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Period 3

Laurel L. Carlson
United States Coast Guard
3 years of service

Laurel L. Carlson

Over sixteen million American servicemen and women served in one of the worst wars America has ever fought in. In World War II, Laurel L. Carlson was one of the brave sixteen million servicemen to fight against a terrible tyranny. Laurel was active from 1943 through 1946; he had many memories from war which he enjoyed to share.

Laurel L. Carlson was born on June 14, 1923 in Minot, a small city of 16,000 in North Dakota. He was raised on a wheat farm with his parents and his two brothers. Carlson grew up in the Great Depression. “[During that time] Having a job was more important than having an education.” At some points in his life, he could not attend school because he had to work at harvest time when all hands were needed to support his family. The first four years of Laurel’s education, he attended a one room school house a couple miles from the farm. The one room had 6 rows for grades 1-6. “Keep your mouth shut unless spoken to.” These are the rules they followed and the rules that some students need to follow to this day. The school had an outdoor bathroom and also a small playground. The school days went from 8am-4pm every weekday. When Laurel was nine, he could drive his dad’s 1924 Dodge in second gear just to give his dad lunch who was working on the family fields. At age ten, Laurel started to herd a group of 30-40 cattle. To herd them all, he would ride a mule back and forth. His earnings were \$1 a week, however it included room and board (which his mother was not fond with). However, in 1933

Laurel and his family moved to the city because of the depression and drought. Nevertheless, on his free time he always flew kites and played a game called “Annie I Over” for fun. In high school, he brought his shotgun to school and went hunting with his teacher before class. During the school day, he would simply store the gun in his locker. During Laurel’s senior year in high school, he worked at a gas station making 25 cents an hour. He graduated high school in 1941. Less than a week after his graduation, in July of 1941, Laurel hitched a ride to California, paying the man \$15 to take him. Once he got to Santa Monica, he was quickly employed by Douglas Aircraft, earning 65 cents an hour. Just two a half months later, Laurel met his wife to be on Christmas Day 1941. He was invited over by a family friend for Christmas dinner when their daughter introduced him to the girl down the street. Little did he know that would be his future wife.

In December of 1942, Laurel received a notice. It was a letter from the President of the United States which said, “Greetings from the President, you have been selected by your fellow citizens to serve in the armed forces.” In February 1943, Laurel enlisted in the United States Coast Guard and attended basic training at Curtis Bay, Maryland. After basic training, he was stationed in a supply depot in New York City where he remained for eighteen months. He later volunteered for Sea Duty. His ship, LST-205, was an Amphibious class ship which Laurel said was the “slowest ship in the whole damn Navy” traveling at a snail speed of eight knots. Carlson’s job was the ship’s barber and night watch. Out at sea, heading to Japan for a planned invasion, Laurel was called by the ship’s captain to cut his hair. During that time the ship was rocking severely due to the big waves, but Laurel continued to follow his orders to cut the Captain’s hair. He ended up cutting the back of his ear! In May 1945, the ship arrived in Seattle

for repairs and Laurel had a 30 day leave. Before he left the ship, he called up his girlfriend and asked her to marry him. They went and got married on May 24th. After his leave, the LST-205 arrived in Japan, they were astonished to see what everyone has saw. The atomic bomb had destroyed nearly everything in Nagasaki and left nothing but rubble. Ten days after the peace treaty was signed, Laurel and some of the LST-205 crew went on the mainland of Japan. The war was finally over. On January 26, 1946, Laurel Carlson was discharged from the United States Coast Guard.

Laurel had a wide background after the war. Within a short span of 1946-1950, Laurel had 13 jobs. He became a firefighter from 1950 to the middle of 1978 after his neighbor had talked him into pursuing it as a career. His job was the truck driver for the fire department. He became a fireman because, "everyone loves a firefighter." College was not priority for Laurel, he wanted his wife to stay home while he worked and take care of their 3 children. Nevertheless, Laurel did go to a junior college to study fire science. He took fire science and hazardous materials and received 32 units of fire dynamics.

Laurel has now been retired for 37 years. He is currently living the ultimate American Dream. Carlson has been married to his wife for nearly 70 years! On Valentines Day 2015, Laurel and his wife renewed their vows. They share three children, five grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Laurel lives on to say that he had fun in the war and he now gets respect from people. He says that if he has to give advice, it would be "To give it 100% to stay out of the war, but if you are in the war, give it 100%." To this day, Laurel happily lives in South Corona Senior Living with his wife.