

Reply from David Abbott, Denver, CO.

Dear Skip,

Truly interesting letters. The comments on hygiene and related products are not part of the commonly told stories.

My dad was night blind and wasn't drafted until late, and then had to be led around at night by his Sargent until the discharge papers came through. He worked at the Denver Ordnance Plant, which became the Denver Federal Center after the war. His brother, my uncle, was also night blind but he had an aircraft mechanic's license and so received a commission as an aircraft maintenance officer. You have to have light to repair planes. The best known Colorado unit was the 10th Mountain Division ski troops composed of National Ski Patrol men and Dartmouth skiers. After the war, the 10th Mountain vets established the US ski industry.

David

David;

I was taught how to ski by the dad of a friend whose father had been in the 10th Mountain Division!

Skip

Reply from Mike Mackenzie, New Orleans, LA

Mr. Hobbs: Quite some memories!

My father was in the Pacific theatre. At one point, he was on a medical ship off of Iwo Jima - treating the wounded when they came back. He suffered a small shrapnel wound when he got ashore on Iwo.

Between the two of us, our families won the war...east and west!

Em Mackenzie

Reply from Robert Merrill, Houston, TX

Skip,

Thanks for sharing. Heart-warming and entertaining. The letters tell a lot about the situation in mid-1944. I am going to share this with my sons. -- Bob

Bob;

I believe I remember you telling me that your dad was a meteorologist in the Army - in South America ??

Skip

Skip,

He was in Peru and Chile. He also had some trips to BA where he commented about the number of Germans and once ran across some Germans in the jungle. I have little detail, however. –

Bob

Reply from Susan Eaton, Calgary, Alberta

Thank you, Skip, for sharing these lovely letters!

My father, David Eaton, was 15 years old in 1943. And, he was eager to join the war effort. But, he was simply too young to join the armed forces... With his parents' permission, my father joined the Merchant Marine Navy. He sailed in the convoys from Halifax to England and England to Murmansk—working on many American- and Canadian-flagged vessels—to deliver supplies to Europe. My father was fished out of the North Atlantic, on a several occasions, after his vessels were hit by torpedoes.

On June 6, 1944, some 14,000 Canadians landed at Juno Beach to join the more than 150,000 Allied troops to fight at the five beaches of Normandy that day. Canadians stormed from the sea with the British on their left and right, attacking Sword Beach and Gold Beach, and the Americans attacking Omaha Beach and Utah Beach.

Warm regards,

Susan

Reply from Mary Van Der Loop, Flatonia, TX

Skip,

What wonderful letters from your father about D Day! I printed them for Bill to read; just this morning we were watching the D Day ceremonies and thinking about my Dad who would have been somewhere between Monte Cassino and Rome at that time. As you know he passed away January 28th 2019 at the age of 96. We miss him very much. As I am sure you miss your father also. Thank you and your family for his service.

I am attaching a copy of my abstract and paper that I presented at AAPG in San Antonio in May on Paleo-Overpressure in the Delaware Basin.

Please keep in touch. Thanks again, Mary

Mary Van Der Loop

Reply from Mark Hughes, Henderson, KY

All,

I would share also in the remembrances today of those who went forward in many capacities into Normandy and other landings. My dad (from NE Pa.) was in the 29th Division, communications section while my Mom was raised in the Durham area of England. They met in London (where I was born in 1945) while Mother worked in the Admiralty and though, of course Mom talked a bit more about the war and London, Dad rarely did speak of his landing in the 3rd Wave going in.

Today was a special touching of my heart as to all that went on then though my parents have now been gone for many years.

Skip, thanks for voicing your experience and family history as to WW II.

Best wishes to you all!

Mark Hughes

Reply from Betsy Suppes, Johnstown, PA

Skip-

Thank you for sending these wonderful letters. I am thinking about sending your dad's letters to Conrad and Sam's American history teachers - they are real snippets of that time.

As for my father, I do not have D-day cred, but I would like to share two photos. My father, under FDR's podium was an appropriations clerk in the U.S. Capitol and this is a photograph from the "Day of Infamy" speech. He was 21 years old. He passed away in 2011.

The other photo is the "gung-ho" photo when the Marines took Mt. Surabachi. My dad's brother, Bob Strachan is circled in red. At Iwo Jima, my uncle was wounded, received a purple heart. He passed away in 2006.

Betsy





Reply from David Bodecott, Penrith, United Kingdom

Many thanks Skip,

I will read with interest. I have my own father's diaries and photo album. This strikes a chord with me because my father some of the time was based at a US air base in Cambridgeshire, fitting British radios, etc. to American planes so that everyone had comms. One "limey" with 500 yanks! He loved that part of it.

Sadly the remainder of the war that he saw in East Africa, Egypt and India upset him greatly, partly because he got a telegram one day (after being away 18 months) saying "your wife has died" (not my mother). He tried to forget the war after that, and I never got his genuine leather and lambswool flying jacket - he burned it.

I have read Anthony Beevor's book on D-day. The allied, Canadian and American sacrifice was huge - 50,000 killed in the first three days I think Beevor states. We are fortunate our Monarch forms a living link with those times, it will be sad when that ends.

Regardless of your view of Your President or divisions in society, his visit to pay his respects was well received this week by the vast majority of the Brits. I think he should be treated equally to past Presidents. History will judge.

I believe the Second World War was the greatest influence on our generation's lives. The current younger generations should pay due respect for their good fortune.

David

Reply from Nick Fedorko, Morgantown, WV

Skip,

You have certainly opened up a wellspring of memories and emotions from everyone, including me.

Your parents' letters are extraordinary, not only because of the on-site observations by your father of the historical events, but also because of the juxtaposition with discussions of the life and love they had together. The letters also make me mourn the loss of letter writing to future generations in this context-less world of tweets we live in.

I have to add my own family story, of course. My Dad was one of 13 children. He ended up in the 480th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, landed on Omaha Beach in early July, 1944 and spent the war with gun crew mates defending airfields in France, Belgium, and Netherlands. I'm not sure if he ever made it to Germany. His oldest brother, John spent the war stateside as a camp cook. Chuck, another older brother, was an MP in the ETA, and a younger brother, Frank was in a communications outfit with Patton's 3rd Army. Dad always told the story of how the three of them met at his camp somewhere in Europe for a joyful reunion when the war ended. I'd be remiss to exclude older brother Mike who served stateside in a mission critical defense factory. And, I can't forget their father who toiled as a coal miner for 40 years in Western PA, not retiring until after the war. To extend the family story a bit more, a cook in Dad's outfit named Joe walked into his tent one day, saw a picture of his younger sister Helen and asked if he could write her a letter. He became one of two Uncle Joes!

On my Mom's side, my other Uncle Joe, future husband to Mom's sister Kay, started in North Africa, hit Italy at Anzio Beach and fought up the peninsula in a combat unit. Last but not least, my Mother's half-brother, Uncle Sam (really) landed on D-Day with an Engineering Battalion. He was an old guy at 26 or 28 years old. He recalled picking up and tossing young GIs on shore that were understandably paralyzed with fear by the violence being hurled at them.

Every one of these men, all gone now, were the product of parents that fled poverty and the lack of opportunity in Eastern Europe and emigrated to the US in the early 20th century. I think they made a contribution.

Thinking back, I am amazed at all the people that aided in this great effort that touched my life. They were teachers, coaches, neighbors, mentors and bosses (My first geologic boss served as a naval officer in the Pacific), and work associates. Their mark on us is indelible.

Thanks for the opportunity to share these memories.

Nick

Comment from Skip

Nick (and other Ammonites);

Thank you for sharing your family WW II story with us. We are the post-war "Baby Boomer" generation. I was born in January 1947, about a year after my dad returned from Europe. The "Greatest Generation" went through the Depression and war, and taught us work hard, be thrifty, "clean your plate", "turn out the lights", and work in the garden for a 25 cents/week allowance. The Millennials and now "Generation Z" are not being raised with the work ethic of our parents. I am grateful that my dad, the son of a minister, who eventually became a prominent Wall Street Banker, always made me and my siblings work at home and have summer jobs, and never gave us cash that was unearned. My wife Breeze's dad was the same - grew up in a Maine paper mill town, scholarship to Harvard where he entered the Navy officer program, and at age 21 was the executive officer on a tank landing ship that was enroute to the Pacific Theater when the war ended. Breeze mowed the lawn at her family's house. We made our sons do their homework before watching TV, not play video games during the week, each have house jobs, and work at our farm. They have turned out just fine.

One of the lines in my father's letters that I really like is the comment to the effect that it's not the college football star who is the hero in battle, but the ordinary "Joe", and this gave him hope for the future of America.

Comment from Betsy Suppes

Skip-

It's interesting that when you send out "News from the Field" about oil and gas-trying to get the Ammonites to write in, it is usually only one or two folks who respond. Your letters on D-Day has unleashed a torrent of emotion and multiple writers weighing in—must admit, that the contributions of our fathers are pretty incredible.

I hope that the rest send in their stories, these are really a treasure.

Betsy

Response from Lynn Pittinger, Amissville, VA.

Skip,

My mother grew up on a wheat farm in NW Kansas in the dust bowl/depression era, nursed her brother through a bad farming accident, and caught a train to Denver to get her nursing degree. She soon found herself working in a hospital on the island of Saipan in the Pacific while they were still clearing out some of the caves. She had dinner with the crew of the Enola Gay before they flew to Tinian.

Every one's story shared has been very moving. - Lynn

Reply from Francois Auzeais, Westport, CT (who grew up in France)

Skip,

As for war stories, my family never spoke of it. My father was 14 on D-Day and the only thing he told me was that he had been kicked out of his house in Normandy by the German who wanted to live in it. He was forced to move to the country farms. He had a relative who went to concentration/labor camp and survived it, but no stories came back with him. My grandfather was in the resistance and only the history books mentioned him, but not a word from him either. And now they are all dead. I suspect it must have been horrible times for them to erase it from their lives.

Best regards,
Francois

Response from Bruce Genereaux, Norwich, VT

Dear Fellow Ammonites,

Well, this reading has brought emotions and memories.

My age is such that my dad was in occupation Germany post war, but his dad, was a DuPont chemical engineer who designed and operated the Hanford uranium to plutonium plant for Oppenheimer.

Needless to say there are plenty of stories of the secrecy and importance of his role in the Manhattan project. I remain proud of all who served, and share Skip's point about serving without question.

Bruce G.

Response from Mabs Holland for Read Holland, Tuscaloosa, AL

Dear Skip

Read is no longer able to read emails due to advanced macular degeneration, so I read them to him. I have read with much interest your father's letters to your mother from England.

I was born at the end of the Depression and grew up (in England) during the War. I was one of the kids who asked the Yanks for gum. The older girls received nylons!! Two of my brothers were in the Royal Signals and served in Africa, Italy and one in Palestine in 1947. My father was gassed and shell shocked during World War 1, but still re-enlisted for World War II. Because he spoke German, he was one of the officers who guarded Rudolf Hess, and played cards with him, when he was imprisoned in Wales. I actually saw Hess sitting the back of a car when my mother and I visited my father.

Your father's letters brought back so many memories and I thank you very much for sharing them.

With best regards

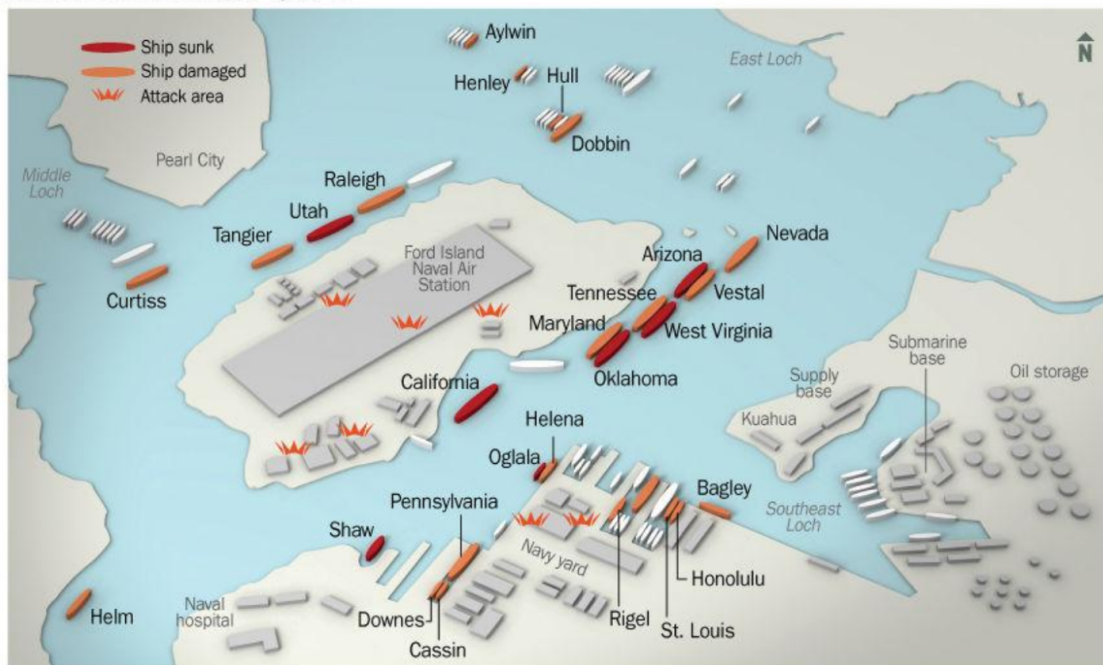
Mabs

Response from Kevin Hill, Shreveport, LA

To Skip

My father was on the Battleship Nevada at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 - a day that will live in infamy. He was the 3rd in command as Communications Officer of the ship. On that day, he was number 2 as the captain was at church. The Nevada was the lead ship in the mooring. My father got the battle stations call and ran to the bridge with his guys. A zero came in over the top of them, and when my dad turned around to see his crew, there was no one left. He called for full engines, drop the lines and get underway. The stern line was not released so he had them reverse, and he climbed down the line and released it. He then climbed back up the line to stay on the ship. They ran the ship aground so it would not sink. My dad got to watch the Arizona take the hits down the smoke stacks and sink. He, and his sidearm saw some very gruesome scenes that day.

PEARL HARBOR Dec. 7, 1941



After that he ran troop ship convoys between the NE and England. They never lost a ship with troops or supplies. He said they did a great job of grouping the convoy and taking on the U-boats. Once in England, it was “last one back to the US is a rotten egg” with no protection.

My dad, Lt. Woodroe P. Hill was on many different ships – Cruisers, destroyers, aircraft carriers, etc. - during his 20 years in the Navy. Two were sunk by U-boats.

As communications officer, my dad worked on breaking code and seemed to be a master of it. He could type 20 words a minute using just two fingers! He was instrumental in German code breaking while in the Mediterranean.

My father was the Admiral’s attaché for the Pacific Fleet at the end of the war with Japan. He did not care to be on the ship where the signing took place.

He spent 10 more years in the Navy after that, and retired to New Orleans in 1957. The reason: “I was mothballing ships after the war, and we took the cruiser New Orleans (CA-32) through New Orleans.

It happened to be Mardi Gras. What a party. I decided that I could live there. There would be parties, good food and lots of fishing.”

Kevin B. Hill



Note: Mr. Hill passed away in 2015 at age 92.

Reply from Mike Canich, State College, PA.

Skip,

I can't tell you much because my father never talked much about the war and there are no letters. From my Ancestry.com research, I found that my father enlisted in February of 1941 and was discharged in December of 1945. The early part of his service was in the United States and the later part was in Europe. The only thing he told me, was the holocaust was real, because he was part of a liberation force at one of the concentration camps. Beyond that, I have no details.

My uncle's also served in Europe, but I have no details for them either.

I am very proud of all of them for being part of the "Greatest Generation".

Thank you for sharing your letters and the other's responses.

Mike

Dear Mike;

Thank you. It is amazing how the violence of the war made such an impact on the young men who fought in it. My dad would tell stories about the lighter side of things, like how he would get fresh eggs from Morocco on supply planes coming back empty from the North African front. When my brother and I asked him about combat/bombing operations, he said " Son, civilized people do not enjoy killing each other, I hope that it is something you and your brother never have to do". And that was the end of the discussion.

Regards,

Skip

Reply from Dan Billman, Houston, PA

Skip:

I agree that the response from folks has been interesting, emotional and heart-warming. Unfortunately (or fortunately ... not sure which) I really don't have anything to add. As I am not a "Baby-Boomer", but a "Generation X'er", my parents were way too young and grand-parents, I think, just a bit too old. So, I don't have any good war stories to pass on.

Talk later, - Dan

Response from Travis Hudson, Sitka, Alaska

Hi Skip... my father died when I was about 4 or 5 of brain cancer. He was a vet though and left me two very valuable things. Being the sole surviving son of a deceased veteran meant that I was undraftable during the Viet Nam war. I found this out after getting drafted actually. I also received his veterans benefits which paid about \$100 per month while in school... a really big help in those days. I have very few memories of him.

My step father was also a vet ... of the Pacific theater where he had a rough time and wound up with health issues as well. In and out of VA hospitals and died at age 52 of a heart attack. So ... that's about it for me when it comes to my family and WWII. Thanks for sharing so much though. Very interesting and good to remember.

Travis

PS.... had a friend who parachuted in on D Day ... great guy.

Response from Tom O'Connor, Cairo, Egypt

Skip,

My father was too old for the draft when the war started; he was working for Sears as a middle manager in Chicago and teaching business at Northwestern University. Sears volunteered a half dozen of their managers, amongst whom was my father, for service with the Federal Government in Washington DC, so we moved there in early 1942, shortly before my brother was born.

Chicago is back about as far as I can remember, but I do remember a lot about growing up in NE Washington, as it was being built out. You might recall that before the war broke out, DC was a small country village sort of town. Almost overnight it sprouted up into a respectable city out of which the war was being managed on two fronts.

My father was in OPA, which meant Office of Price something - had to do with ration books and price fixing and seeing that there was no price scalping. In going through some old papers a year or so ago, I ran across some of the ration books.

My father had three younger sisters, all of whom married guys in the service, two of which were met in DC and I, being the oldest kid in the family, got invited to all (well probably not all) the courting parties, most of which were held in my parents' house. The only newly minted uncle that actually saw action was my uncle Wray, who used to be a blacksmith and was the biggest man I had ever seen. He worked with the SeaBees in the South Pacific, building forward airstrips for use by the B-17 bombers. They would be taking off, fully loaded, all four engines at full throttle, while Wray and his guys were laying out the end of the strip. At the end of the war he had a 75% loss of hearing and was deaf the last 4-5 years of his life. The other two had Washington tours of duty; my oldest Uncle, John worked with MacArthur, I think in strategic planning. He was a lawyer, worked with JFK during the election, delivered Michigan for him and became the Undersecretary of the Interior, under Stewart Udall. Super interesting guy with some incredible stories to tell, but he never talked much about the war.

Not nearly as dramatic as your stories or some of the others, but that's the way it was.

Tom