

Can you tell me your name?

Mr. Christensen: Benjamin Franklin Christensen.

Your birthday?

Mr. Christensen: October 30, 1915.

Where were you born?

Mr. Christensen: Iowa

What were your parent's names?

Mr. Christensen: John and Elsie Christensen.

What did your father do?

Mr. Christensen: He was a farmer.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Christensen: Nine of them.

When did you join the service?

Mr. Christensen: September of 1942.

So you were how old?

Mr. Christensen: 25.

What branch of the service?

Mr. Christensen: Army, in the medics.

Do you remember where you went to training?

Mr. Christensen: I went to New Guinea and I ended up in California, San Francisco, and ended up in New Guinea 30 days later.

(Mrs. Christensen?: That wasn't the first place he went though. He went several places in the states.)

Like where?

Mrs. Christensen: Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; and one in New Orleans.

Mr. Christensen: There was a hospital being built. I worked at a hospital ship for five months. We went out to the front lines, picked up the wounded patients that were wounded from the war, and put them on the hospital ship and brought them back to the hospital that was behind the lines.

What kind of things did you do? What did you do?

Mr. Christensen: Well what do you do to sick people?

Mrs. Christensen: He just worked in the hospital where people were sick. You worked on a medical ward didn't you?

Mr. Christensen: I worked on a medical ward.

In New Guinea?

Mrs. Christensen: I think so? Where else were you besides New Guinea?

Mr. Christensen: From New Guinea we went to the Philippines. From the Philippines we went to Sydney, Australia, to pick up some nurses to work at our hospital over there. When we went through the Coral Sea, it was so rough the hospital was picking up water and everybody was so seasick. We were so seasick until we got through the Coral Sea and then we were ok. I was seasick too.

Mrs. Christensen: Tell her your snake story about the snake that was in your sleeping bag.

Mr. Christensen: I woke up one morning and there was a snake in bed with me; sleeping by my feet. He was probably eight feet long. He didn't hurt me or anything.

Mrs. Christensen: That was when he was in New Guinea.

Mr. Christensen: But I got him out of there.

Where did you go after Australia?

Mr. Christensen: I went back to the hospital at New Guinea and then we went to Manila, in the Philippines.

Mrs. Christensen: Didn't you go to Tokyo too? When did you go to Tokyo?

Mr. Christensen: After we had been to the Philippines, we went to Tokyo, Japan. The war was still on. We got to Tokyo, Japan. When I got to Tokyo, Japan, the war ended and I got to come back here to the United States. I was so happy. The names of all the patients that were coming back to the United States and my name was not on there. So I said, "How come my name is not on there?" He double-checked and he said, "Oh there it is, I just mischecked it, get on that truck so you can get back to the United States." There were 10,000 people on that ship.

Did you get sick on that ship?

Mr. Christensen: No. I didn't get sick.

Mrs. Christensen: He was too happy to be sick.

Mr. Christensen: We got two meals a day, breakfast and supper.

When did you two meet? When and where did you guys meet?

Mr. Christensen: Were we ever so glad to be back in the United States. We got back to Seattle, Washington, and they gave 50 people a pass to call home and tell them we were back in the United States. I called my wife at 3 o'clock in the morning.

How long had you been married, at that point?

Mrs. Christensen: When he went in?

Yes.

Mrs. Christensen: A little less than a year.

Mr. Christensen: The operator got it all mixed up.

So I bet that was a good phone call.

Mrs. Christensen: Yes.

Mr. Christensen: I called her back and told her she must have got it mixed up, so I gave her the telephone number for my wife back in Hutchinson and I got a hold of her right away. She was so glad to know I was back in the United States and that I was ok.

Did you get a lot of letters? Did he write a lot?

Mrs. Christensen: Yes, we wrote everyday; back and forth.

Is there anything else that you want to add?

Mrs. Christensen: Did you want to tell her about anything else that happened?

Mr. Christensen: I was discharged on January 6, 1946.

Mrs. Christensen: ...and then you got to see your son for the first time.

Mr. Christensen: I got to see my 2-year old son for the first time. He was of course afraid. He said, "I have never seen that man before." His grandma was holding him. Finally, he came over to me and I got to hug my oldest boy for the very first time. Oh what a joy that was. He was 2-years old. We were good friends ever since. I want you to look behind that door.

(End of tape)