

W.J. KRAFFT

Please state your name and age for the camera.

**Mr. Krafft:** Warren J. Krafft; age: 80 coming up on January 26.

Hard to believe. What branch of the service did you serve in?

**Mr. Krafft:** Army National Guard in peace time; active service December 1940. I got out September 10, 1945.

Wow you were in a long time. What unit did you serve in?

**Mr. Krafft:** 138<sup>th</sup> Infantry 35<sup>th</sup> Division. I was on special assignment with ammunition ships at Fort Mason, San Francisco.

Oh ok. I didn't realize that. Tell us where you did your training first.

**Mr. Krafft:** Camp Robinson, Joseph T. Robinson, Little Rock, Arkansas.

What did they train you to do?

**Mr. Krafft:** I was an anti-tank 37mm anti-tank 60/80 mm mortars, pistols, automatic browning rifle, bayonet, and close hand to hand encounter.

How long did the training last?

**Mr. Krafft:** We got down there I think it was December of 1941 and we got done training, marches and everything until war was declared.

So you can go ahead now and just tell me your story of going off to war.

**Mr. Krafft:** My first one we were at Fort Ord, California. Orders came down and Chuck Taylor says that he needed 20 men, one non-comm and one officer. They put us on the back of a truck and drove us all the way to Fort Mason. I finally asked him a few years later, "Why did you put me on that duty?" He said, "You were the youngest non-comm I had in the company." He was a good friend of mine. We got to San Francisco we hit Fort Mason and along side of Fort Mason we went down and got on a little ferry like that took us past Alcatraz and took us to Angel Island which was where immigrants used to come. We went up there and they gave us different uniforms, marched us into a two-room place with about four guys, medics. What they did was take our shirts off and they took rubber stamps and gave us four on each side of shots. I looked and I told my buddies, I said, "We are going for a boat ride someplace." They would give you the shots up here not down here. The guys would say, "Move your arms Sarge, move your arms!" Then they took us to a mess hall and this happened on Christmas Eve, they wined and dined us. They would give us cigarettes, but I didn't smoke, candy and everything and we changed our uniforms. We got ready and we went back and got on that little scooter and went back over at Fort Mason. At Fort Mason you get up to the corner you make a right and you go down to the end where the other gate is and you go down. We got down there and I told my buddies, I said, "We are going for a boat ride." We aint

been on nothing bigger than the Mississippi River. On the front we had two 37mm anti-tank guns mounted on tripods like your camera. Two forward, two aft and four air-cooled 50 calibers on flying bridge. Mind you, we were Army. The Navy has armed guards too. I think, this is my speaking, I think our country owes them armed guards and every guy that went on a ship to protect our men that we were taking over on ships, because we didn't fly them over, they were on ships for four weeks, five weeks.

Troop ships right?

**Mr. Krafft:** Troop transport, yeah.

Did they have you packed in there?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah. You would lay up on deck and get sun. I went to Honolulu first and dropped some ammunition off and we went down to New Zealand and we dropped troops off because that way another ship would take them to the battle zones on the islands. We would go back, pick up, and we would go back to the states. I would be there about three or four days and had another ship. We never got time to fool around. Sometimes we had 1500-1800 troops on it going to the battle zones. I admired them guys too. I came back with the 1<sup>st</sup> Marines; me and an Army guy, Colonel Roosevelt and General Vandergrift on the M\_\_\_\_\_; that picture that I showed you. I got a little \_\_\_\_\_. I came back with them. They said that Colonel Roosevelt was the first man off of the landing barges at Guadalcanal. Then we went up to Kiska. A lot of American people, I hate to say it, are dumb. They didn't realize that Japan had a foothold in North America. They had Attu; they had Kiska and they were ready to go up. But what they did, the big battle of Midway, this is what we were told, Japan split their naval force and sent them ships up to the Aleutian Islands. The Air Force, they lost a lot of planes flying up there; a lot of planes. I think their commander down in the South Pacific, Nimitz, or whoever it was; they got wind of that so they just kept their U.S. naval forces down there. That is the reason Japan got their cans beat. We took troops in at Attu, Massacre Bay, Holtz Bay, and Chichagof Harbor. There was an engineering company that got wiped out down there because the Japs came down off the mountains.

Okay so the engineering company's in there.....

**Mr. Krafft:** ....and they took a loss. I had that little piece of paper for you of how many troops we lost. Then they went in to Kiska, that is the guy I showed you. They never had a Jap on the island. We lost 50, I don't know exactly how many. I seen it in an article that might be in here. They lost 50 something men. Anyhow they got wounded and killed. The Canadians and Americans were shooting at one another and didn't know it. Up there the fog settles down. There was a ship sitting on the side and you weren't allowed to touch it. They were dug in. This little article right here tells you that the guys they took from the 138<sup>th</sup>, they went over to Germany and a lot of them were prisoners-of-war over there. They were up there at Coal Bay and Kiska in there too.

Okay so you would take the ship and you would just get off, you and your unit when....

**Mr. Krafft:** That was our assignment. That ship was our battle zone. I want everybody to know, we never had no escort.

It was just one lone ship?

**Mr. Krafft:** The ship was out on the ocean all by itself. We almost got hit twice. Like I told you about that one that sunk.

Did you see Japanese bombers flying over?

**Mr. Krafft:** No, submarines.

The submarines.

**Mr. Krafft:** We used to do like a crow's nest submarine watch you know. A lot of people don't know that see?

Were you on one ship that took a hit? Did you tell me that?

**Mr. Krafft:** Almost got hit.

Almost got hit by a submarine.

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah.

Were you up by the Aleutian Islands then?

**Mr. Krafft:** We was up by Auckland, New Zealand; between there and the Philippines. My sister ship was the one that got sunk down in the South Pacific.

You just happened to be off of it because...?

**Mr. Krafft:** .....Of malaria. I thank that malaria. I think our country, and my cousin was in the North Atlantic. He died here about four years ago, Vernon Krafft. His ship got sunk. He was on a raft, wounded severely. If I can get the article from St. Louis, I will get you a copy of it. They had him listed as a draft dodger. I seen the article. When he came back they took him to the hospital and everything. The judge told him, he said, "Young man you want to go back on ship or you want to go in the Army?" He went in the Army. He got captured about eight times and escaped every time. I got to tell you this about him. The Germans caught him after he was hit. The SS trooper says, "I am going to shoot you next time I catch you." My little cousin said, "You are not going to shoot me." He said, "Why not?" My cousin Vernon said, "My name is Vernon Adolph Von Krafft." You know that is high class. I asked him when I seen him, I said, "What did they do?" He said, "He looked at me and said get back in the barracks!" They had that magic word von. I never use it.

That's not part of your name now. Before Pearl Harbor you were in the National Guard?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes.

Do you remember what you were doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

**Mr. Krafft:** You want me to tell you?

Uh-huh!

**Mr. Krafft:** I was sitting in Little Rock with this date I was with, which I didn't know my wife then. It came over the radio, it said, "All military personnel report back to camp immediately!" Me and a couple of other guys went back and the other guys used to go home on weekends to St. Louis. Do you know when they came back? Monday morning. But we had to go back in that Saturday. We had to take our guns, code them, and load them on boxcars. We had to code everything. We lived in tents. You can see them in the book here. That is what we slept in. We had a little stove and that was our...

You knew then when Pearl Harbor got hit that you were going to war?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah. We had a hunch, why would they mobilize all of us and then start the draft? The draft guys came in, in February.

Ok when were you mobilized?

**Mr. Krafft:** December 1940.

You kind of knew before Pearl Harbor got hit that something was going on.

**Mr. Krafft:** When I went to school, in our history books they showed in Geography and it showed two or three Japanese and it said that they were testing the water to see if the flyers would \_\_\_\_\_. I remembered this to the day. It was a Geography book and what they were doing; they were testing the temperature of the water in the Aleutians because it could be up high and then drop down. You had to see them islands. There was a recruiting sergeant that came in the bowling alley and he told me he was from \_\_\_\_\_ Bay. I said, "Do you know where the Aleutian Islands are?" He said, "No, where is that at?" I said, "Son, let me tell you something, you better get your Geography and look those, Japan had a foothold in North America." You know how they got out of Kiska? The day before the Navy got wind that they were going to come in and take their troops off at Kiska and it was going to be verified too. They thought they seen and heard the Japs so the Navy went out and fired all of our depth charges and everything else but there were no Japs. When the Navy got done, the Japs came in the next day. They got all of them troops off of there and went over to the Creole Islands. They goofed us see. I just feel and of course I was a young kid, I feel that the younger kids were not asking for anything. We only got \$36.00 a month or \$72.00 a month. We got a \$100.00 discharge pay. We knew times were hard but I look at the ones nowadays. A kid retired the other day I said, "How much do you get?" He said, "I get about 16 or 17 hundred dollars a month." I just shook my head. He said, "What did you get?" I said, "Well I put almost nine years in and all I got was \$100.00 discharge pay." I think our country and the job that you are doing that the generation can see that it's a different war. There is an old saying; you let the horse out of the barn without locking the door. A lot of us guys could see this coming from Korea. I told them, "We are going to get stuck in Vietnam." What happened was and you could check it too, Vietnam was fighting the French. They encircled it. It was in Life magazine. I wished I would have kept it. It was in 1947. They showed Ho Chi Min and all of DeGalle or whoever he was ask us for help. DeGalle said, "You can't give him help. You are an ally of ours and we are fighting him." So you know what, open the door. I could be wrong.

When you got your training and everything, did you feel like all the equipment that you used worked well, like your rifle? There has been speculation now that the Germans had a lot better equipment.

**Mr. Krafft:** We were out on the firing range one day. Frank Simon he is up in Pennsylvania now and he was our 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant, Chuck Taylor, he died. They were standing off about 20 feet and the maintenance

guys came out with the armored B.A.R's. He hands me the B.A.R. I pick it up and he flipped the clip. I picked it up like that and it made a noise. I stood there. I said, "Oh my God." I looked over and checked and Frank said, "Put that thing down." I didn't move. I said, "You tell this ordinance guy to come over here." They took the gun and got the clip out. It had malfunctioned.

Is that the only time that happened to you?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah.

Did you do, I assume that you did, did you do any hand-to-hand combat?

**Mr. Krafft:** We worked on hand-to-hand in training.

Did you ever actually have to use it when you were on any of the islands?

**Mr. Krafft:** No. I went on patrol eight days up in New Guinea on look outs. They wouldn't even sit on the ship being a Sergeant, you know. I was firing my 37 mm gun and at that time you got a plunger. That is why my arm is broke in half. Then I broke it again.

How did you do that? How did you break your arm?

**Mr. Krafft:** The recoil on that.....

Oh ok, that big gun. How many guys did you have on patrol when you went out?

**Mr. Krafft:** We would take four; one and two behind us when we went on there. They would say, "You are not just going to sit on the ship all the time. We could use you out here."

Okay so you would go on patrol.

**Mr. Krafft:** We went with the Aussies. I got a, you can see that emblem I got on my thing in there. A New Zealand guy gave me that.

How did you like working with them?

**Mr. Krafft:** He went across a lagoon about that size and he said, "Come on Yank!" He is about 6'4". He said, "Sharks aren't going to bother you." The four guys that were with me they said, "Krafft, we are not going over there. He is crazy if he thinks we are going off in that water." They took a little cut out canoe and we stayed with him four or five days. They took us back across to the ship. They had guys that could do it. We took supplies and ammunition. We used to go down a hole and I said, "If we ever get hit, look out!" I called this guy the other day and he said, "Yeah they had got hit down there; had went out the day before us and it got sunk." Down in New Hiberties, Marshall Islands, when you go in to dock your ship they had swing gates with bombs on the bottom. The SS Coolidge, you know where it is sitting? It is sitting right out on that reef right by the thing. Some guy went out to look at it. You could see it when you go over it. I guess it is still there because they had a thing on Discovery Channel; jeeps and everything is still sitting there. If you try to move it.....

.....it will go on down.

**Mr. Krafft:** You know how we used to take our ships? We could go right up to; you go five feet off in the water, it just goes down. I used to feel sorry for a lot of them guys; they look at us and kept saying, "Hey we will go with you." I told them I said, "Buddy, we don't know whether we are going to make it back or not."

Did you see your friends get killed while you were on...?

**Mr. Krafft:** A couple of them yeah.

Did they get shot or mines?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah coming back with a couple of them, yeah. My cousin, Tom, took me down to JB Hospital one day and this guy that was over in Korea with him he said, "Jim do you want to see that guys face?" I said, "Yeah what the heck happened to him?" He had like this, like this, like that. He said, "He got hit in the head with a shell." While they were operating on Tom," his name is Tom \_\_\_\_\_ and he lives in Highridge", he said, "they just put him on a table and they operated on me. They went back about 45 minutes or an hour later and I heard them say that he was still alive." The guy is alive today.

Wow and he got hit in the head with a shell.

**Mr. Kraft:** Tom, he stepped on landmine but he made it. My grandfather was in the service, my dad was in the service, I was in, my brother was in Army Occupation, my cousin was in, my son was in Vietnam, and my great grandfather on the German side was a Sergeant in the Kizer Elite Guard.

Your great grandfather served in the Civil War.

**Mr. Krafft:** My grandpa.

Your father was in World War I, the same unit you were in, in World War II.

**Mr. Krafft:** Isn't that a coincidence? This has got German on it.

Now this was your....

**Mr. Krafft:** This was my aunt. This is her father. I don't know the year. His full name was August Wilhelm Von Krafft. He was a member of the.....

Kizer Guard. Do you know about when that would have been?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh it had to be quite a while back. Aint that something?

That is something. Tell me, when ya'll were in the islands on the ship did ya'll eat C-rations? I think that is what they were called then.

**Mr. Krafft:** We had food. We had to go by what the gully cooks cooked.

Was that pretty good?

**Mr. Krafft:** It was good for what they had to do. It kept us alive though. When we got to New Guinea on our ship there they had pork liver in a freezer. When they unloaded it they got up to the dock and it was like putting a big rock down. That liver was froze that hard.

Well was it good when you ate it?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah. My buddy, Tony, who lives on a hill in St. Louis, they were captured in Germany. He said, "I am going to tell you how I got captured." If he ever sees this he will laugh. He said, "Don Simpson and I had got lost from the company." They were going up a hill and they picked up a couple of other guys. Don Simpson works on the golf course back there and he was a recon sergeant. He said, "There are a lot of American troops down there." There was but the Germans had them all surrounded. They were POWs. Tony said, "Don't ever tell anybody that I got captured." He was a cook. He said, "A German officer told me to make some soup for the guys." Later on we ate all that. The German guy came back and said, "Where is that pork rack?" He said, "Well you told me to make soup for all the guys." He said, "I wasn't a cook no more." He was just supposed to season it.

Oh so they fired him from being a cook.

**Mr. Krafft:** They pushed him in a different company or whatever it was. I left.

Did you ever get taken POW?

**Mr. Krafft:** No.

Did you take anybody POW?

**Mr. Krafft:** No.

Did you see a lot of Japanese on the island?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes, on the island. I seen a lot of them. Some of them were hit bad. We were up at Attu that one time and a guy was coming down the hill. I was with these two guys and he was waving his rifle at the guy. He said, "Somebody better shoot him!" I had a gun but I didn't have no ammo. Up in Attu they had two cemeteries; a little foil cemetery that was for the Americans. The other one they just dug a trench with a big dozer and put the Japanese down in there. Have you ever seen that film I got on the Aleutian Islands?

I haven't seen that.

**Mr. Krafft:** The natives up there looked like the Japanese. You ought to see the treatment they got when the Japanese brought them. A lot of them had diphtheria and things like that. A lot of them died.

Were the natives friendly to you guys because they were glad to see you?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah. We went fishing to get salmon. They guy told me to tie three or four hooks and it would be back up this water thing. He didn't tell us to put gloves on. If you ever get a hold of a salmon, man I had rope burns. We would take a whole thing back to the ship.

Now that was good eating.

**Mr. Krafft:** You improvised.

The natives would help you do all of that?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah. They used to say over in the New Hiberties, it's French you know, say orangees instead of oranges.

When you were in do you remember receiving a lot of mail or did the mail come.

**Mr. Krafft:** We didn't get our mail until we came back.

Okay, so you would go to the islands and where would ya'll go back?

**Mr. Krafft:** We would sometimes be out six, seven or eight months.

Ya'll would go back to Honolulu?

**Mr. Krafft:** We would go back to San Francisco.

San Francisco, and you wouldn't get your mail until you got back there?

**Mr. Krafft:** My one buddy that was on ship with me, this is the truth, we were coming back and we were going to stop at Honolulu. He said, "My uncle, during the war, is a manager of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel." I told the guy, "No way!" So we got off that thing and we go up and all you see is white; Navy. We walked in and they looked at us. We walked up to the thing, I wished I could remember his name, and he says, "Will you tell Mr. so and so his nephew from St. Louis is here?" He came down put his arms around him and he said, "How long are you going to be here?" He said, "We are just coming back from down the island. We will be here seven days." He said, "Move them naval officers out of those quarters up there and put my nephew and his buddy in there." We had it for seven days. I told him, "I will never doubt your word again."

Now you weren't married to your wife at this time?

**Mr. Krafft:** No.

You hadn't even met her until after the war?

**Mr. Krafft:** When I got out of the service. Boy what a charm that was.

You'll have been married 56 years.

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes 56 years.

That's wonderful. Did you get promoted during the war?

**Mr. Krafft:** No, what they did and this is what teed us off. I was a Tech 4 Sergeant. The Army and this is wrong, we came back and they had all these guys that had never been out of the states. They were wearing double anchors. I said, "How did you get your stripes?" He said, "Well they have a certain quota to fill and they had to fill them."

So you weren't getting promoted but they were and they had never been.....

**Mr. Krafft:** A lot of guys will tell you from overseas it was wrong. The Army does a lot of things that are wrong.

Did you see it more in the Army than like the other branches of the service?

**Mr. Krafft:** They are probably all the same. Just like this one, I don't know what Navy ship it was, but a year or so back they got hit or something like that. The officer on the ship was an Admiral I think. I think John McCain's dad was, you know that Senator; anyway it was in the chronicle they gave this guy the Medal of Honor. Do you know where they presented that Medal of Honor to him? It was in the chronicle, in a Navy cafeteria. Now that should be presented up in the White House. The chronicle had it. They do some things. It's a different generation. I look at some of these guys and what they are making and then they got to have food stamps and they got to have this. That little guy and I, I went out and got two jobs to take care. I worked the railroad and I built these automobiles. I used to load 59 of those an hour for Chevrolet. Those are Chevrolets. I ran that monster. This is the dashboard and this is the trunk part. What I do when I sat there, I would hit these switches the thing in the line moved up and drop and come up. I ran that thing 59 an hour.

I was going to ask you, we read some books in class about souvenirs that were taken off the enemy. Do you remember any of that or did you do any?

**Mr. Krafft:** I had a flag and a gun when I came back to Jefferson Barracks.

A Japanese flag?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah, and it got lost.

Then we had heard some about taking teeth.

**Mr. Krafft:** I heard that too but I...

You never saw anybody do that?

**Mr. Krafft:** I thought, the man is dead let him rest in peace. Of course you know when you get in a tight spot you don't know. I was robbed and shot at \_\_\_\_\_ when I went in to work by two blacks. They picked the wrong guy. They didn't get anything. I lowered a boom on them. The detective calls her and says, "Your husband was shot at."

It scared her to death I bet.

**Mr. Krafft:** I was smart. That is where my Army training came in. There was one on each side of me. They had their pistols like this aimed at me. So when the other guys started coming I said, "When you guys coming to work?" So what they did, they stepped up but I stayed back so I wasn't in their line of fire. The big guy, my buddy Mike that was working, he came in out of the back gate from the park and this guy on my left went like that. When he went like that I wanted to break his neck. The little guy I punched him. They caught him. I only had \$4.00.

Were you scared?

**Mr. Krafft:** No, as God as my witness, I never was.

Were you ever scared when you were in the war?

**Mr. Krafft:** I was scared when they said we got a submarine alert. I said to myself, "Man we are setting out here, we get hit there aint nobody going to even know about us." That's scary you know. I thought, "Well if it comes, it comes."

What do you think about the enemy you were fighting the Japanese? They are kind of known for being tenacious and other things. What do you think about that?

**Mr. Krafft:** I got Japanese that are friends of mine. You can't blame, the Japanese wanted to expand but they made a mistake; they hit Pearl Harbor hitting the ships and everything.

When you were fighting with them and during the war did you kind of have a respect for them or did you feel hostile? I know you had to some.

**Mr. Krafft:** Well yeah, I figured "Hey if it going to be you or me, I hope that it is you."

But you didn't carry that hatred around?

**Mr. Krafft:** I didn't carry a grudge, no; even to this day. I looked at a lot of the different races you know and I played ball and worked with a guys and everything. I always tell my son, "If the guy is trash, don't run with him." I worked with a lot of colored fellows down at Chevrolet. I had good friends down there, even the girls. The guys used to walk by, "Hey mama!" That one gal, Rosie, walked over and she said, "Don't you ever call me your mama!" Some of them take advantage of the ones that are working. A lot of white people do it too.

Yeah I think you get all types of people of every race.

**Mr. Krafft:** One thing I never understood is why we didn't have colored troops with us. When we were in Little Rock, the first time we got down there we didn't know, but we went into town and we were walking down the street and this colored gentleman stepped off. I looked at Tucker and said, "What's this?" I said, "Mister, can I see you a minute?" "Yes sir!" I said, "Why did you step off?" He said, "Oh we got to!" In St. Louis we never had any of that. Then we go get on a bus and it had a sign. We got to the back and the bus driver says, "Soldiers can't sit back there." My buddy said, "You see this khaki uniform? We are going to sit back here." People laughed and all. It's wrong.

But you didn't serve with any black American troops?

**Mr. Krafft:** No. I don't know if you read history or not but when I was up at Pittsburg past Camp Stoneman, California, between Pittsburg and Oakland there was a naval base down there where they load ammo. Did you read about the big explosion?

No, I don't think so.

**Mr. Krafft:** They made a movie on it. I don't know how many of them got killed. Port Chicago was the name of the movie.

Okay I vaguely know what you are talking about.

**Mr. Krafft:** That is a picture you should see. But they didn't stick together, some of them went back to load. Out here now they only have a little monument. I passed the OCS test and I was going down to Oakland to get my physical. It blew the windows out of our barracks and everything. It blew two ships. They didn't give those guys gloves. They didn't do anything. You have to see the picture. The Navy was wrong. Them officers they had was wrong.

Yeah, you got some bad eggs didn't you?

**Mr. Krafft:** Well it took a lot of lives. It could have been avoided.

You went to take the OCS test but what happened?

**Mr. Krafft:** When I passed it, two college guys, because when I passed it the question they ask you on the written test some of them don't even have an answer to it. So what are you going to do? You are going to stand there with each one and go down to the next one. These guys were trying to figure out answers, not me. We got done and it took, there were three big bird officers in there, and Father Dewier from St. Louis was the commanding chaplain. He was in our outfit. We go in and we sat there and he said, "Whatever they ask you in that room, don't come out here and repeat." They walked in there and the guy was in there two minutes or so and walked out. Another guy went in and walked out. He said, "Okay Sergeant." So I walk in. I held that salute like that. I held it and said, "So what's up? If you three birds think I am going to drop this arm before you return my salute, you got another guess coming." I held that salute for about eight or nine minutes. They said, "Okay Sergeant, we got one, I see you are Infantry?" I said, "Yes sir!" We got a question to ask you. "If you had a company of men and you came to the edge of a cliff, what command would you give them?" I said, "Fall out!" They looked like this and said, "Okay you are dismissed!" I held my salute that time for about 10 minutes. I went up to see Father Dewier and he said, "Well you passed." So went up to headquarters in Pittsburg and I said, "Where do I go and where will I be stationed in the states?" This was in 1945. The point system came out in May of 1945. He said, "You will probably go back over." That is when they were planning the invasion of Leyte in the Philippines. That General he was up in the Aleutians, they one that got killed. He messed up. He said, "You will probably go back overseas again." I went down and took the physical but they disqualified me due to that malaria and broke arms.

What year did you get the malaria?

**Mr. Krafft:** I had malaria two or three times.

Oh gosh. Now the first time you got it, when was that?

**Mr. Krafft:** 1942.

Do you feel like you got good medical treatment?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah. The only thing is they gave you was quinine. I'll tell you what happened, in 1941 we were on maneuvers and we came back in late. We took a break and this guy said, "Don't move Krafft!" I moved my arm and I got bit by a tarantula. I was in the hospital a good 34 or 35 days. My arm went up, you got a gland here and they kept it in a plastic box with heat on it all the time. They couldn't

cut it because they didn't know where. The nurses would come in squeeze and pull my fingers and the doctors would come in and push on my shoulder. Finally they said, "Well we better notify his parents." I can remember that day very distinctly. They came up and took that box off the two nurses' were here and the doctor got up here by this gland and that thing went \_\_\_\_\_. You should have seen the junk that came out of that arm. I see these guys fooling with spiders and I just shake my head, not for me buddy. It was funny because I was sitting in town that Saturday, I got bit that Friday. I was with my girlfriend and all of a sudden I got hot and passed out.

Yeah that is bad stuff.

**Mr. Krafft:** I didn't even get the pictures of my company. I was in the hospital. They had the big picture.

Now when you get the malaria did they just put you back on the ship?

**Mr. Krafft:** I had it so bad that I started losing my hair. When I got back I went into Letterman General Hospital. They kept me nine days. I lost about 55 pounds. There was a girl in a port surgeon's office, her name was Vicky M. Davis, she was an Olympic diver or swimmer and she said, "Is that you Sergeant Krafft?" I said, "That is me, what is left of me."

Yeah, you were skinny to start with it's not like you could afford to lose 55 pounds.

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh it was hard when I saw my hair.

You had it like three times; was it just reoccurring from the first time?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah. When we got married, it came back on me.

That was in 1945?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah, when we got married. I never doubted the Army for it. I figure I got good health, I aint worrying about it. My broken arm and all that, I don't worry about that.

Does it hurt you, your arm?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh if I take it and straighten it out, I got to watch it. I still got a lump there.

How long were you out for your arm? They said it I assume.

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh about three months. Then I broke it when I got out of the service.

How did you do that?

**Mr. Krafft:** I was playing soccer. I went out to hit a ball like that and my arm cracked again. The Sunday I broke it I came home and she says, "I thought you would be crying?" She said, "Well \_\_\_\_\_." I said, "I got tickets to the hockey game." We went to the hockey game didn't we hun?

**Mrs. Krafft:** What are you talking about?

**Mr. Krafft:** The night I broke my arm.

**Mrs. Krafft:** Yeah?

**Mr. Krafft:** Where did we go?

**Mrs. Krafft:** Hockey game.

Do you remember when President Roosevelt died? Where you were?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah.

How did you hear about that?

**Mr. Krafft:** Let me think. I remember when Kennedy got killed.

That would have been when Roosevelt died and then Truman took over.

**Mr. Krafft:** I don't remember where we were. I can't remember that part. He was a good man I thought.

So you approved of the way he handled everything?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes. It's a guy sits under you. Like you hear what they did last week, all politicians, they pass that big pay raise at midnight. The guy came on Channel 17 last night and he said, "This is wrong." I will tell you one guy I don't like is two in Bush's Administration, is Chaney and Ashcroft. Ashcroft's from Missouri. I feel this way, you got some poor soul that is dying, are you going to just let him lay there and lay there and lay there? But you take this guy that killed somebody and you give him the death sentence. You walk him in there and you tie him up on a table and run that stuff so he can die peacefully.

Yeah they say that is not painful at all.

**Mr. Krafft:** There was an article in yesterday's paper, this poor lady, Oregon's got it,

Oh yeah where they will let you, if you; yeah I think so too because in Europe they do that. If you are of sound mind....

**Mr. Krafft:** All they want is the money. I just don't believe it.

When President Truman took over and he decided to drop the bomb on Japan, what did you think about that then?

**Mr. Krafft:** He was going to end that war right then and there.

You were glad?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah.

Everybody was weren't they?

**Mr. Krafft:** Darn right. Just like now they are dropping one of them smart bombs to keep the guys out of the tunnels. You got to drop it before they get it. I think he did the right thing. Of course being from Missouri you know.

Yeah that's right he is from Missouri. My brother in law was the Attorney General of Missouri a few years ago. \_\_\_\_\_ Anderson, he died. He was in the Marines.

Aw, well I am sorry about that. You already told me that before Pearl Harbor, you kind of knew something was going to go on.

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah we had a feeling by the training we were going through.

Did everybody, it kind of seems like now that here in the United States everybody was kind of innocent. That we didn't really realize what the Nazi's and the Japanese were up to. Do you think that was true?

**Mr. Krafft:** No, I think people had an inkling. Why would you mobilize your Army and National Guard? It was supposed to have been for one year. I said, "What are they going to do after one year?" Somebody knew something was up. Of course in Germany, you could see that coming. Anybody that didn't was foolish. Just like this guy, Bin Laden, he is not very bright in one way because why would you take the two buildings that control the finances of practically the whole world? If you are going to do anything take one that doesn't have anything. But he took it and destroyed the Trade Center. That, to me, if I were doing it, I wouldn't have done that; and then take that many innocent lives.

Some people are just evil.

**Mr. Krafft:** Did you see where that guy was on that airplane?

I watched Good Morning America this morning and they were talking about those people. Did you see it? That was really good. They said they had a lot of passengers on there and they said it was kind of like everybody knew what they were supposed to do. Nobody panicked.

**Mr. Krafft:** They got him.

That is what I had told my husband. It used to be they used to tell you that if you got hijacked, just do what they tell you to do. I said, "Those days are over!" You are in bad shape now if you try to hijack a plane.

**Mr. Krafft:** He can only get one guy or two if he was going to shoot anybody.

Yeah, you have all those passengers and they are ready because they think they are going to die anyway. They are taking you down. They had the French reporter that was on there. Did you see him? He said it was like something out of a John Wayne movie.

**Mr. Krafft:** I got one weapon in my drawer in there. It's my combat knife.

Did you have that during the war?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah, it was issued to us.

You kept that.

**Mr. Krafft:** Have you ever seen one? I'm going to get it. I keep it. Anybody that comes in my house better be ready.

Well I hope no one does.

**Mr. Krafft:** A guy down at the rat pack.....

Oh uh-huh; I know him. He owns a house down on our neighborhood.

**Mr. Krafft:** He said, "You got one?" That thing is worth \$600.00; 1918. It's all original. The knuckle comes off.

Did you carry this during the war?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes. There are a lot of people that think that you take it like this but you don't.

You would be a lot more mobile if you carried it like that. So you carried that and a gun?

**Mr. Krafft:** This unscrews and the blade will come out.

I'm just going to ask you a few more questions and you feel free to tell anything you want to tell about the war or after or before it that you feel is important. A lot of the guys that we interview remember it as kind of like the best time of their life. I mean I don't say best but they have a lot of really good memories and the friends they made. Do you feel that way?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah. Where is my book at? I got to show you, this is the reason why I feel this way. We were all good athletes from St. Louis.

You still are.

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah, thank goodness.

I think it's great you played professional soccer.

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah, my whole family. This is a book that has got history in it. Right here it tells you that the men...

...had been very active in many phases of recreation and won 18 straight games in softball for various companies and played a prominent part. This is when you were getting your training over in Arkansas at Camp Robinson.

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes. Here are some pictures of them. This guy was from Wisconsin. Here is that guy I was telling you about that got captured by the Germans. Some of these guys had passed away. This guy lives in Colorado Springs. He was wounded in service. This guy had a band in St. Louis. Look how they dressed that day. Paul Page, he died here about four years ago. This is my buddy. He lives in Missouri.

After you got to California and on the ships, did ya'll get to have any kind of activity or sports when you were doing that?

**Mr. Krafft:** No.

What did ya'll do?

**Mr. Krafft:** All military work. We had to keep our equipment updated and keep our guns covered and make sure that they didn't get anything on them. Salt water will ruin them. Once you come out you can't get off that ship. The Lieutenant, what we did, we were going to be there for three days and we would get ready to go. He had emergency leave so he gives us all a 48 hour pass. We get on that little thing and go by Alcatraz and we get picked up in San Francisco. "Hey Sergeant, let me see your passes. Where did you get these?" I said, "We got a 48 hour pass. Our Lieutenant got emergency leave." "They are not signed." You know what, that is why I got two days on my thing. They took us back and locked us up on Angel Island. The Lieutenant got back and came over and said, "Where is my gun crew?" The officer down there said, "They didn't have a legally signed pass." He said, "Show me that." He said, "Release them; we got to get that ship going." They released us. But you know what; they didn't take it off of our records. I told the Lieutenant there, "You better get things straight."

When ya'll were on the ship did ya'll play cards or anything like that on your own time?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah, the merchant marines are big card players.

Did you play like poker and stuff like that?

**Mr. Krafft:** Pea knuckle; they would take four decks of pea knuckle. That is what this guy was telling me the other night. One guy this G.I. got beat up. I said, "Yeah, he was in a card game with the merchant marines." The next morning we got near San Francisco and I looked at the Captain and I said, "I have got a problem down here and I want to know what we are going to do about it." When we got close enough to San Francisco he had the FBI waiting at the dock. They picked these four guys up in the card game. Then there were two colored fellows that got in a fight. A lot of people don't know this. This one guy bit the guy and that is a federal offense. A mouth bite can carry more germs. They locked this guy up. I don't know what they ever did to him but they locked him up. When we went in to Kiska we were really surprised. Guys were getting shot and we had no enemy there. The fog sets down so one guy fires and all of a sudden firing everywhere. It was in the paper.

But it wasn't the Japanese though?

**Mr. Krafft:** No, it wasn't the Japanese. They were Canadians and them. It was in the chronicle last week.

1943 Battle of the Aleutian Islands of Kiska, 35,000 U.S. and Canadian soldiers fought for 24 hours only to find after the heavy fog lifted that they had been shooting at each other. 28 were killed and 50 wounded.

**Mr. Krafft:** Friendly fire.

That happens a lot doesn't it?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes it does. I told guys that and they said, "No I don't believe that." Well there it is.

Is there anything else you want to tell me?

**Mr. Krafft:** I sure enjoyed this. I think this is a good thing. A lot of us have our own stories, nothing gruesome or anything. We can save gruesome things for some things. I was lucky that I came down with malaria when my ship was.....

Oh yeah tell them about the ship. You got malaria and wasn't on it. They call it the USS Powell.

**Mr. Krafft:** The SS.

Oh the SS and you had been on it.

**Mr. Krafft:** This was taken the 5<sup>th</sup> of April.

So you were on it from March 5<sup>th</sup>.....

**Mr. Krafft:** That was our pass after that.

Okay and then you got malaria and they got you off the ship.

**Mr. Krafft:** Way down in the South Pacific and then it got sunk. You know I showed you in the paper. It got sunk the next .....

Were there any survivors?

**Mr. Krafft:** They never did find none. The \_\_\_\_\_, we tried to go where they were but they wouldn't meet us. Like I say, I think that the country should have known what these guys put their life; like in the North Atlantic. That is what this letter I got from that guy was.

Oh ok. Armed guard World War II; merchants.

**Mr. Krafft:** People say, "Oh what did them guys do in World War II?" He said, "They ought to realize we were the guys that took the troops over and everything else." We didn't ask for anything. Nobody knew when we left and nobody knew when we came back, except when they seen us in town. Then I go to Fort Mason and they said, "The ship is leaving in four or five days." I never got seasick.

You never did?

**Mr. Krafft:** They told me to eat crackers.

They have little things now they can put on you but you never got seasick? That is good. You got your sea legs quick.

**Mr. Krafft:** The guys used to say....

It did get rough out there in that cold water.

**Mr. Krafft:** I was coming off the flying bridge one night from gun watch and I had that raincoat on. The things they got on the sides of the ships where they tied ropes on and at that time the decks were like this. My foot gave way and that thing went right up my \_\_\_\_\_. It was the only thing that kept me from going overboard.

That would have been a bad thing. Do you remember anybody going overboard?

**Mr. Krafft:** No. We had a submarine alert on that one there. I had ate a green apple that night. I had my bunk right by the engine room. I don't know why but I will never do it again. They sounded the alarm, I rolled out of that bunk and got down on that deck and couldn't move. Cramping from that green apple. I said to myself, "Oh God, I am going to die here!" I think the young kids ought to know what us guys did. We were kids.

Yeah you were just young, just babies.

**Mr. Krafft:** One thing about it, they watched a lot of them too. If you had a police record, you didn't get in. You didn't get in the service if you had a police record.

Would you do it again?

**Mr. Krafft:** Oh yeah, if my country wanted me right now. I may be nuts but....

No, that is wonderful.

**Mr. Krafft:** This is where I come from.

There are no regrets. You would do it all over again.

**Mr. Krafft:** It was good. I had my three policies made out. I had two of them made out to my grandma and I had one out to my mom. If anything happened to me, well we had about \$5,000 apiece that was on it.

I know what I wanted to ask you. I know you had a brother. Did you have any other siblings?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah, my brother Ross was in the Army for a short time.

During the war?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah. He was down at Camp Wallers. My brother Jim, after I got out of the service, he was at that stage he was wild you know. My sister got into a... and I walked in and put them down and I said, "I am going to tell you something. You make up your mind. You are not going to bum on these streets with them gangs. You got your choice; Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard." He looked at me and said, "Will you go down with me?" I said, "Yeah! But I don't want you to be a bum." You know what, he joined the Navy and he retired in 20 years. My step-day, my dad, he said, "You had no right to do that." Before my dad died he said, "That was a good thing you did with Jim." My brother lives in California. Him and I, we look alike. He's got his own business and he tells everybody, "That is who I owe everything to." I said, "No, I just seen where you were headed and it aint going to happen."

Good for you.

**Mr. Krafft:** I love my brother. He was on a 1<sup>st</sup> missile destroyer; USS Brown. I could just see him when I came back out of service. When we got married we had to have a ration stamp for gas.

This was right after the war?

**Mr. Krafft:** Yes.

So they were still rationing everything at that point.

**Mr. Krafft:** In 1946 my dad got us a ham. We rented a hall for \$5.00 and we had a beautiful wedding.

Do you remember how long the rationing lasted after the war ended?

**Mr. Krafft:** About after a year.

Oh ok so about after a year.

**Mr. Krafft:** Yeah, things were tight and jobs were tight you know.

Is there anything else you want to tell me before I shut off this interview?

**Mr. Krafft:** I think you are doing a good job.

I had a good interviewee.

**Mr. Krafft:** A lot of guys will tell you some stuff but they got nothing to show you.

I know. Some of them don't.

(End of Tape)