

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
Floyd Pridemore
Seaman 2nd Class, Navy "Seabees," World War II

2005

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Pridemore, Floyd W. (1913-2009), Oral History Interview, 2005

User copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 55 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master copy, 1 sound cassette (ca. 55 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Abstract:

Floyd W. Pridemore, a Mountain Home, Arkansas resident, discusses his service with the 96th Navy Seabees in the Azores and the Philippines during World War II. Pridemore was born in Northfield (Minnesota) and grew up in Stillwater (Minnesota). He mentions his family moved often between Milwaukee and Beloit (Wisconsin), settling in Milwaukee during his eighth grade year. In 1933, Pridemore graduated from North Division High School in Milwaukee. He talks about finding work in the Depression; in the summers he shined shoes and worked on his uncle's farm in Springer (Wisconsin). After high school, Pridemore reveals he left home with a backpack and hitched railcars up north, hoping to find work at a lumberyard. Pridemore tells of detours to the Chicago World's Fair and his aunt's house in St. Paul (Minnesota) before he finally arrived in Glidden (Wisconsin) and was hired by a logging company. Pridemore explains he worked there for a few years before moving back to Milwaukee to become an apprentice plumber. Pridemore recalls the bombing of Pearl Harbor and making a deal with Navy recruiters to defer enlistment until he finished his plumbing apprenticeship. In 1942, Pridemore enlisted in the Navy. He covers his induction at Great Lakes Naval Base (Illinois), his basic training at Camp Perry (Virginia), and his advance training in Biloxi (Mississippi) with the 96th Navy Seabees. In late 1943, Pridemore shipped out on a Liberty Troop ship from New Jersey to the Azores Islands. He explains the Navy Seabees built metal airstrips and pontoon bridges as a staging ground for the D-Day Invasion. He comments his commanding officer was reassigned to Europe for the Invasion of Normandy, but the rest of the Seabees remained on the islands. During this time, Pridemore mentions he was promoted to Seaman 2nd Class for fixing a water system problem. He also states that, while on the Azores, he "got the nerve" to marry his girlfriend of six years. After a year overseas, Pridemore returned to Milwaukee on a thirty day furlough and got married. Next, he explains he was sent to Camp Hueneme in Ventura, California, for additional training and his next assignment. He describes taking a freight carrier ship to the Philippines in 1945, a trip that took forty-two days. Pridemore comments he never got seasick because he ate quality food from the Merchant Marines aboard the ship. He explains the Seabees built airfields and roads on Manicani Island (Philippines) in 140 degree heat. Pridemore reveals the 96th Seabees were scheduled to invade Japan in Summer 1945, but then the atomic bomb was dropped. He was discharged on points in October 1945, returning to the States on an aircraft carrier. After the war, Pridemore returned to Joseph Whitting Plumbing in Milwaukee as a journeyman plumber, but he states he quit because his bosses asked him to do tasks below his skill level. He soon passed his master plumber exam and had a long career in the Milwaukee area as a plumber. Pridemore

states he expected to see more combat during the war, but points out that building airstrips in the Azores was crucial to staging the D-Day Invasion. He was a member of the VFW and American Legion and attended reunions of the 96th Seabees, but he never used the G.I. Bill or took veterans loans because “I wanted to do it all myself.”

Biographical Sketch

Pridemore (1913-2009) was born in Northfield and grew up in Stillwater (Minnesota). As a teenager, his family moved often between Beloit and Milwaukee (Wisconsin). After graduating from North Division High School in Milwaukee in 1933, Pridemore rode boxcars for a few months between Chicago, St. Paul, and northern Wisconsin, eventually getting a job as a logger in Glidden (Wisconsin). In 1940, he returned to Milwaukee to begin a plumbing apprenticeship. He deferred the draft for a few months to finish his apprenticeship, then enlisted in the Navy in 1942. Pridemore served with the 96th Navy Seabees in the Azores in 1944 during the D-Day Invasion and in the Philippines in 1945. He married his girlfriend of six years while home on furlough. After the war, Pridemore became a master plumber, working for several companies and clients in the Milwaukee area. He was a life member of the VFW and American Legion and participated in several reunions of the 96th Seabees. After retiring, Pridemore moved to Arkansas.

Interviewed by Russell Horton, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2005.
Transcribed by John K. Driscoll, Wisconsin Veterans Museum Volunteer, 2005.
Transcript edited and abstract written by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2010

Interview Transcript:

Russell: This interview is being conducted at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison, Wisconsin, on September 28, 2005. The interviewer is Russell Horton. Mr. Pridemore, could you tell me a little bit more about your background, before you entered the military service? Like where you were born, when you were born? Things like that?

Floyd: Yeah. My birthday was 10-6-13. I was born in Northfield, Minnesota. I can't tell you what the year is, but we wound up in Stillwater, Minnesota, which is where I actually spent my childhood, you know. I went to school there. And I was growing up there, of course. And then, want to know anything that happened at Stillwater?

Russell: Yeah.

Floyd: Well, I can give you a little bit. I'm not going to give you much.

Russell: Sure. Sure.

Floyd: Well, at that time I was about ten years old, ten years old, and I was in the eighth grade, of course. And some friends of mine talked me into working in a shoe shining parlor, just to make a few nickels, you know. And which, of course, I did. And I worked there, oh, probably not more than a year, if it was that long. And making \$4.75 a week. Then my mother got word from my dad. He had, I'm not sure if he was in Madison or if that was Beloit. Beloit, see. And she got the word to pack up the kids and come to Milwaukee. Okay. So we packed up and got on the train there in Stillwater and went to Milwaukee. Okay. We hadn't any more than arrived in Milwaukee and I had an uncle living on a farm in Singer. And he took me out to the farm and then I guess I spent, probably, that summer there. I guess that would be about it. And of course, I got to do some of the chores, the cows, milking the cows and feeding them, and all that kind of stuff. And then I went to, came in to Milwaukee, well, when I got back home that summer, we were going to move to Beloit. Which we did, of course. We moved to Beloit, then. We didn't spend more than about ten or twelve months, hardly a year, out of the year, in Beloit, you know. And then he got another job in Milwaukee, my dad did. And we were going to pack up again, and move to Milwaukee.

Russell: So you traveled a lot when you were young.

Floyd: Yeah. So, anyhow, living in Milwaukee, and I got into the eighth grade there on Tenor Street. I can't tell you what the other street was. 8th and Tenor, 9th and Tenor? I can't remember. 8th and Tenor, I think it was. And the grade school was on one side of the street and the high school was on the other. On the other side

was the high school of North Division, and of course, I graduated from there out of the eighth grade, and just went right across the street and continued my education there at North Division.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: I played a little football there.

Russell: What did you do after you graduated from high school? Did you stay around Milwaukee?

Floyd: No. As soon as I got out of high school, I had my pack already set up. I had a backpack set up, with an oil cloth wrapped around to keep my clothes from getting wet. I told my mother, "I'm heading out." And so I left about nine, ten o'clock that night and I walked, not all the way but quite a lot of the way, and hitchhiked the rest of the way to Rockfield. Yeah, Rockfield. And Rockfield, that was almost where the train left the junction, where the trains would pull in and out, you know. And so anyway, I convinced a friend of mine to go with me. First of all, I should say, see I was at this friend's house when he had people come in from northern Wisconsin. Actually from Glidden, Wisconsin. And they had, that was the Strothlawn Brothers Lumber Company, these people that, they were the younger guy and his dad. His dad and his brother ran the lumber business, and so, he had mentioned at that time that, come on up north in the logging woods, and he'd give me a job driving a team of horses. Well, I thought I could drive a team of horses. I kind of had it in my mind that I had agreed to it, so I told that friend of mine, that was the younger brother, see there was three boys in that family where I was staying. And the second one, I couldn't convince him to go with me. And he headed up towards Glidden, with the idea of going all the way to St. Paul. I had an aunt living there and I figured I could talk to her and pay a visit to her while I'm up there.

Russell: Sure.

Floyd: So, anyway, from then, we didn't get to my aunt's place. We got sidetracked somehow and got off to another place, and got kicked off a couple times. And the dicks at that time were pretty well covered. They were, you know, out to get. See, at that time, there was robbery going on, and they had to be very careful. So then I talked them into, at that time, it was 1933. When I graduated, and that was the same year I must have gone up north. So we talked about going to Chicago, the Chicago World's Fair. It was in 1933. So we jumped on another train, I forget whether it was a freight train. And headed for Chicago. Well, we got to Matevilla (?), that was the outskirts of Chicago. And got kicked off again. And so the cops talked pretty rough. We better get out of the area, you know. Whatever. So, my

friend was getting fed up with this kind of stuff. So we had agreed we'd go back. We didn't go that far to the World's Fair. So we got back, and I got rid of him, and I decided to take off myself, so I took my whatever I had in my bundle, and jumped on the first freight there in Lisbon Junction, and headed north. And that is when I got up to Park Falls. It was a kind of a freight yard. And I got into the freight yard okay. And I got off, and headed up the first street. And that first street was, that was Minneapolis, not St. Paul. I did go to St. Paul. But I went to Minneapolis first. And when I got off there I walked over to the roadway and started walking up the sidewalk, and I didn't notice an open station. Evidently a gas station of some sort. And I was going to go in there and wash up because I looked like a black person, you know. So, anyway, I went in there and washed up. And I saw this cop go by, but he never bothered me. So I came out of there, and I kept walking, and I walked all the way from Minneapolis to St. Paul.

Russell: Wow.

Floyd: And got to my aunt's house. I questioned different people, because I knew what the address was, and I got to my aunt's house, and I stayed there for a couple days. And then I left, when I left, I went down to the yards. And the yards superintendent, or whatever you want to call him, I told him I was heading north. I was looking for a chance to get up to the logging camps. So he put me in an empty boxcar, and closed the door, so it was cold. Okay. So I took off from there, and got up to Glidden. And, of course, part of the company, there was a lumber yard there, and a sawmill there. And it just so happened, this was, I guess it was a day in the middle of the week, about Thursday. Anyway, I went up to the yard, and they were stacking lumber. And I asked if I could get a job. I wanted a job. Okay. So then they asked one of the guys there, where is so-and-so? Well, there was an old guy that worked there, and he lived in a little shack right there. Oh, he said, Joe, one day a week he does washing and ironing and bed making, and all the works. And this was the day that he done it, and there wasn't going to be any work. So he asked me, oh, boy, sure, I was ready to go. So they hired me right on the spot, and I remember, when I went up to the, see, there were two houses there where the saw mill was. And they had the saw mill a little further down. And when I went up to the house to have dinner, and I must have eaten like a starved person, because I was hungry, I can tell you. So I stayed at this one particular house, and that was where the sons, one of the sons, lived, and he was kind of like a transient, or something. And so, I stayed there for, well, I stayed there for almost two years. And I remember I went back home a couple of times. One time, for sure. I took a freight back. Found a home-bound. At that time I lived on, after I got out of school, I lived with my dad. He was building a little house, and that is where my mother and my dad and I lived. I lived in that house before I went in the service.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: So, anyway, I went back there and I had no more than and then you had a bus service going from there into Milwaukee. And I had no car at that time. So I rode the bus. And so I came home one night from work and the neighbors were telling me they were looking for me. Looking for me, for what? Something to do with the service. So, when I got home, my mother said, the Shore Patrol was out here looking for you, but they got talking, and you know how women are, and they get talking about things, and they came from West Bend. "Oh," my mother says, "I got an uncle lives there, my brother lives there," and all of this and that. What kind of a change is that in attitude? So, I was to be down at the recruiting office at nine o'clock, or ten, the next day.

Russell: Now, when about was this?

Floyd: That was in 1942.

Russell: Okay, so after Pearl Harbor? Pearl Harbor was December, '41.

Floyd: Yeah, '41. Right after Pearl Harbor.

Russell: Okay, do you remember what you were doing when Pearl Harbor happened?

Floyd: What I was doing?

Russell: Yeah.

Floyd: Well, I was an apprentice plumber.

Russell: In Milwaukee?

Floyd: Yeah, in Milwaukee.

Russell: How did it, how did you react to Pearl Harbor? What did you think when you heard about it?

Floyd: Well, I thought it was a dirty deal and I was raring and ready to go when they called me. So, meanwhile, I got a couple of deferments.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: I was mainly interested in could I finish my time, my apprenticeship, you know? And then I had met up with the president of the apprenticeship board, and I told

him, "Now I'll tell you what, if you'll let me get by, give me another deferment, one more time, when that is in, I am going to enlist." So they did, and I enlisted.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: I enlisted in the Sea Bees. And of course, then, I got sent to Great Lakes, and that is where we scheduled out, and they shipped us to Camp Perry, Virginia. That is where you went.

Russell: Okay. So you enlisted in 1942?

Floyd: It was in 1942.

Russell: And, when you got sent to Great Lakes, did you receive any training there, or did they just sort of gather you up and send you off to Camp Perry?

Floyd: Ah, Camp Perry. No, we got training, to the extent of going on guard and patrolling the area, and things like that.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: And then, of course, at Camp Perry, I think they went to Biloxi, Mississippi.

Russell: Now, wait, where is Camp Perry?

Floyd: Camp Perry is in Virginia.

Russell: Okay. Then you went to Biloxi?

Floyd: I went to Biloxi and got some advanced training.

Russell: In which area?

Floyd: Biloxi?

Russell: What sort of training?

Floyd: Well, they called it advanced training. That is what they called it, you know. And then we go and ride the train back. Well, at that time, we rode all passenger cars. Reserved strictly for us. I know the trip to Biloxi was in a car and we made another trip to the West Coast. Okay, so we got some advanced training in Biloxi. And we had to spend more time in, we came back to Camp Perry. And we shipped out of there again, and we headed for Camp Hueneme [also called Port Hueneme]

in California. That is where the Marines and a lot of them ship out from. Because we were supposed to be actually, as they tell me, to line up to join a Marine outfit. Anyhow, we got to Camp Hueneme and we got some more training there. That followed the advanced training, I guess. I don't know. We even got involved in this, see, they used pontoons for bridges and that stuff, when they come to a body of water, well, they don't just put up a temporary, they use those floating pontoons, but ones, five and six feet square. And so, after we, I forget how much time we spent there, probably six months, I don't know. And then we shipped out. We were going to ship out, well, we didn't know for sure where we were going, but everybody guessed at it.

Russell: What year, about, was it when you shipped out from Camp Hueneme?

Floyd: I'd have to say we spent about a year there.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: And then we shipped out in '43.

Russell: Okay. And what was your rank at this time in the Sea Bees?

Floyd: Well, I started out as a third class. I don't know if they ever put that on here, or not. And then we took forty-two days, after we shipped out, to get to the Philippines. I don't know what island we were going to be on. We were going to be on an island.

Russell: What kind of ship did you go over on?

Floyd: I was on a Liberty Ship. A troop ship, that's all it was. A Liberty troop ship, that's what they called it.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: And, so, we get over there.

Russell: To the Philippines?

Floyd: To the Philippines, and now, we built some roads. I wasn't involved in the road work. We had bulldozers with us, and all that kind of thing.

Russell: This was kind of after the battle had taken place?

Floyd: Well, there was no Japs on it when we got there.

Russell: So it must have been cleared.

Floyd: It must have been cleaned out by the time we got there. And then...

Russell: What were you doing in the Philippines?

Floyd: We built a field, an air field, with metal racks, like a big rack made out of steel, and you laid that on the ground. And when a plane would come in and line up for a landing, they would have that thing to land their wheels on. Well, they was talking. When they invaded Germany and France.

Russell: On D-Day?

Floyd: Yeah, well, our commander took off, and didn't take us with him.

Russell: Did he stay in the Philippines?

Floyd: We stayed in the Philippines, yeah. Well, I understood later that we were going to line up with a Marine outfit and for whenever they were going to send in troops to the island, or to Japan, that is when we would be involved. In that. But, in the meantime, they dropped the A-bomb.

Russell: This would be 1945.

Floyd: Well, see, '43, when I went in, and '44, '45, I had to make, we made two crossings, from one coast to the other, while I was in the advanced camp.

Russell: Of the United States.

Floyd: Right.

Russell: You went from Virginia to California?

Floyd: Yeah, and back again. And back again, and back the next time. Well, that second time is when we shipped out.

Russell: So, you shipped out maybe in '44 or '45?

Floyd: Not in '44. Not in '45. It was '43.

Russell: You enlisted in '42?

Floyd: Yeah.

Russell: And you spent maybe a year or so in training?

Floyd: Yeah.

Russell: So you shipped out in '43?

Floyd: I think it was the later part of '43, if I am not mistaken.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: The later part of '43 or early part of '44.

Russell: So you spent a while in the Philippines?

Floyd: Yeah. I was two and a half years in the service, complete, you know. Wait a minute, I'm getting ahead of myself. Well, we shipped out once before that, and went to the Azores. That's where we were taught how to build these pontoons, and they make bridges out of them, and they float. And went through the Azores first.

Russell: From California to the Azores?

Floyd: No, we shipped out of New Jersey. That's right. I am getting ahead of myself. We shipped out of New Jersey and across the Atlantic to get to the Azores. Well, we were there about a year there, and getting in preparation for the landing, for making the invasion. That is why we were taught how to make a field out of metal to make it easy for a plane without getting stuck in the mud. See. Because it rained an awful lot. It rained the day I got there and almost to the day I left. Sitting out there with your equipment and water. So then, yeah, we were there about a year, a year and a half.

Russell: The Azores?

Floyd: We were there, of course, when they invaded. We were there at that particular time.

Russell: You were still in the Azores?

Floyd: We were still in the Azores.

Russell: You didn't take part in the invasion?

Floyd: No. The planes came over and landed in our stuff that we had built, the war planes. We didn't actually get involved in it as far as the landing or anything. We weren't trained for that. But the commander, that is where he wound up. I don't know how he got into it. But he went, and he didn't take us with him. But then, from there, we shipped home.

Russell: If you don't mind, we'll stop here and I'll flip the tape, and then we can start up again.

Floyd: Okay.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

Russell: Okay, this is still Tape 1, Side B, of the interview with Floyd Pridemore. Mr. Pridemore, we were just talking about you got shipped back to the States from the Azores after the D-Day invasion.

Floyd: We got a thirty day leave.

Russell: You got back to the States, you got a thirty-day leave.

Floyd: And then they shipped us to California, that's right.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: And, then six months in Fort Hueneme. And this is about the extent of my memory. And then they loaded us up on a freight carrier,

Russell: Okay. Did you receive any sort of different training, this time when you were in California? For the Japanese theater? Or was it still sort of the bridges and airfields?

Floyd: No, we had our, most of our training before we got there. So we didn't know what our set-up was going to be when we got there. I know we were going to ship out to go into a warm climate, that is how they kind of talked us into it. And so after a while, I, they were loading us up and heading for the Philippines. So why they said that, I don't know. So we got up on a freighter, I guess you might call it. They converted a lot of those into regular carriers during the war. And we was on that boat. Don't ask me the name of it. I just can't remember. I tried to remember it. I just couldn't get it.

Russell: That's fine.

- Floyd: We was on it forty-two days, I do remember that.
- Russell: Okay. Did you get seasick at all?
- Floyd: No, I never got sick. Well, I learned from the very beginning that if you want to keep from getting sick, you got to eat.
- Russell: Really?
- Floyd: Yes, sir. And, of course, what are you going to eat? So, what I did, I got to be able to pick out a crew. Like, in our case, we had a crew of six or seven people, you know. And put them to work, whether it is scraping paint, or whatever it is on board ship. And after that, down here. So I found out where the chow line was. And I got in on the chow line, and every day, every day, most every day, I got in on that line. I had me a berth. I had me a breakfast, and a lunch, I tell you that. And they put butter on the table, a whole pound or a gallon of milk, or whatever. But those guys ate good. That was merchant marines, they were. And they ate good. So, I remember, when we got to the Islands, why, I felt good. I wasn't complaining about anything. So after we landed...
- Russell: At the Philippines?
- Floyd: In the Philippines. Yeah. We were landing on the island. The island was called Manicani. The name of the island.
- Russell: Okay.
- Floyd: But, on the island, it was awful hot there. Always hot. And, of course, they put us unloading a freighter. I got it. At least, in our company, there was a dozen of us. But like I say, it was hot. And I couldn't get enough water to drink. They had an ice machine there that I used to take advantage of, you know, and I got by with that. And, but anyway, after, well, we got kind of used to that. At 140 degrees, of course, that was something that I, all I can do is say that is what I was told. How hot is it? How hot is it? 140. And boy, you are just sweating like a pig. But then we spent the other six months on this island, and at the Roads. The Roads, there. And I guess we had a couple fields we had to build. But, most, oh, that is where we built those pontoon deals. We built them there. So, in case of a landing, we set up one.
- Russell: Did you encounter any enemy troops or anything?
- Floyd: What?

- Russell: Did you run across any enemy troops?
- Floyd: No, no. But what the plan was, just prior to them dropping the A-bomb, I guess they had to have some kind of reserve and we were scheduled to go in on Japanese soil. They tell me. I didn't talk to any generals, or anything else. But what happened, they dropped the A-bomb and, of course, everything changed. You know. And I got, and that is when I got, see, if you are in long enough, you accumulate points. And when you are accumulating so many points, then you get sent home. And that is what happened to me. I got home in '45. In October of '45.
- Russell: Okay. Did you come back to California?
- Floyd: We came back on the carrier. And I can't think of the name of that one.
- Russell: That's all right.
- Floyd: I don't know why I didn't write that stuff down. But we came back on the carrier, we came back, and a lot of this time we were over there. But that was a good ride. They had the landing area aboard ship where the planes would park and they took off. And I don't know how many times they took off and head some place to do some bombing. But other than that, we weren't involved in it. Except we were there just to make sure everything, the landing was okay, and everything else. And, so, like I say, that's about it. I guess. I didn't do anything else. Still, I try to have, but so many guys have passed away now. Some of the old guys that I, in my platoon, in my platoon there, I don't believe there are any of them. I talked to them at the reunions. And they couldn't tell me much at all.
- Russell: So, you got back to California from the Philippines, and were you discharged right there?
- Floyd: No, we had to go to Great Lakes.
- Russell: You went to Great Lakes and were discharged there.
- Floyd: Yeah.
- Russell: How did you feel once the war was done?
- Floyd: Well, I felt pretty good, I'll tell you that. I didn't celebrate like a lot of them did when they got to Milwaukee. Of course, when I got to Milwaukee, I mean, that was something else again. But, I know, my wife, I was married at that time, you know. Matter of fact, I was married on my thirty day leave from the Azores.

Russell: Oh, really?

Floyd: And, so, she was working at Harneschfeger and she came home, and there I was. She was pretty happy about it all.

Russell: Had you known your wife before you joined the military?

Floyd: Oh, yeah, we went together about six years.

Russell: Okay. And then you came home and you got married after all.

Floyd: Yeah, we talked about it, and finally, I had decided. I had decided overseas to get married. I had a friend of mine that had decided the same thing. And both of us, and he lived in Illinois, and, of course, I was in Wisconsin, you know. And I just didn't have the nerve before that. And I was thinking about it, I thought, maybe that is the best thing I can do. And, of course, I wasn't getting that much pay. Oh, then, I did get a promotion. That's right. I got a promotion.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: From third class to second class.

Russell: Was this after the A-burst?

Floyd: No. It was right on the A-burst. On the Azores.

Russell: To seaman second class.

Floyd: I went in as a third class, and when I got over there, I did something that they, the commanding officer thought was quite something.

Russell: Okay. What was that?

Floyd: Well, it was just hooking up something. I forget it. There was a water system. That was back-to-back. You got a fixture here and a fixture here, and they're back-to-back. And then I was laying water to them, and he thought whatever I had done, I don't remember myself. But...

Russell: But you got a promotion out of it?

Floyd: Yeah, I got a promotion out of it. That's all.

Russell: Was it to seaman second class? What was your actual rank? Seaman second class?

Floyd: Seaman. Yes.

Russell: Okay. So, once you got back to Milwaukee, after you were discharged, what did you do?

Floyd: The first thing I did I went down to where I had worked, where I had served my apprenticeship. And they took me back. But I didn't like it there any more. And I was getting to the point where I wanted to do something different. I didn't want to stay there, and they had the one son. The company I worked for was Joseph Whitting. They were on North Water Street.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: And, I forget, I wasn't there very long. I know I did something, the guy that did, there was two brothers. And they had their nephew. And he wanted me to do something. What the heck was it. And I thought, now I'm a journeyman plumber. I took the exam about that same time. The journeyman exam. And I made it. And that is when I went back to the old shop. And this guy telling me what I should do. Like I should go and unload the truck. And I said, I ain't going to unload that truck for nobody. That's how I was at that time. I was, I just didn't like that idea. Because there was another plumber there at that time that had just come in from a job and it didn't mean nothing to him. So, I figured, what the devil? So, I don't say that is what caused it, but it didn't help, I know that.

Russell: Sure.

Floyd: So I left there. And went to work for another contractor. Just a small contractor. Housing and repair work, and that. And then I decided to go, I took the master's exam for plumber. Master plumber. And I got that. And, oh, boy, I thought I was on top of the hill. I was really something. Right where we lived, we lived on 33rd and Lisbon. And I remember I had my truck. Did I have a truck then? I think so. But I kept a car down in this big parking lot, right there on the street. And I went in there and I went down there to get the car out, and they had a station wagon right in the middle of the whole lot.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: So I walk in there one door, and there is another door on the other side. And I walked in here, he walked in on the other side, and we yelled, "Hi," and so and so. And he had me mixed up with somebody else. But I didn't have him mixed up. I knew exactly who he was. And so, anyway, he said, "You're just the guy I need.

You know. I need a plumber. I'm going to build a store." Which he did. He built a store there on Platonina and Capital Drive. And so I put the plumbing all in for him. And then, of course, he told me, of course, here is what he told me. He says, "If you come and do my jobs, I'll promise you you'll never be without work." And that was true. I never had to ask for a job. I got more calls. And so forth. I was real grateful. It was good for me. And then, so...

Russell: Did you ever use any veterans benefits, like the GI Bill? Or anything like that?

Floyd: No.

Russell: Any disability?

Floyd: No. No. To tell you the truth, I wanted to do it all myself.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: I wanted to add to what I had. It was just like, I am missing a little bit here. Oh, let me see. I can't get the connection. I went back to the old boss. Oh, yeah, and then I got a mob at this small contractor. And this is when it happened. I went out to the same friend, that lived out there in the country, and while I was there, they had another friend that happened to be there. And we got talking. And he said he was going to go and ask for a raise. And he was working for a plumbing, well, they did everything. Plumbing, electrical, pump work, in Jackson, Wisconsin. And I said, well, gee, I'd like to go with you. And he said, well, you can have my job because I'm going to quit. So, good. And we went up there and we talked, and back to the boss's house. And this friend of mine got his raise. No, there was two guys involved. I got the one, the guy that went in there got the raise. He was looking for a raise. I didn't do that. I didn't go with him. He quit, so I got his job. And then we were working, we were working on our chicken place there, out on Capital Drive. I'd say about, roughly, 133rd, maybe 140th Street. I don't know. But anyhow, it was a big chicken thing, never got off the ground. And I got to work there. How did I get into that? Oh, that's when I met this guy in the station. That's how all that happened. And he was the one said I'd never be without a job.

Russell: Okay.

Floyd: Well, anyway, I did that. And I did this plumbing job. And of course, I kept going. I did a job here, I been all over. I been working in Shorewood, I worked in Milwaukee, of course. I worked out at the, well, I can't remember all these subdivisions.

Russell: That's all right. You mentioned that you...

Floyd: Cudahay. Another one. I did some work there. A little later on, I got pretty good training.

Russell: You mentioned that you still kept in touch with the veteran's organizations? Do you have reunions?

Floyd: You mean the one I was in?

Russell: Yes. Were you in a veterans organization? Did you join the VFW? The American Legion?

Floyd: Oh, yeah, I still belong to both of them. I've got my membership card in my pocket. Well, I got in my other one.

Russell: That's okay. How about other units? Like just from your unit, or the Sea Bees?

Floyd: I went to a reunion, but, like I said, there is nobody there. All gone.

Russell: Okay, but did you start going right away? When did the reunions begin.

Floyd: Well, not the first time, no. But after a couple of times, and then I talked to my wife about going, if she would be interested. And finally we got to the closest one we could get to. From Arkansas, it was in Louisiana.

Russell: Louisiana?

Floyd: I think it was in Louisiana. The first one we went to. And I kept asking about all these different fellows that I was in the outfit with.

Russell: A reunion of the Sea Bees?

Floyd: Yeah.

Russell: Of your unit, the 96th?

Floyd: Here's the thing about this, the 96th. That is how it started out.

Russell: Okay, your unit, then.

Floyd: And then in the process, it broke up. These other outfits broke up, and they joined the 96th to make it so we could still keep our company. And now when we get a notice that says anybody that was ever connected with the 96th is welcome to

come. But that, there are so many other outfits. Oh, you know. I can't remember some of the names from somewhere.

Russell: That's okay.

Floyd: I don't think it makes that much difference. They were not the original ones. I was. I was with the original Sea Bees. Then, like I said, it broke up. After the war.

Russell: So, looking back, how do you feel about your war experience?

Floyd: How do I feel about it?

Russell: Yeah. How it affected your life. Positive? Negative? Indifferent?

Floyd: Well, I often thought we'd see some action. That was my thought. I really thought that I should get in there and do my share. We had one guy from Texas, a big guy from Texas. And he wasn't satisfied, so he quit. And joined a Marine outfit. But I didn't really think that far. I didn't, I couldn't figure that. To go to all that trouble. But this is true. I often wondered why we don't get involved in it. I expected it. Of course, over in the Azores, that was something. The closest we got to it. But, like I say, what we contributed to it, we built these air fields these planes landed on. That wasn't anything.

Russell: That was still important.

Floyd: So they could make their bombing runs. They got no place to go. It's too far to go to England. And they couldn't, of course, land over there. Because of the enemy.

Russell: Right. Right.

Floyd: So, yeah.

Russell: Was there anything else that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to mention about your military service? That you can think of?

Floyd: Well, off hand, I can't think of anything here.

Russell: Okay. Well, thanks for coming in for this interview.

Floyd: Well, I am glad to do it. I mean, my boy is the one that talked me into it.

Russell: Sure.

Floyd: Of course, I don't live here, so I didn't know anything about it.

[End of Interview]