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St. Johns High School

Home of the Redwings!

George Pierson

Interviewed by Taping Grounds

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In 1943 when George Pierson was only 18 he decided to volunteer himself into being drafted during World War II. His first choice was to be in the Army but he was placed into the Navy. He says that he is very glad that he was placed into the Navy instead. One reason why he decided to join the service was because everyone else was. He spent 10 weeks in the Great Lakes for basic training for mechanics and then went to Virginia for diesel school, and then switched to PT boats.

Mr. Pierson feels that the US had no choice but to enter the war and that they were forced into it when Japan bunkered their fleet. While in the war Mr. Pierson did not see any racism but he is sure that there was some going on. The one time he can really remember getting scared was when the radar manager thought that the spot on the screen was a cloud and it was actually an island. When their boat ran onto the island he thought that they were being hit and that was when he got scared.

During the war Mr. Pierson spent much of his time in the Philippine islands, although they did not stay long in one place. The conditions were swampy and it was very hot. The men would try to sleep on the deck if they could because it was cooler. They got little spare time, but when they did get some they would often fish.

It was difficult for the guys to get food and especially clothing. Whenever they could they would hook up to the "mother ship" and get new supplies. About 10 ships could hook up to the "mother ship" at a time. They would get food and buy new clothing. They would mostly receive canned food and most men did not like the food but some men did not mind it, such as Mr. Pierson.

When I asked Mr. Pierson if he ever regretted joining the Navy he said, "No ma'am, I thoroughly enjoyed every bit of it, I had never been anywhere, I have never seen the world, if it hadn't been for that." In 1946 after the war, Mr. Pierson decided to get out of the Navy because he had been home since he first left. On his way home he seen the gold gate bridge and he that was one of the prettiest thing that he had ever seen. The most memorable moment of the war for Mr. Pierson was when they were told that the war was over and the next day they tore down the flag on the boat and put up a new one, and he got to keep the flag.

A year after Mr. Pierson returned home he got married to his wife and had three boys. All of his boys ended up in Vietnam. One was in the Army another in the Navy and another in the Marines.

One message that Mr. Pierson would like to send out to all teens is just to be happy if they do have to go through all of this.