'Course, here again, none of us were making very much income here, and if you have any sort of family—you know, by this time, I'm having three children—and I needed the income, plus this support that I could continue being able to go to night
school and have an income from that to further support me. In essence, we who did it that way, of course, it was income more than anything else. Because I was working during the day, and going to school at night.

Now these fellows that were not working any jobs at all, and went full-time schooling, 'course the GI Bill was just a magnificent program for 'em. Many of 'em would have never made it without it. In my case, it was a great aid, temporary aid, for me. . . .It was a great incentive to go to school, and I remember that very vividly: it was a great incentive for me to get into further education.
KOREA AND VIETNAM

STANLEY W. CAMPBELL

Korea was a more important event in his life: "World War II was just a boy's adventure for me." It was after Korea he decided to go to college, using the benefits of the Korean GI Bill of Rights. "I suppose I was twenty-three, when I woke up one morning, and said, 'Hey, Campbell, the world really doesn't revolve around you.'" (Laughs.) "Going to college was the most exciting thing I ever did. . .it was a world I didn't know existed."

I had nobody to blame but myself. In late '47, it occurred to me that there was some easy money floating around in the United States Naval Reserve, and I oughta be able to get some of that easy money. So, I went and joined the Naval Reserve, thinking that I might be able to get a post out of Buckley Field [in Colorado] where the Navy had a station out there. Well, I never got an appointment, I never got any of that easy money. But, because of my job code-number as a electronics fire-control technician, I got a letter from the Navy saying, "Get ready." That it wasn't come, but get ready.

So, I was cowboying in Gunnison, Colorado at the time. I think it was on June 20th I was irrigating a hay meadow, and I saw my wife running across the field, waving her arms, yelling, "The Russians have bombed Korea! The Russians have bombed Korea!" (Laughs.) And I recall thinking at the time, "Aw hell." (Laughs.)

Well, she had gotten the story garbled, but it became, I think, clear that it was only a matter of time. I had no real prospects, so I re-enlisted in the regular Navy, thinking that I would make it a career. So I went back on November the eighth, 1950, and went to Washington D.C. Because I had done so well on the tests that they administered, they told me that I could go anywhere I wanted to go. Well, I wanted to go as far away from Korea as I
could get, so I went to Jacksonville, Florida. (Laughs.) And I ended up in Korea anyway. (Laughs.)

He was assigned to Air Group Six, out of Jacksonville, where he worked with fire-control technology and new American jet fighter-bombers, F2H2 Banshees. He then spent four years in Korea, six to eight months actually at sea, on the carrier USS Lake Champlain. During the early months of the Korean War, carriers often served as the airfields for the beleaguered defenders of the Pusan Perimeter.

I was an aviation ordnanceman, and...by the time I was in Korea, I was a first-class petty officer. I checked the rocket circuits just prior to take-off, and checked the circuits and plugged the rockets in. I was the last person out from under the plane when the flight officer gave it go.

The normal tour, you'd spend forty days on the battle-line, and that meant actually four days on the line, and then one day off re-provisioning. Four days back on, one day re-fueling, re-provisioning, for forty days. Then we'd come back to Japan.

Flight quarters would normally go at 2:30 in the morning. We'd work all day, and I would be lucky to have all my equipment cleaned up, ready for the next day, by 10 o'clock at night. So, when we were on the line, we didn't get much sleep. I didn't recognize at the time how dangerous it was. I see it in the movies now and it scares the devil out of me.

We loaded napalm bombs—that is, I fused the bombs. I didn't know what napalm was, I hadn't had any experience with it, but I recall having a kind of queasy feeling. It had to do with incinerating people, it didn't matter who they were.
ELIEL D. ARCHILLA

A retired Lt. Colonel in the Air Force Reserve, Arch was not recalled for Korea, although members of his unit were. His reserve unit was stationed in Ft. Worth, Texas.

I was in the reserve unit in '47, '48, and '49. Then about that time the Korean conflict erupted. Almost immediately then some of our pilots, World War II pilots, started being recalled. The reason they were being recalled [was] we had guys that flew P-51's and P-47's both. The P-51 pilots were hot. They needed them first. So, they started recalling a lot of P-51 pilots that were on the reserve status.

By this time I had three children, and gone through the GI Bill--school. I guess the dependents kept me from being recalled, 'cause all the fellows that got recalled had no children, or married singles, or whatever. One had one child.

Did any of those veterans resent being called up?

Yeah. (Laughs.) They sure did. Most of the fellows that I talked with did not want to be recalled. A couple of 'em did, they loved the idea of--by that time the first operational jet came into play, the F-80--and they really wanted to go into jet flying. So, they were glad, they were pleased to go back in. One of the guys was single, so he had everything in the world for him.

But, by and large, some of them who were settled and married, so forth, resented having to pull out again from good jobs that they had gotten into. . . . Some of these boys had gotten their education, their degrees, and were ready to settle down with some good positions. And of course being yanked out again, they resented that.
None of the veterans I talked with had any service in Vietnam, despite their involvement in the Army Reserves. However, Charles had had a brush with war protesters during the Vietnam War. He had already earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering before World War II, so he sought work after his release from active duty, and finally settled at Oak Ridge working with the Corps of Engineers at the various reactors. However, he was active in the Reserves, teaching Command and General Staff School for two weeks every summer. One of his students headed the University of Tennessee's R.O.T.C. unit, and looked to him for advice during a protest:

He called me about two o'clock one morning. By that time I was a "light" [Lt.] Colonel [in the Reserves]. He said, "Colonel, we're in the Reserve building, and the...students are trying to come over...the fence and burn the building. Third Army has ordered us not to use live ammunition. What in the hell am I gonna do?"

Charles told the nervous officer to run water hoses off the gas-heated, hot-water furnace, which he said to turn up to maximum heat. Charles told the officer to turn the hot water on the protesters: "You just keep a hot-water spray on that damn fence."

Aw, there was some talk. He burnt a few of 'em. Some talk about suing the Reserves...But that killed any problem at all there. Nobody's gonna go into just-below-the-boiling-point water to come over a fence.

He told me that to tell me about this story. One summer during Vietnam, he taught Command and General Staff School at a college in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. The president of the school was a former general. He told Charles and his teaching staff:

"Gentlemen, you will have no difficulty [with protesters] here. The people here love the military. This spring we had a minor problem, some of the students stoned my house. I found out that they were all from either New York or New Jersey, and even the professors who were with them did not have tenure. They're not here, and we're not accepting students from New York or New Jersey anymore."

I was amazed at that place.
T.J. grew up in segregated east Texas, and served in the segregated military of World War II. The air branches were especially notorious for their lily-white appearance. Speaking of African-Americans in his childhood, he said, "...[W]e still felt like, kinda like the old saying 'birds of a feather flock together.' They had their own culture, their own way, we had our own way. ...I lived in a community of minorities, [and] had a lot of good friends, at least I thought they were good friends, and we would go swimming, we'd work together, we'd hunt together, we'd play together. But, yet we never did socialize together." After the war, race relations began changing, forcing T.J. to side with the Dixiecrat Party in the 1948 election.

I think this was one of the things that began to surface prior to the election of 1948. Some people didn't want to change, and I don't know that I was really ready to change. I thought maybe the Democratic Party was a little bit too forward in some of the changes, stirring up trouble, and that sort of thing. We in east Texas weren't too much in favor of that. You know it's alright if a person wants to change, but maybe it was our fault, the media, and all of the things that went on were something we did not accept too well.

When you say the media, you mean the coverage of marches. . .

If you had a sit-in somewhere, they would show that, but something could happen in another part of the country, and they wouldn't even mention that. But if it happened in east Texas, or Mississippi, or Alabama, it would be shown, see. So we thought they made too big an issue out of some of this stuff. But maybe that was the only way they could get attention.
CHARLES E. MURPHY

Above all, he is a wonderful story-teller, and has a lot of stories to tell. An orphan at an early age, he grew up in Baltimore's McDonogh School, a military school. He missed the cut for West Point because of a weak eye, but he earned his commission from the R.O.T.C. program at the University of Tennessee. During the war, Charles served as a captain in the 1st Engineer Combat Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division. He participated in the North African landing, the Sicily landing, the Normandy landing, during which he was wounded for the second time, and finished up the war in Czechoslovakia. He is also a retired Lt. Colonel in the Reserve. Lighting up a cigarette, the first of many, he began to talk.

. . . During that time, the training units were divided into white and black units. Completely segregated. There were ten white training companies and ten black companies. Then there was a company they called "The Eight Ball Company" which were the rejects of all the blacks. They got into trouble. Instead of puttin' 'em in the hoosgow, or sendin' 'em off to some reform troops, they put 'em in a separate company.

Well, lucky me, I got command of that company.

Did that reconfirm or change ideas you had about blacks?

From military school, I had no direct connection with blacks. In fact, just occasional meeting of 'em on the streets. Except for the servants [at school]. Some of 'em I tolerated, others I didn't like. I had no real animosity at all.

Taking over this group. . . . First thing, I of course went to the company area, and their first sergeant was a man about sixty years old. He was a graduate of Rhode Island College. Of course, he was absolutely useless as a first sergeant—the men ran over him. The first thing I did was say, "Sergeant get your equipment together. . . ." I noticed he had a clerk-typist there, typin' with one finger. I said, "Take him with you and go to group headquarters for reassignment."

I said, "Before you do, fall the troops out, I want to take a look at 'em."

Of course, there were three platoons. Most dirtiest, slovenly-lookin' things,
as I walked down the line, except for one. I came to this one fellow, he was tall, about six-foot-four, broad-shouldered, very light-brown. Clean uniform and standing rigidly at attention. I said, "Soldier, what are you doin' in this outfit?" He said, "Well. . .Cap'n [Charles was only a 2d Lt. at the time], one of the sahgents done told me somethin' that I didn't like. . .I clouted him!" [He said,] "That sahgent done called me a cocksucker and I just boned him one." (Laughs.)

They put him in this outfit. I said, "Well, you're going to be the first sergeant. Come on, stand out here now." I said, "Now, dismiss these troops; you'll have 'em back in formation in two hours, in clean uniforms, and clean shaven. . .Come on up to the orderly room, I'll give you your stripes. I want them on too." So I left.

I came back, oh, in less than two hours. . .and he had the company out already. They were in clean uniforms, and they were clean-shaven. They were standing rigidly at attention. He was walking up and down in front of 'em. He said, pointed to his chevron [motions to his arm, then mimics], "Dis says I'se de fust sahgent." He said, "An' de white man, he said I'se de fust sahgent." He rolled up one arm that was about as big as my thigh, and he said, "An' dis says I'se de fust sahgent. Any you niggas wanna argue?" (Laughs.) They were just shakin'.

Surprisingly, it worked out very well. He had worked out a little code. Apparently, the blacks were having trouble understanding exactly what these military orders meant. For instance, just calling to attention, it was slow gettin' through. I found out that when I'd give an order there'd be a funny little whistle. When I'd say, let's say I'd say, "Right Shoulder!" I'd hear this funny little whistle. I'd say, "Arms!" He'd say, "Nigga!". . .And it went like that all the way through. I listened to this and I talked to him. I said, "Look, I
hear these whistles now. Are you commanding, are you telling these troops my orders, through these whistles?"

He said, "Yassuh. Don't you mind?" I said, "No, no, I don't mind a bit. Why don't you make up a drill-team now, and work 'em by whistles." He said, "Can do that?" I said, "You sure can. I'll give you extra time to do that." He got up this drill team. . . . They were precise, just like that (snaps), all commanded by whistle. Everything from right oblique to movement of the arms. They traveled all over the post. . . . puttin' on these exhibitions The whole outfit just came up—they had somethin' now to be proud of.

How did your experience affect you later? Did you have problems with the Civil Rights movement?

No, not really. I saw evidence of . . . some blacks being. . . . oh, lacking brain power, if you wish to put it that way. I don't know whether it was due to the fact [of] the way they had been treated as youngsters, or whether it was just a normal case of the way they were born. I have seen excellent black soldiers, and I've seen very poor black soldiers. But, I've seen the same in whites. . . . No, I never learned any real animosity toward blacks. I treated 'em differently. Actually, I guess I gave them more leeway.

EDGAR C. WILSON

The one of the few experiences with integration he had in the army came in Officers Candidate School, where two black men were in the class. Their white tent-mates, both from Alabama, complained to the commanding officer about the situation, and they were transferred out. I led into a discussion about race, by asking him about liberating the camps at the end of the war. "I saw the crematoriums," he said.

At Weimar, [when] we did get into [it] that day, the burgomeister. . . . said that the concentration camp was about five kilometers from the town. . . . He wanted us to go out there, but our orders were to keep moving. We couldn't
do that. So, a few days later, a green division that had just arrived in Europe did go in and liberate that one. We did not see inside that one.

When the war ended in Austria [where he ultimately wound up], at Ebensee. . .[a] lake area at the foothills of the Alps, and I went into this [camp] a couple of days after it had been liberated. . .Our medics had gone in the day before and started adjusting their diets. The German records showed that they had been losing two hundred a day by death, and when our medics gave them too much food, they lost six hundred a day.

Many of them were so far gone, at a distance of. . .two or three hundred feet, why it looked just like a skeleton. They were still able to walk. They're wearing no clothes whatsoever.

There was one fellow who was not that far gone. He had been there a few weeks, but he was just jumping up and down so happy to see us. He said, "When we heard the crashing of the gate, we knew that the Americans had come." (Smiles.) "It was our birthday! Our birthday!" Over and over he would say that.

I asked him. . ."Who are all the people in here? Are they all Jews?" He said, "No, they're not here because of their religion, they're here because they opposed the government." But he said, "Probably 80 percent of them are Jews." And that was right on the outskirts of a nice little resort village around this lake.

The camp was at the entrance to a mine, and it was the "last stage," where inmates who had been worked to death were placed to die. I asked him if his experiences with these inmates changed his ideas about race:

No. I'm a native of Knoxville. The race problem was never here what was said to have been in other places. The Knoxville College was a respected institution. I grew up on a dairy farm, my father was a dairy-man. We sold butter and butter-milk, and I delivered that to the store right at the entrance
to Knoxville College. We had other customers that were blacks...I had no feeling against [them].

I could not support some of the things that were done [however]...To oppose movements like that is a dangerous thing. I think that it should've been worked out more reasonably. When you force a movement, you are going too fast.

*Later he related, at the end of the war, he was in charge of a train-car of dischargees on the way to Camp Lucky Strike in France—"about a third black, and two-thirds white."*

I wondered, "Well now, is this going to cause a problem?" But I just stopped outside the door...then when we start to get on, well, it was just natural: all the blacks came to this end (*motions*), all the whites went to that end (*motions*). [No problem] whatsoever. And I slept on the floor between them. It was an interesting ride, to hear conversation in that end of the car, and then conversation in this end of the car.

**HERSCHEL M. DOWNS**

*Did World War II change your attitudes toward race?*

No, it did not. It really did not change my attitude at all. I felt like everyone ought to be treated fairly, but I resented, and still resent, being forced to accept somebody into my company, so to speak, that I didn't necessarily invite in. That's just the way it is.
ELIEL D. ARCHILLA

Being a Puerto Rican himself and raised in the bustle of New York, I expected Arch to have a unique attitude toward prejudice and race. I figured he would be quite different from other men of his age and experience that lived around him in Dallas. I was surprised by what he said, and he led into it this way:

I do remember one, one very sad [incident]—and it's stayed with me all these many, many years. We had a Cuban fellow that went into the glider-pilot training, like I did, from New York. He was a little dark-casted. He had long fingers (motions). And, perhaps, even a little flat-nose.

I remember so well this captain, when I was shipped over into Columbus, Ohio—when I enlisted in the Army, I was assigned to a replacement depot in Columbus, Ohio, where all these glider-pilot trainees were grouped together, and then they were shipped out to various locations after that. But, while we were there, we were doing just normal military things—KP’s and all of that. I was called in by a captain one day to the orderly room, and this captain was asking me questions about this Cuban. He was asking me whether this Cuban (lowers his voice to a low whisper)—if I knew this Cuban was black or not. And I said, "No sir, I don't think he's black." He said, "Well, don't they have black Cubans?" I said, "Well, I'm sure they do, sir." He knew I was Puerto Rican.

He brings out the long fingers. He says, [lowers his voice again] "He looks black—look at 'em, you know—you notice his hands? He's got those black fingers and all that." Very biased guy. Come to find out he was from Georgia. You know, I tried to cover for this kid, and, lo-and-be-hold, he was shipped out after that . . .

Beyond that incident, I never remember any bias of my name or anything else. 'Cause you take a look at the roster we have of my group—we have every conceivable name in the world flying with us.

91
However, there were no blacks in his squadron. While Arch agreed that military service did help break down barriers of prejudice, when I asked him about the Civil Rights movement, in particular seeing the various marches, on TV, he said:

I thought they were horrible. I have a little bias about the blacks...my children do not have nearly the bias I have with the blacks. I'm a so-called minority myself, but I've seen blacks do, you know, things that...are just typically black. I do have a slight resentment with some of them about that. Others are very fine, very dear friends of mine are black and I've no problem with that. I think it's almost bred in us.

We had more bias against the Jew than I had [against] the blacks in New York City when I was a kid. We used to chase the Jew-boys and throw stones on 'em, and everything else to 'em. Oh yeah, we had more bias against the Jew than we had anybody else.

As it turned out, his wingman during the war was Jewish. They became, and still are, good friends.

GEORGE M. VALENTINE
He was born and raised in Maryville, Tennessee, and spent all of his working life in and around Knoxville, Tennessee. Because he was African-American and a Southerner, I was interested to hear him talk about being in a segregated Army, and coming back to a segregated society. Overall, he said, "Not all blacks suffered that much, but a lot of 'em did, 'cause I ran into some fellows that came into service that actually were just getting out of slavery."

...He [Truman] had taken office by then, and after he became president he actually did away with the discrimination in the armed forces. Of course, that was the thing which we really we fought for, you know. I guess the most...I don't know how to put it--the things that we went through, the horror we went through, and the hell that we went through, [and] have to come back to conditions we had to come back to--this was really a blow. But, you had to
learn to ride with the punches, and it wasn't totally unexpected, you know what I mean?

And [you] got back to the United States and being discharged, you had to ride in a separate, segregated car. You still had the white fountain, black fountain, white restrooms, and black restrooms, and this sort of thing. You think, what in the hell did we fight for? But being born in a religious family, you can't let hatred be the dominating factor in your life. You just have to pray to God that those things are going to smooth over sooner or later.

You know what was the most hurting thing that I ran into that really stuck with me that I'll never forget as long as I live? I got married shortly after I went into service. So, we were in Alexandria, Louisiana, and had to go to the courthouse to get our marriage license. While I was there waiting at the counter, a white soldier came up and was waiting also to get his license—he's getting ready to get married. And he was telling the people there—everybody could hear—that he thought the black soldier was a disgrace to the American people.

Now, that thing stuck with me, just hurt me so bad, that I wanted to strike out. But, I said, "No, I won't say a word. That's just one man, that's his opinion." I just let it ride.

But that really hurt, you know.

_But that hurt didn't translate into involvement in the Civil Rights movement._ He came back to his job at Alcoa. Before the war he had a job as a "glorified janitor": "you had to have a high school education to push a broom in the lab." He cleaned glassware, and set up experiments for the regular analysts, but he couldn't actually test for results. He had a solid grasp of the routines, and wanted to buck for more responsibility. After confronting his boss about it, he was promoted to a salaried position. "Things began to change a little, simply because we had people in the lab that were...I thought were very...you know, understanding about the black man's plight." He related this about a white counterpart:
One of the metallurgists, still with Alcoa. . . .his dad was a Ku Klux--belonged to the Klan. And his son was instrumental, or took part, in the sit-ins here in Knoxville, in Birmingham. . . .His dad wanted to disown him. But he felt that way, he's just a boy, just finished UT, he just felt that way, you know. I don't know how his dad ended up, whether he actually took him back in his arms or not.

*Were you impressed by the rate of change in desegregation?*

I couldn't say that I had such a problem with it [segregation], 'cause I came from an area, which was Blount County, around Maryville, that we didn't experience that much [prejudice]. I don't know, when I grew up, all my friends were white that lived in the neighborhood. There weren't very many blacks in Maryville. . . .but most of [the] kids I grew up with were white. So, we didn't experience--personally, I didn't experience too much. That only happened after I began to get older, and venture out. . . .
CHARLES E. MURPHY

At the end of the war, his company linked up with the Russians, and he met personally with his Russian counterpart. "I didn't like them at all. We had some pretty nasty situations take place."

For awhile there, we were on a confronting line with about a ten-mile limit between us. I immediately went to see the Russian commander. . .to see my opposite number. Well, he didn't speak any English, and I didn't speak any Russian, but I had a good interpreter with me, who was an actual Russian who was in the unit.

The Russian [commander] . . .he must have been almost Cossack origin. He was quite bellicose, and wonderin' to know why we were even there, said, "After all, Russia won the war." You know, that type.

The two officers worked out a patrol system, using jeep patrols to intercept German prisoners and prevent looting. 'Charles' unit was to patrol Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the Russians, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Sunday was left free. I asked him if he was surprised the Cold War broke out, and he answered by describing what happened the first Monday his men went out on patrol. He wasn't surprised at all about what happened later.

I sent my patrol out Monday . . .just a jeep patrol, a lieutenant, and a man with a good .50 [mounted on the jeep]. He radioed back within the first hour, "I've run into a Russian patrol." I said, "Okay, pull back. I'll go see Ivan and see what the hell is goin' on."

The Russians claimed, they were to patrol on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Charles chalked up this to the use of interpreters and the delay in conversation created by their use. He let it slide, "Okay, no sweat."
Tuesday, we sent a patrol out. They're out about an hour, they radioed [they] run into a Russian patrol. I said, "Kill 'em or capture 'em. They must be fakes. No Russians are supposed to be in this area." They captured them.

The Russians were brought in, stripped of their weapons, and put in the stockade built for German POW's.

I got in the command car, and went over to the Russian headquarters. My first remark to him "Was what in the hell are you [doing with] troops in the area?" He said, "That's what we agreed."

I said, "You know damn well that wasn't our agreement. I think these are impostors, and I intend to kill 'em."

He said, "No! No! No! You don't kill Russians." I said, "Then you will get in a dress uniform. You will come to my company, and you will apologize to lying to it." He was not going to do that.

I said, "Fine, I'll just go ahead and kill these people." Finally, he agreed he would. He did. . . . And we didn't have any more trouble out of that.

So, did the fall of communism in East Europe and Russia catch you by surprise?

Very much so. I didn't think--well, I didn't think that you could reason with the Russians. You asked how I felt about blacks. I felt worse about Russians.

Did you think we would begin fighting?

I was surprised we didn't.

STANLEY W. CAMPBELL

I think that the arms race that we're in now is just one of the tragedies of the period in which we live. I'm speculating now, I don't have hard evidence to support this, but I think that there were some people who learned that what
brought us out of the Depression was not war. It was the spending of billions and billions of dollars immediately in the arms industry.

I remember my mother and my father both being able to go to work and make more money than they'd ever made in their lives. . . . in the arms industry. And I think that took.

Then, with the developments of the Cold War mentality, where we were going to play international policeman, and that we were the one leading nuclear power in the world, and that we had to shoulder that responsibility whether or not we wanted to, then there were those that [made sure] the arms industry got the kinds of weapons it needed. Under the leadership of Robert McNamara, we became, in effect, the leading arms merchants in the world.

Now then, the tragedy is that the Cold War is over and I think that there are people in the government who would like to cut back on the armaments industry. But if they do, what are they going to do for the jobs that all those people leave, and that are going to be fired [from]? I think that politically is just unthinkable.

ELIEL D. ARCHILLA

Did you ever think you’d see the end of the Cold War?

I was hoping that it would happen. I remember the airlift into Berlin, followed that very close. I thought we would end up fighting Russia. Little by little, they started negotiations. . . .

[Russia] is a scary country. Very scary. We would’ve had a horrible, horrible time ever fighting the Russians. . . .
EDGAR C. WILSON

His unit linked up with the Russians at the end of the war.

Our unit met them at the river. . .we were not allowed to cross. But I had been getting cross-talk on my radio; I could hear them for two or three days. A few of our officers had to go over on official business to deliver documents and things.

They came back with some. . .horrifying stories of what they saw. Rape cases in the field with a whole bunch of men, one German woman. . .one Austrian woman. They were impressed with the fighting spirit, I guess, of the Russians, but it was [different]. They were not our kind of people.

. . .The reports [of the Russians] that we got from prisoners were all that they were so ruthless. It was. . .no comparison with our Army in the way of fighting. In the last few days of the war in Europe, there was no, for at least a week, there was no actual combat, because the German troops in the area were surrendering and we couldn't even handle it. We were supposed to go on to the river where the Russians were to stop. We were to get there as fast as we could and it was very tiresome on foot. We were marching in two columns (motions), one on each side of the road, [and] the Germans were surrendering in columns coming this way [west]. . .wanting to stop and say, "What can we do?" All we could do is keep going, just keep going that way [east]. I think they said there were three-and-a-half million Germans that surrendered in that area. But, the ones that did want to talk to us, they wanted to join us and go and fight the Russians. They had been told they were to do that: they were to come in and meet us, and we would use them to fight their enemy.

So, did it bother you when West Germany was brought into NATO?
Those of us that fought through Europe, as much as we had a feeling against the Germans in a way, you still had to admire them. In Europe, they impressed you a little bit more than the French did. They're a high-class kind of people. They were wrong politically, but you still had to admire them. You'd want 'em on your team.

He had been impressed by the spirit of German POW's serving in support functions at the demobilization camps in France. Despite their worn uniforms, they kept them patched and clean. They were clean-shaven and personally neat, which was more than he could say for many of the American troops, going to seed in the lax discipline of discharge. And at night, he related, thousands of the POW's would sing in unison songs like "Mighty Fortress is Our God," despite the obvious presence of the American troops ringing them.

Finally I asked him if he was surprised to see the end of the Cold War:
I think that I had realized, and I think many people had that I knew, that it was inevitable. But then when it crashed so completely, and certainly, I guess, that was somewhat of a surprise.

T.J. WEESNER
I don't know if it [the arms race] really bothered me. I thought we might've gone overboard just a little bit on some of it. It could be very self-destructive, and we could just wipe out the whole country if we're not careful. Even today, getting into the wrong hands could be awful. But, here again I guess I look at it a little bit different: when you get back to the way our whole society is you got all these defense plants, you got the banks, you got the governments, you got the politicians. Here these defense plants they need to be manufacturing something, whether it's a gun, a bomb, or whatever. The banks over here, they've got big loans against all these companies and they need for these people to be doing something over here so that they can pay the loan over there. The politicians, they need to get elected, so they can get
some money from these folks and channel their way. . . .This is a system, so if the defense industry gets in trouble, then they start pushing the politicians to come up with something--aw, the Russians are gonna do this, the Japanese are gonna do that, or the Chinese. . . .we need to increase our war-machine over here to take care of that. Really. . . they are providing jobs for people, the companies are paying the banks, paying the stockholders, and it just goes on and on. . . . Sometimes they do that, not for the sole purpose of protecting the United States, they're doing it for political and financial gain.

So do you think we lost the war against militarism?

I think war will be with us as long as. . . we stand. I think there'll be some kind of skirmish goin' on all the time, for some particular reason. Our whole society, I guess it's just the way the things are, the war effort is kindy tied in with everything that we do. If you were to close down all of your defense plants, close down all of these things, and just went straight to. . . 

Like the way it was before World War II?

Right. Now who you going to sell all--what are you going to do with all these folks out of--everybody's going to be out of a job, everybody's going to be riotin', they're gonna be fightin', so you're gonna have to do something to keep the people in place. This is the one thing we may get involved in now is for--I don't know how to say it--but we're not. . . we've got a lot of problems here now in the United States.

Did you buy into the idea of an internal Communist threat?

I didn't really buy into that. I tell you what, I think this is one of the big political games. . . . If you're a politician, you've got to always have something in focus to rally the troops. I think that communism was something, even though they were considered an enemy of ours--but if you wanted to get
anything done in this country, you had to whip up on somebody. I think that a lot of that was overdone. . . .

Even today, if you don't have something, if you're running for political office, if you don't have something to rally the troops behind, why you may not get elected. You got to come up with something. That was a tool we could use, the politicians could use.

I don't know. There might have been communists lurking here and there and yon, but I'm sure we were lurkin' over there too. It was something that I think most of us just took with a grain of salt. At least I did.

GEORGE M. VALENTINE

The 761st met the Russians at the end of the war.

We met the Russians. We had chased the Eleventh Panzer Division across Germany into Austria, and the Germans did not want to give up to, surrender to the Russians. So, we captured them. . . .Then we met the Russians.

Of course, the language barrier was the biggest thing. You know, none of us spoke Russian, and very few of them spoke English. But the most amazin' part about it was the number of women that served in their army, drivin' their tanks, and this sort of thing.

But the Russians I guess treated us well--as well as they could, you know, within the difficulty we had communicating.

'Til I found out what a communist was, I had no earthly idea why I would be upset over [communism]. . . .(Laughs.) 'Cause we had arguments there in the lab [at Alcoa] among the fellows there that hated communism. And I asked 'em, "Well, do you understand communism? If you do, please let me [know]. Maybe I could understand it a little better." He [a co-worker]
had no earthly idea why he hated 'em. They were just communists, and he hated the communists. I had no feeling one way or the other 'cause I did not understand what communism was all about. Now, since I've learned what it's all about, I wasn't pleased with their attitude toward their people, how they treated 'em.

Was it a surprise to see the Cold War end?

Due to my religious belief, I guess it's a little hard for me to try to sympathize with a nation that felt like that they could control other people to that extent. I don't think that I could live under such conditions, but... a guy said, "Well, you lived through a lot more hell than that when you was growing up." But it was a little different.

...I really didn't understand what the Cold War was all about. I think maybe [it was] just a power struggle between two nations....I was [relieved that it ended]. I wish now that things would just kinda level off. Things are just getting worse, in a sense. Nobody seems to have any leadership--we don't have the leadership, the world leadership....

**HERSCHEL M. DOWNS**

Was it disappointing that in 1945, many Americans, both veteran and nonveteran, expected war with the Soviet Union within twenty years?

Yes, it was disappointing because we went through a whole propaganda change. From way back, I remember in--I believe it was 1933--it was only about 1933 that the United States recognized the Soviet Union, because it had come in as a result of force. We still regard[ed] the Soviet Union with suspicion and [said] what bad people they were.. And then all of a sudden, when it looked like it might be to our interest to support them because they were enemies of Germany, [we] had a complete propaganda change--things
may not be so bad. Then after the war they changed back again, 180 degrees to the pre-war concept. It was disappointing, very disappointing. Alarming too. Did you find HUAC and Joe McCarthy alarming too?

In the setting that you were back in the Fifties, the early Fifties and late Forties, when it looked like communism again was going to just mushroom, mushroom out, you get caught up in the thought, "Yes, we don't want to have it here. We do have a Communist party in the United States."

Did you ever think you would see the end of the Cold War?

It was a real surprise to me, and I felt like . . . at least felt like Ronald Reagan felt when Gorbachev went to Iceland and came up with this proposal: "Well this is just a lot of Soviet propaganda. What do they have up their sleeve?" Yes, I was really surprised to see that it was gonna materialize and that the man was actually trying to do something for the Soviet Union to bring them in step with the rest of the world.

It caught me by complete surprise, as did the wall coming down in Berlin.
CHAPTER 9

REMEMBERINGS

ELIEL D. ARCHILLA

Not a member of a formal veterans’ group like the Legion or the VFW, Arch is a member of an association comprised of his old squadron.

It wasn’t until the last four years that I started having a nostalgic feeling about the war. The older you get, you start rememberings. I started getting that.

I kept thinking about my friend...in particular this little Jewish friend of mine. See, I have a bias against the Jews, and my best friend flying with me was my wingman—he was a little Jewish boy. Just a real fine kid. I kept thinking about Marvin Abramalvitz over the years...he went overseas with me. His name being A’s, we were assigned together everywhere we went.

About four years ago, I started hearing about all these reunions. All of these groups, the Navy, the Air Force, were all having reunions, and you see these khakis guys wearing, you know. I started getting that feeling, and started looking at papers and seeing units being recalled or having reunions. And suddenly, I got a communication from one old friend that flew with me, and he wondered where in the world I was. They’d been trying to get in touch with me for years.

So that evolved. Before long I started getting letters from everybody...Then, we got communicated [with] Marvin, finally got a hold of me. We went on the first reunion with him. I then saw guys for the first time, I hadn’t seen in forty-five years.

What was that like?

Oh, it was wonderful (with a BIG smile). Wonderful feeling. Just, you know, embraced and you start talking about the old days. A lot of it you forget, and
then you start talking about it, then you remember little things—a little bit of that, and a little bit of that, and before long you start really recollecting some of the missions and the guys that got killed, and so forth. . . . You had 'em back here, back of your head. Now, all of these things, it comes up as you talk about it. . . . Then, of course, this fiftieth anniversary of D-Day just really brought everything up into the front.

**CHARLES E. MURPHY**

*Although a life-member, he is not active in the American Legion. He is also a member of the Retired Officer's Association. He goes to reunions of officers from the 1st Division.*

There are three different groups of 1st Infantry officers. There's the World War II, Vietnam [group], and the Desert Storm group. [Last year,] they had three different CP's [command posts], all of 'em saying "1st Engineer Combat Battalion." We didn't mix a whole lot.

*Why was that?*

Age, mainly. . . It's a funny thing. The Desert Storm officers were [a] rowdy bunch. Maybe we were when we were that age too, but. . . well, there was a hell of a lot of drinking going on. . . .

I think it was more of an age, and a different--we still maintained pretty damn good discipline in our group. I mean, even though there was no rank indicated, we all knew where we had been and what our present ranks were. There's a lot of respect. There was more buddy-buddyism goin' on down in the Desert Storm group.
STANLEY W. CAMPBELL

One of the things that I avoided like the plague when I came home is I didn't join veterans' groups, and I didn't join the American Legion, and I wasn't interested in sitting around a bunch of men, talking about the war. That didn't interest me at all.

I'd grown up in the war. It wasn't always a happy experience—several times, I got close to getting killed, but when you ride bucking horses (chuckles), you'd could get killed. So, maybe I'm not typical, the typical veteran in that sense. It was over and I didn't want to talk about it. I didn't seek out opportunities for nostalgia. I lost track of the members of my flight crew. I have no idea where they are.

Still, wouldn't you mind seeing some of them today?

Well, now, there are two or three of 'em I think about, I'd like to see 'em. Just to see what they did.

Later, he said,

See, I think that had I been in the infantry my whole attitude about everything might be different. The kind of war I was involved in was awfully sterile. We didn't see people die. We didn't shoot pilots down, we shot planes down. It was abstracted in a way that maybe it can't be for an infantryman.

I had no bitterness about any of that.

I assume you would do it all over again?

Under not knowing what I know now? Yeah (softly).
EDGAR C. WILSON

Although he is not active, he is a member of the American Legion, and he is a member of Disabled American Veterans. He also meets regularly with the men of his unit.

After I retired at sixty-five, then I went back to division reunions for about seven times. The small group that I worked with actually in combat, the officers in the infantry battalion that I worked with, we decided at one of the reunions--here we see fifteen hundred people, and most of 'em we didn't know at the time, why don't we go somewhere just on our own? Just our small group of about twenty. . . .

So we did that. . . . We still meet. We're supposed to go this year, in May, over to Richmond, Virginia.

GEORGE M. VALENTINE

The 761st still has a reunion every year. First, just the battalion met, but because of a decrease in numbers due to deaths, the group moved to incorporate with Allied Veterans, other units the 761st had been associated with both at home and in Europe, "just to make up numbers, more or less."

We meet every year. Three years ago, we were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation--Carter gave it to us. Now we're working on the Croix de Guerre. They promised us that. I thought when this last documentary came out--they had it not too long ago--it'd be part of that, but it wasn't.

It's a ball to hear those fellows lie about (Laughs) what they've been doing since they came home, started working, got married, and retired from their jobs and so forth.
CHAPTER 10

LAST WORDS

T.J. WEESNER

So many things have been invented since the war. I know myself, other than maybe radio and automobiles, prior to World War II, basically we lived the same as maybe my grandmother did back during the Civil War. No change—the houses were old, and no conveniences of any thing. We did the same about the same way. We grew crops, and we killed hogs and cattle, and everything basically was the same. . . .

Hard work, integrity—these are things I think sometimes we might lose sight of, if we're not careful. . . .

Our whole political structure has encouraged—I think—for people to change from the way that they were raised and brought up. They've encouraged, for example, they encourage people not to be married. You get tax benefits if you're single, more so than you do if you're married. You get welfare checks if you're single, if you're married you might not get one. You know, it encourages people to break down the family. This is something that I don't know how to explain all that well, but it is something I feel that in trying to help people help themselves, we've might of helped people go the other way. This is something we may have to correct.

EDGAR C. WILSON

The experience of going through World War II, and especially in the infantry and artillery, which in my personal opinion, I had the best position in the Army. I was able—I had thorough training with the artillery. . .but I was with
infantry on the very frontlines. I saw what took place. I was there when they needed artillery, and our unit was so well-trained, that we delivered the artillery when it was needed. Nobody on the frontline was more appreciated than the artillery [observer]. . . .

To see those people nowadays, they still remember. And I still remember them (his eyes glisten). In one of our small meetings, this fellow from Georgia, who died recently, he sat down by me and said, "You saved my life one time." And I said, "You saved my life many times." But he reminded me of an incident where he was right over here (motions) in a ditch, really, and I was over here. I had got in a hole that the Germans had left, which was a good, deep hole. We were being heavily bombarded with German artillery.

And I said, "Sergeant, come over here. I've got plenty of room. . . ." He did. He no more jumped in that hole with me, until a round hit exactly where he was in that ditch.

HERSCHEL M. DOWNS

Do you think the election of Bill Clinton signified "the passing of the torch" between generations, like the Kennedy election did? Or was it a fluke?

I didn't feel like the torch had been passed. That's just one election, I felt like, that. . . .things will change the next go around. I don't look at it from the standpoint of the veterans. I feel like that the [World War II] veterans have--true, they've served in a war and they did something--but we're now all citizens. To me, it has nothing to do with your past performance in the service, unless, it is something where you need governmental assistance. . . .for example the VA Hospitals. But we're all citizens. I don't believe being a veteran makes you any different from any other citizen.
We've been absorbed into society and we're a part of it, and passing out. I feel like that the...first of all you got to consider that my entire education was paid for by the government, through the service academy and through the GI Bill. I feel like that the government has repaid me, the country has repaid me, in the best way that they could for what service that I performed for them. I feel like, yes, as far as I'm concerned, it does have a great deal here. If I felt like that I had been neglected,[ I] might feel differently. It maybe different with the Vietnam veterans, from what I have read, because they were not necessarily recognized as they should've been originally. But, I feel like that I have been recognized, I have been taken care of by the government, put on my feet, and put out to do. . .it's up to me now, or was up to me, to do what I could do with the background the government had provided.

GEORGE M. VALENTINE

I wasn't. . .until I got older, [I wasn't] interested in politics. I'm not a Democrat or a Republican, you know, I vote for a person that I think is gonna serve the country--[that] goes local and nationwide. But some of the things I hear now is very disturbing to me. It seems like it's just a power struggle between two different political parties. To me, things like that just--is there ever going to be any unity at all? Why can't we ever get together?

Like we were in World War II?

Sure! Yeah. Seems like everything that--well, this president [Clinton] being a young fellow, I guess he wants to get his program over. He, maybe, [is] too hasty in some of his endeavors, but being a young fellow and he sees the conditions that the United States is in, you can't blame him too much. But, you got some older people [who think] that he's moving too fast.
Then they want to take what President Johnson with his Great Society, the programs that he started, now they want to balance the budget. [They] got to cut out all this. Well, see sometimes you start cuttin' out too much. Because all the poor people are not black, when you come to think of it. And if you gonna do that just to get, to punish the blacks, you gonna hurt somebody else. You gonna hurt a lot of people.

CHARLES E. MURPHY
I don't know whether it was totally World War II, or my personal experience growing up in military school, but I have a very firm conviction that we wouldn't be havin' all this damn trouble with kids, if both boys and girls went to military school... I would like to see universal military training for at least two years for boys and girls.

Was it was a mistake to end the draft?
No...my opinion on this, and they're quite a few who agree with me, I would maintain a regular military--Navy, Marines, Army, and Air Force--at a reasonable level. And I'd have a damn strong reserve. I mean, I don't really believe in drafting people, unless you draft 'em into reserve units. Don't wait until the damn war is on and then draft 'em. 'Cause they never get enough information and you get 'em killed like that (snaps)...That tells you the system isn't worth a damn.

...Of course, when I went up to the Olympics in Canada, we ran into a hell of a lot of deserters--not from the Army, but, hell, desertin' the States. I was upset when they gave them amnesty and allowed 'em to come back in. I think they should've been...considered non-Americans.
We talked a bit about Henry Adams. Dr. Campbell rejected Adams' attempt to find a law of history, and his predictions of the future. However, he found Adams' outlook quite revealing. Although he wasn’t too impressed with some of his students, in general, Dr. Campbell felt the younger generations would be competent in facing the future.

You have no fears for our future?

Well—yes I do. But they stem from something more profound. We're involved in an economic enterprise which depends upon the exploitation of natural resources at a rate which cannot be perpetuated into infinity. And I tend to agree with Vico, that civilizations rise through several stages until they reach decadence, then go into decline which is irreversible.

Now, I'm not a determinist, but his argument that for this to turn around would require that we become somebody else other than who we are. Whether or not we can find the will to reform our educational system, whether or not we can find the political will to solve some of these problems is academic. It can be argued either way. I suppose my skepticism tells me that we won't. We'll go the way of the British Empire, and the way every other empire, eventually.

But what I do profoundly believe is that the western industrial world cannot perpetuate its standard of living into infinity. It's physically impossible.

*Henry Adams.*

*(Laughs.)*
PART III
CONCLUSION

SO LONG, SOLDIER?

1. GENERAL RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

A total of seven interviews were finally conducted, a figure reduced from fifteen due to practical limitations imposed by the nature of the thesis. Additionally, after much consultation between the author and his major professor, it was thought that enough information had been gathered to begin answering the questions posed by the author.

Of the seven interviewees, all currently reside in the South: three in Texas, one in Louisiana, and three in Tennessee. All lived in an urban environment. Three of the men originated from areas outside the South, one from Colorado, one from New York City, and one from Baltimore, Maryland. Furthermore, one interviewee was African-American, and one was Puerto Rican. In their respective backgrounds, four came from rural areas, two from urban ones, and one grew up in a mid-sized town.

Two individuals served in the Navy, one on board a destroyer in the Atlantic, and one as part of a Naval flight crew in the Pacific. Two interviewees served in the Army Air Forces (the forerunner of the Air Force), one as a member of a tactical air-support squadron, the other as a flight crew member in the Air Transport and Bomber Ferry Commands. Finally, three men served in the Army, all in the European Theatre of Operations—-one as a combat engineer, another as forward artillery observer, and the last as a tank gunner. Five men served in the European theatre, but only one served in the Pacific. One served in both.
From the foregoing information, several problems with the oral history section appear. One problem is the regionalism characterizing the interviews. All the men, despite their respective origins, now live in the South and Southwest, and while a wide range of opinion is expressed within this group, it would be interesting to have the views of other veterans living in different sections of the United States.

Although the respective backgrounds and racial characteristics of the interview group appear balanced, in terms of service and theatre, there could be more balance. There is no representative of the Marine Corps, and only one from the Pacific Theatre. Second, there is only one representative of the massive logistical support network that supplied and reinforced American combat troops. While not as glamorous or dramatic as combat, logistical support is vital for success in warfare, and a true reflection of American involvement in World War II needs to incorporate more representatives of this supply network.

Basically, all of these problems can be rectified by increasing the interview sample, while keeping it balanced. Doing this, however, highlights a wider problem in the thesis: this thesis contains two separate approaches towards answering Henry Adams: a collective answer, given in a traditional historical narrative in Part I, and an individual answer, approached in the form of oral history. Perhaps the topic and the questions of this thesis could be better served by electing one mode of research and discussion and expanding on it. In this case, two different techniques of research are used, and perhaps do not succeed as well as if only one had been exclusively utilized.
2. RESULTS OF THE MAIL-IN SURVEY

At the end of each interview, a mail-in survey was given to each interviewee, to provide quick access to some background information that could inform the transcriptions, and would give a more human face to some of the facets of postwar life described in Part I. Of seven distributed, five surveys were returned. Some of the findings are summarized here.

One can examine the questions from the sample survey given in the appendix. Of the five men, their average age was seventy-five. Each of the five described his mother's occupation as homemaker, and three of the men had fathers whose occupations could be designated as blue-collar or farm-oriented. One veteran's father was killed in World War I; one veteran's father was in the insurance business.

Two men entered service at a relatively young age, nineteen and twenty respectively, and two entered service in their mid-twenties, 25 and 26 respectively. One left the question unanswered. All had entered service by 1943, and were out by 1947. Three of the men were field-grade officers (one a captain, and two lieutenants), and of the other two, one reached corporal and the other reached sergeant by the end of the war.

All but one had seen "active combat." Likewise, all but one came through without being wounded. One veteran had been wounded twice but not seriously enough to take him out of combat, and, additionally, one respondent determined he had suffered some hearing loss during the war. All five veterans had received some sort of award for their service. Three men were in units which received Presidential Unit Citations; one had a Purple Heart Medal; two received Bronze Star Medals for heroic actions; and one was awarded the Silver Star Medal. (It was known by the author that one
veteran, not returning a survey, had the Distinguished Flying Cross, second only to the Medal of Honor, and twelve other air medals.)

Three of the five men were not members of any organized veterans' group. Two were members of the American Legion and other specialized veterans' organizations. None of the respondents had ever been a member of a labor union, and all were currently retired (the two veterans not sending in survey are currently still working). All but one veteran described their careers as "white-collar;" of these four, two said they were "white-collar" and "self-employed." Two men had never moved in search of work, two had moved only once, and one moved twice looking for work. A problem with this question is that it can not distinguish whether a veteran migrated a long distance, or just moved somewhere close by to his home. All the respondents had been in long-term marriages lasting more than forty years; three of the men were currently widowers, and on average had two children.

Turning to the presidential voting pattern, the results are interesting. This section was included in the survey to lend a clearer perspective on the political leanings of these veterans over the past fifty years. Two men did not vote in the 1944 election; one left the question blank. The remaining two had voted, one for Roosevelt, and the other unsure of whom he voted for (a general offensive had been launched the same day as the election, and his was a lead unit).

Of the four white veterans, their voting record can be characterized as basically Republican. In the 1948 election, one voted for Dewey, one for Truman, one for the Dixiecrats, and one left the question unanswered. All the men then voted Republican, until the 1976 election, where two voted for Carter. From 1980 to 1992, all the men again voted Republican, except for one respondent who circled Clinton as his choice in the 1992 election. For the one
African-American veteran, his voting pattern could be described as primarily Democratic, except for the 1952 and 1956 elections, where he voted for Eisenhower.

When asked in the next question, "Are you more inclined to trust a fellow veteran running for office than a non-veteran?" two men answered "yes;" two responded "no," and one wrote in the margin, "Possibly, but not necessarily." However, as the voting records show in the case of the white veterans, they have routinely voted for candidates that have had military experience. Moreover, many of the Democratic candidates, which the one African-American respondent voted for, also had military service in their records. Therefore, while to individual vets veteran status may not be important, looking at America as a whole since 1945, veteran status is an important consideration in elections.

Three of the veterans considered themselves as politically "moderate." Two men described themselves as "conservative." Finally, all the respondents described themselves as "middle-class," except one who did not answer the question. In relation to their parents, none of the veterans described his standard of living as being poorer. Two said their standards of living were "much better" when compared to those of their parents; one left the question unanswered, as he was orphaned at age five. The remaining two characterized their standard of living as "better" and "somewhat better."

The mail-in survey reconfirmed many of the trends illustrated in Part I about veterans as a whole in the postwar era: these five men were educated, upwardly mobile economically, center-to-right-of-center politically, not too involved with organized veterans' groups, and solid members of their respective communities. Of course, it should be remembered that these men, and most World War II veterans of today, are survivors of survivors. These
men coped with civilian life, integrating their experience of war. Those wounded mentally and physically, unable to successfully re-enter the mainstream of life, have in many instances passed by the way and their story is not represented here—or perhaps anywhere. These unwanted or misunderstood men slipped beneath America's collective sight and out of its memory in most cases.

3. FINAL THOUGHTS

For many American men in the twentieth century, military service is a common shared experience, as today in American society there are veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, notwithstanding smaller actions, such as Haiti, Grenada, the Dominican Republic, Lebanon, Panama, Somalia, and Desert Storm. There are additional veterans of the Reserves, National Guard, and various occupation troops which have served overseas. There are even veterans left from World War I.

At no other time in American history has the shared occurrence of military duty been so widespread for so many. Yet as a historical topic, for the most part, postwar veterans' issues are relatively unexplored. Over one-half of all American men entering retirement in the 1990's will be vets, and little outside of their actual wartime or military experiences is recorded and related to others.¹ Such a sizable group of men definitely has an influence on the political and social culture of the United States, but as a historical group, veterans usually are only examined within a historical vacuum of wars themselves. Little is synthesized or placed within a larger framework.

World War II veterans are a good case in point. This thesis has tried within its limits to put these veterans and their memories in a wider historical perspective, to see how they handled the legacy that World War II left them and what they ultimately fashioned from it. Almost as a generalization, this project found World War II vets well integrated into civilian life, so much so, that it is almost impossible to distinguish them from their nonveteran counterparts.

Moreover, the information in this thesis points to a larger gap in American historiography. The programs conceived for World War II vets by government planners sought to foster economic security and had the result of creating probably the largest middle-class society in American history. If, only in thought and outlook, many Americans before World War II were characterized as middle-class, programs like the GI Bill made this class status a reality. However, much of contemporary American historiography has ignored the growth of the middle-class since 1945 in favor of examining the margins of American society. While this research is valid and welcome, not only do American veterans need to be included in these surveys, but also the larger component of American society--the "silent majority," the middle-class--should be subject to intense study. By expanding our knowledge of the American middle-class in this century, more light can be shed upon current national political and social trends.

A characteristic of World War II veterans, and their generation, is optimism. While it may be clear to us, their children and grandchildren, that the bluebirds have not come home, nor has "a world that sensitive and timid natures could regard without shudder"² been created, the World War II

generation has not given up looking. The nostalgic Newsweek of 11 January 1993, titled "So Long, Soldier," heralded the election of President Bill Clinton as a transfer of generational power akin to President John Kennedy's acceptance of the generational torch from his antecedents, the ones that planned World War II. Perhaps this is premature. 1996 Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole, a combat veteran of World War II and a spokesman of sorts for his generation, said about his bid, "Maybe there is one more mission. Maybe there is one more call to serve."³ America has not heard the last of the World War II generation and this group of veterans. Not yet, and not by a long shot.

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS:


Primary Sources:


**MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS:**


"Baruch on Veterans." *The Nation,* 15 September 1945, 243-44.


125
"Our Veterans are Standing the Strain of Peace." *Saturday Evening Post*, 9 August 1947, 108.


Stone, Andrea. "Some WWII vets fight enemy within." *USA Today*, 11 November 1994, 6A.


"What Ever Happened To The Veterans?" *Time*, 5 January 1959, 24-5.

INTERVIEWS:

Archilla, Eliel D., of Dallas, TX. Interview by author, 31 December 1994, Dallas TX. Tape recording. The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

Campbell, Dr. Stanley W., of Waco, TX. Interview by author, 22 December 1994, Waco, TX. Tape recording. The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

Downs, Herschel M., of Shreveport, LA. Interview by author, 29 December 1994, Shreveport, LA. Tape recording. The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

Murphy, Charles E., of Oak Ridge, TN. Interview by author, 2 March 1995, Oak Ridge, TN. Tape recording. The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

Valentine, George M., of Knoxville, TN. Interview by author, 29 February 1995, Knoxville, TN. Tape recording. The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

126
Weesner, T.J., of Dallas, TX. Interview by author, 6 January 1995, Dallas, TX. Tape recording. The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

Wilson, Edgar C., of Knoxville, TN. Interview by author, 1 March 1995, Knoxville, TN. Tape recording. The Center for the Study of War and Society, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.

UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL:


SECONDARY SOURCES:


APPENDIX
All interviews in this study were conducted under the aegis of the University of Tennessee's Center for the Study of War and Society. Accordingly, the tape cassettes of the interviews are in the Center's archives and are available to qualified individuals for research.

Interviewees were selected after consultation between the author and Dr. Charles W. Johnson, major professor for this project, and were picked based upon accessibility to the interviewer, wartime roles and experiences, and ethnic status. On average, interviewing sessions were a hour in length; one was conducted at the Center, one at an individual's office, and the rest were done at the respective homes of the interviewees. Each veteran was asked a different combination of specific questions chosen from the following list, determined from deliberation by both the author and the committee. At the conclusion of each interview, a mail-in survey was distributed to each veteran, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope for return.

Portions of each interview, but not the whole tape, were transcribed to fit the chapters of the thesis. The mail-in surveys were collected and collated for information and the results were incorporated into the conclusion.
Interview Questionnaire

1944-1945:
1. Do you remember where you were when you heard FDR had died?
2. Did you think Truman would be a good president?
3. How did you feel about the dropping of the A-bomb?
4. Did you feel in 1945 that you had a better chance of getting ahead financially than your parents had in the past?

Demobilization:
5. How did you feel about the point system?
6. How long did you wait for discharge?
7. What did you think of the servicemen protests?

Interlude, 1945-1947:
8. What did you think about the UN?
9. Do you think Roosevelt "sold us out" at Yalta?
10. How did you feel about civilians, for instance strikers, who complained about things at home while you were in service?
11. Did you have any problems in readjusting to civilian life?
12. Did you believe the time you spent in service hindered you from establishing your career? Did you resent that?
13. Did your service experience change your previous attitudes about minorities?

The GI Bill:
14. When did you first hear of the GI Bill?
15. Did you take advantage of the GI Bill?
16. Did you, or did you know any vets who gave up getting benefits because of apparent red-tape?
17. Did the Bill's benefits change or improve your life?
18. Do you now think the Bill was social welfare, or a well-deserved reward for your time in-service?

Into the Future, 1947-present:
19. As a vet, how did you view the "loss" of China, the Berlin Blockade, the rearmament of West Germany, the Korean War, Vietnam, détente, Watergate, and the Gulf War? (will pick a different topic for each vet)
20. Did you think the USSR was the next major threat, comparable to Germany and Japan in 1941?
21. Was your quality of life better in 1950 than in 1940?
22. Have you received any service from the VA?
23. Were the values "justified" by the American victory in W.W.II and post-war dominance still applicable to today's society and world?
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete this survey and return within seven days of your interview. If you need more space for written answers, please continue on the back of the page.

Name: _____________________________ Current
Age: ______
Birthplace: __________
Father's occupation: ________________
Mother's occupation: ________________
Number of siblings: ______
Number of siblings inservice during WWII: ______
Estimated annual Family earnings: ______
Age and year when drafted or enlisted: ____________
Town of residence when drafted: ________________
Branch of service: ____________
Unit or units served with: ______________
Type of duty: ____________
Enlisted or Officer status: ______________
Highest rank attained: ______________
Year of discharge: ______

Please answer the following questions by circling the appropriate answer, or writing one in the space provided.

Did you see active combat? yes no
Were you wounded? yes no
If yes, where and how severely?
Were you awarded any medals? yes no

If yes, please describe which ones and for what services:

Are you a member of a veterans' organization, like the VFW or the American Legion? yes no

If yes, which one?

Are you now, or have you been, a member of a labor union? yes no

If yes, which one?

Are you currently retired? yes no

Overall, would you describe your work experience as basically blue-collar white-collar self-employed

If you are retired, please describe your former occupation(s). If you are currently working, please describe your current occupation, and the length of time you have been working at it.

Since your discharge from the service, how many times have you moved in search for work?

once twice three times four times or more

Are you married? yes no

How long have you been married?

Have you ever been divorced? yes no

If yes, please give date(s) of your divorce(s):
How many children do (did) you have?

Think about your past record as a voter. In the following questions, please indicate your selection by circling the appropriate presidential candidate. If the candidate you voted for is not listed, or you did not vote, please indicate in the space provided.

Did you vote in the 1944 election? yes no

If yes, did you vote for Roosevelt? yes no

In the following elections, did you vote for:

1948: Truman Dewey
1952: Stevenson Eisenhower
1956: Stevenson Eisenhower
1960: Kennedy Nixon
1964: Johnson Goldwater
1968: Humphrey Nixon
1972: McGovern Nixon
1976: Carter Ford
1980: Carter Reagan
1984: Mondale Reagan
1988: Dukakis Bush

135
1992: Clinton Bush

Are you more inclined to trust a fellow veteran running for office than a non-veteran? yes no

Would you characterize yourself politically as a conservative moderate liberal

Are you a member of a religious denomination? yes no

If yes, which one, and for how long have you been a member?

Compared with your parents, would you describe your standard of living much better better same poorer much poorer

Do you consider yourself upper class upper middle-class middle-class lower middle-class working class

Please list all educational experience you have, describing the highest level of schooling you achieved, any degrees you hold, and any vocational training you might have received:

Thank you for completing this survey.
VITA

Tim Ray was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on 24 August 1971. After a period of constant moving, his family settled in Royal Oak, Michigan in 1980, where Tim attended private school. He graduated cum laude from Cranbrook Kingswood Upper School in June, 1989. The following September, Tim entered Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and eventually earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history, magna cum laude, in December, 1992. He then entered the graduate program in history at the University of Tennessee, where he received a Master of Arts degree in May, 1995.

Tim's specialty is twentieth century American history and American military history.