

A Veterans Oral History
Heritage Education Commission
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Moorhead, MN

Lloyd Sunde
Narrator

Linda Jenson
Interviewer

June 2005

LJ: Do you want to state your name?

LS: Lloyd Sunde.

LJ: Where were you born?

LS: At Felton, Minnesota.

LJ: And what year were you born?

LS: 1920.

LJ: And who were your parents?

LS: John and Leah Sunde.

LJ: And what did they do?

LS: They were farmers.

LJ: How many children in your family?

LS: Two.

LJ: Did you have a sister or a brother?

LS: One sister, she lives in California at the present time.

LJ: And where did you go to high school?

LS: Felton.

LJ: Did you graduate?

LS: Yes.

LJ: In what year?

LS: '37.

LJ: Did you go on to college?

LS: **Yes.**

LJ: Where did you go?

LS: **Concordia.**

LJ: And did you graduate from college?

LS: **Yes.**

LJ: In what year?

LS: **'41.**

LJ: What was your major in college?

LS: **Economics.**

LJ: Were you drafted into the war?

LS: **No.**

LJ: You just decided to go?

LS: **Yes.**

LJ: In what branch of the service did you serve?

LS: **Navy.**

LJ: Where did you go for your training?

LS: **Well I started out at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, from there down to Virginia, and from there aboard ship on which I served 18 months.**

LJ: What did you learn during your training?

LS: **Well I learned some more in engineering.**

LJ: Okay.

LS: **What little I had come off the farm and it didn't amount to too much, but I went to a few engineering schools and gradually picked up more.**

LJ: Did you serve overseas?

LS: **Yes.**

LJ: Where did they send you overseas after your training?

LS: **Well I went aboard ship in Norfolk.**

LJ: Okay.

LS: **And this was a pretty good-sized vessel and I was one of about 500 people.**

LJ: So there were 500 of you on the ship?

LS: Yes and we could haul about 3,000 troops.

LJ: It was that big?

LS: Yes.

LJ: How long did it take you to get to your first port?

LS: Eleven days ... we left New York for Scotland.

LJ: Did you get off the ship there then or...?

LS: No, we were permanent quarters.

LJ: On the ship?

LS: At least for the time being.

LJ: I see.

LS: It turned out later that I had served 18 months continuous.

LJ: From start to finish ... 18 months?

LS: And then I became an engineering officer and I was going to be an assistant engineer aboard this big vessel, which scared the heck out of me because that was a big job.

LJ: So what did you do as an engineer on the ship?

LS: Stood watches.

LJ: Anything else?

LS: Made landings.

LJ: Did you serve in a war zone?

LS: Yes, we sure did World War II or excuse me –

LJ: Normandy?

LS: Normandy, yes.

LJ: Was that the first place?

LS: That was the first combat we'd seen. And then we went from there to southern France and did the same thing over again. Only there was no opposition there to amount to anything, because they had captured a bunch of southern France troops, so there were Hungarians, Bulgarians, a mixture of those peoples. And they didn't want to fight. They just sat in the shade and watched us march in.

LJ: They didn't seem too concerned, huh?

LS: No they weren't going to fight Hitler's war for him for anything.

LJ: Where did you go from southern France?

LS: **Back to the States ... which was really a welcomed deal, although we had only been overseas maybe six-eight months.**

LJ: How long did you get to stay back in the States?

LS: **Well we landed there in November and we left again. Let's see, would be about February that we set sail for Hawaii and later on we reached the Philippines. We were just a few short hundreds of miles from completing the circle of the**

LJ: Of the earth?

LS: **Of the earth, yes, right.**

LJ: Oh, that's a lot of miles.

LS: **Yes.**

LJ: Any particular story that comes to mind when you think back on those three campaigns: Normandy, southern France, and Okinawa? Any special memories come to mind?

LS: **Well I guess so. I got to hit the beaches at Normandy and my little boat had to make two trips. Somebody had to do it, I guess, and we brought back a bunch of wounded soldiers and how we didn't get shot, I'll never know, because the bullets were flying thick and thin. And I was lucky enough to get to go back there on the 50th Anniversary of D-Day.**

LJ: Really?

LS: **Yes, Concordia had a program with a town by the name of Falaise. And they had a language relationship for several years, so that was part of the deal, too, that we associate with those people and learn more about them and stuff.**

LJ: What was that like, going back for the 50th Anniversary?

LS: **Well, you see, we didn't stay on shore very long. We got out of there faster than you can imagine. So I didn't get the relationship at that time, but we made up for it, I think, when we came back after 50 years.**

LJ: Well that's nice.

LS: **We were treated as heroes and, oh goodness, it was just something else. They had about 100 people waiting for us at Falaise when we drove in from Paris.**

LJ: Were there a lot of buddies that you met or went over with for that celebration?

LS: **No, because we didn't have a chance to fraternize at all with the local population. We hit the beach and backed off and got the heck out of there. So that subsequent waves coming in wouldn't be clogging up, but the beach was clogged up. We went in and unloaded our boatload of about 100 and – I'm sorry, I just can't recall what I want to recall here.**

LJ: It'll come back. That's okay. Did you go back over to the 50th Anniversary of D-Day with any of your naval buddies?

LS: No, I didn't.

LJ: You didn't?

LS: A friend of mine from Wahpeton, he and I went through flight training together. I thought maybe he'd go but his wife had surgery about that time, so that put the kibosh on that. Then Concordia comes through with an offer I couldn't refuse.

LJ: Your alma mater, really terrific.

LS: Yes.

LJ: How long were you there for the celebration?

LS: About 10 days -- incidentally, my wife and I have set up a scholarship for the people from Falaise coming to our . . .

LJ: To Concordia?

LS: Yes.

LJ: That's terrific.

LS: Yes, we were glad to do it.

LJ: Any memories come to mind about southern France or Okinawa?

LS: Okinawa comes to mind because I was down in the engine room when the dog-gone bomb hit and I didn't appreciate that at all.

LJ: Did you lose a lot of friends?

LS: About 50.

LJ: What happened after that?

LS: We got orders back home because of the damage to the ship. The ship was really hurting. And then I finally got into flight training. That's what I wanted to do all the time but I was just one jump behind all the time in getting orders to flight training. But it finally came through.

LJ: And where did you go for flight training?

LS: Corpus Christi and Pensacola, naval air facilities in both instances.

LJ: How long did you do training?

LS: Oh, let's see. We started in November of one year and finished the next summer -- around -- let's see, when would that have been? February, February of '47. I got my wings.

LJ: What was that first solo flight like?

LS: Well I had those all ready. I had a pilot's license.

LJ: Oh, you did.

LS: So I got in on that through the ...

LJ: What kind of planes were you flying?

LS: We flew the SNJ, the PBY, TBF ... the usual run-of-the-mill airplanes.

LJ: Once you got done with your flight training, where did they send you?

LS: They sent me home.

LJ: They did.

LS: I was griping about the fact that I was having to, fulfill this contract that I agreed to do. – A chief yeoman heard me griping about this, having to stay in for another year. He said, “You want out? I’ll get you out.” This was on Monday ... on Thursday, I was heading for Minnesota.

LJ: Really?

LS: Yes, so they were cutting down on everything, just slashing it.

LJ: So was that in 1946?

LS: This was in '46 and '47. I got my wings in '47. I may have erred on the year back there but ...

LJ: So from the time you actually went into flight training until the time they sent you home to the States, how long was that?

LS: Oh, probably two years.

LJ: Two years?

LS: Yes, not quite.

LJ: So what was the feeling when your boss said, “I can get you out of here.” What did you think?

LS: Well, I thought this was [unclear] for me because I was about getting near fed up on the – We were married, we had a child and he was sick, just the ordinary flu, but it was still part of the whole deal that sent us home.

LJ: What did you do after you left the military?

LS: Well, I got a job teaching in Glyndon and then I went into the implement business selling implements for a firm there in Moorhead.

LJ: How long were you teaching?

LS: I taught about three-and-half years in Glyndon. I was principal of the high school there and then I hired out at Thief River Falls for implement sales.

And before that I had sold for a firm in Moorhead, Harris Brothers, it was an old, established firm.

LJ: So how long did you work for the implement dealership in Thief River Falls?

LS: One year, a short year. We had an opportunity to get into farming, so I took that and did selling and stuff besides.

LJ: Did you keep in contact with any of the people that you met in your three, four years in the military?

LS: There was one guy, his name is Bob Sweeney. He was an enlisted man, first class, and he's a first-class guy. And he and I still correspond.

LJ: That's terrific.

LS: By telephone and he visited us about four, five years – oh, more than that ago now. But he and his wife were on vacation and they stopped in and spent overnight with us. Bob Sweeney was his name.

LJ: So where does Bob live?

LS: In upstate New York, he was a dairy farmer there.

LJ: Have you gotten out to see him at all?

LS: No, I saw two or three of my mates when we were down there for a convention one time. New York City was our ...

LJ: Was the place you met?

LS: Yes.

LJ: Have you been to any other reunions?

LS: No, our ship is unique in that it's got an organization that keeps the thing alive and I've contributed some to that, but I got in on the tail end of their publishing deal and so I don't think it got any coverage.

LJ: Do you have any final thoughts about what you went through during your time in the service?

LS: No, I'm just glad I had escaped.

LJ: Came out alive?

LS: Yes. Oh, those bullets were flying. I'll tell you, they ...

LJ: Any other special stories come to mind, that you'd like to share?

LS: No, not that I could mention over the radio.

LJ: Lloyd, how would you like to be remembered?

LS: Oh, I don't know – That's kind of difficult. I would like to be remembered as a patriot. – I don't know if I can say any more than that.

LJ: Thank you very much, Lloyd.