

Boyd Dave Wilkin

As interviewed by Judy Hansen

Boyd Dave Wilkin was born in the family home on January 11, 1930 to Reed and Rosabell (Rose) Wilkin. He had seven siblings: Genevive who died as an infant, Jerry (who served in WWII in Germany), Scott, Nile, Sonja, and John L, His father died in 1936 when he was five years old. Boyd grew up in Lehi in the LDS First ward.

Boyd had a friend that joined the service so he decided he want to be in the military too. He tried to join in 1946 but he was only 16 years old and they wouldn't take him. He had to wait until after his birthday when he was 17. He didn't have a birth certificate when he joined and had to use his church blessing certificate as proof of birth.

When he finally got in the Army January 1947 he went to Fort Douglas, Utah. This was during the end of WWII. From Fort Douglas they shipped him to Fort Ord, California where he completed his basic training. Basic training for Boyd was in the winter time and it was cold. It wasn't the kind of cold here in Utah but a damp cold.

While Boyd was in basic training there was only about a ½ dozen men that made expert rifleman. He was one of them. In fact, they gave him a carton of cigarettes for making this achievement. After he made expert rifleman they were shooting one day and he had his fingers in his ears. His commanding officer yells down at him, "Soldier, get those fingers out of your ears it's not going to hurt you." Boyd yells back, "Oh bullshit." He had to scrub the supply room floor and didn't get any liberties. He thought for sure the Army would use that expertise and ship him overseas. Fortunately for him they didn't. After he completed basic training they sent him off to Beaumont General Hospital in El Paso, Texas. He started out there as a second cook helping in the kitchen. This assignment really surprised him. They wanted him to go to the cook and baker school.

Boyd, being the follower that he was, again had a friend that was working as a neuropsychiatric technician so he decided he wanted to do that too. It intrigued him so see how military service had affected the men. There was no competition for the assignment so they allowed him in the medical corp. They sent him to a school to learn the duties of that job where he received a diploma.

Boyd would pick troops up that were coming back from overseas and take them to the hospital. Some they would have to physically help because of severe injuries. A small percentage of men would have such severe battle fatigue (stress) they would have to put them in strait-jackets because they were so violent.

It was while he was serving as a neuropsychiatric technician that he witnessed his first autopsy. The military had their own morgue and they would do their own autopsies at Beaumont hospital.



They had a first sergeant that was in the Para-troopers that had been shot 38 times when he was coming down. They had him in ready to perform his autopsy and he woke up. This man really developed a bad attitude and wouldn't listen to anybody. He didn't seem to care about anything and he ended up leaving as a private.

He also witnessed his first skin graft. They were going to graft some skin onto a man's nose and this man had to go around with his hand taped up to his nose for a very long time while the skin grew to the place it was needed. The hand would have to be held there for months. That is how they would do skin grafts in the late 1940's. Everything was so primitive back then.

Corporal Boyd Wilkins served in the Army for 18 months. He was honorably discharge 18 June 1948. He received \$300.00 muster out pay. When he returned home Governor Herbert B Maw from the State of Utah wrote him a letter welcoming him back. This letter was dated July 16, 1948. He got a year's exemption from paying Utah State taxes after he was discharged with 18 months service. He also got \$20.00 a week for 52 weeks to look for a job. They all called this the 52-20 Club.

He decided his military service was over so he needed a career. He attended the Salt Lake Barber College. He would hitchhike from Lehi to Salt Lake so he could attend. He got his barber license.

Lehi had a National Guard artillery unit but when WWII started they took that unit to war. When Boyd came home they wanted to start the National Guard up again in Lehi. They came and got some of the returned veterans to join the new Lehi National Guard Combat Engineers 1467. Sherwin Allred was the first Sergeant and Maurice Dahl worked for them full time. Boyd joined as a platoon sergeant. They had Lt. Clooney and Captain Howard Robinson also in the unit.

In the National Guard he went to school in Fort Belvoir, Virginia and on 7 December 1951 certified as a Tractor-Scraper Operator which meant he was a heavy equipment operator. He came home and was honorably discharged 4th February 1952. He served in the guard for two years.

Again, Boyd had a friend, Trustin Beck that was ex-marine who said lets go back into the service so they both went and joined the Navy in May 1954. They didn't have to go through boot camp because they had already been in the service. They sent his friend to the Hawaiian Islands. They gave Boyd seaman status which was like a Corporal and while in San Diego, California they put him aboard the USS Brinkley Bass DD887, a destroyer. Because he had barber license they made him the barber of the ship. He was on the ship for three years. He was assigned to man the 5 stage gun mount as his general quarters station if they ever became under attack but his primary job was barber. While on the USS Brinkley Bass he went all over. He went to the Philippines a dozen times, Hong Kong seven times, Manila Bay where he got to see all the sunken ships from WWII, Australia, and all over the pacific. When he went to Hiroshima the atomic bomb had been dropped ten years before and all that was still left was a huge cement dome of a building there. When he was in Kobe, Japan he saw the monument of the biggest battle ship that the Japanese were going to build. They had brought it from Sasabo to Kobe to

put the guns on it and the US sank it right there before they finished getting the guns on it. Boyd had open gangway which meant he could get on and off the ship whenever he wanted. There was Cinderella liberty which meant they had to be back by 12:00 whenever they got off ship. Boyd received a cruise book of the USS Brinkley Bass of '54 which was like a yearbook of the ship.

The United States was allies with Kaohsiung and a lot of the mission for the USS Brinkley Bass was patrolling Kaohsiung Strait protecting them from China¹. They were able to maintain peace and they all received the China Service Medal. Boyd also received the Naval Occupation Service Medal, and good conduct medals for both the Navy and Army.

Being on sea so much often got pretty boring so they had to do things to make their own fun. When he went to Australia they had to cross the International Date Line. The shellbacks (Officers) did an initiation for all the polliwogs (enlisted men). Boyd, being the barber, they took his clippers and just cut the front half of his hair all off and left the back. They also gave everyone a royal bath where they set a tarp up filled with water and they all had to jump in. They had rotten eggs busted in their mouths which they would just gag on. Then salt water was poured in their mouths to wash the eggs down. They also saved the garbage for four days, tunneled a canvas, then filled the canvas up with all the garbage and made everyone crawl through it. Fun times in the Navy.

One time they were out to sea when there was a typhoon just off Japan. They won't let you stay in port because the waves would wash the ship onto shore. They were outrunning this typhoon and they split a seam in the ship. They had to shore it up enough to get it back for repairs. Boyd was cutting this skipper's (Captain) hair and he told the Captain he sure thought they were a goner then and that they were going to sink. The Captain told him, 'As long as I am the Skipper to this ship it will never sink.'" Boyd laughed to himself and thought, "Wow, who does he think he is."

He was on maneuvers another time and someone got the wrong maneuver and so they got so close to another ship that it scraped the paint right off the ship Boyd was on. It sure took a lot of paint off.

They told him he had been on ship too long and that he needed shore duty. They told him there was a catch to it; he would have to extend a year to get shore duty. He had signed up in the Navy for four years and he had to extend a year to get his shore duty. They ask him where he wanted to go. With the extensive knowledge he had from traveling he came up with three options, his first choice was Japan, 2nd choice the Philippine Islands, and 3rd choice was the Hawaiian Islands. Well they gave him the Hawaiian Islands. He was there for 18 months and he ran the Navy Exchange on Barnam airforce base. The Exchange had a barber shop and he cut hair in the mornings then in the afternoons they would open the Navy Exchange store. While he was in Hawaii he met a girl, Salada (Sally) Kapualani Ana and married her. She automatically became a citizen of the United States when she married Boyd in 1957. They lived in Kekaha, Kauai and had two children Kalani and Haleakia. These boys were born in the Hawaiian Territory before it became a State.

¹ The USS Brinkley Bass was eventually sold to Sweden for training and then they ended up scuttling (sinking) it.

After his shore duty was over they put him back aboard ship – a Tortuga. This ship was a landing ship dock. They could open the back of the ship and dry dock a destroyer or another ship while on the ocean and work it over for repairs. While on the Tortuga he continued to cut hair.

When his time in the military was up he went home and received the same \$300.00 muster out pay. He was honorably discharged 5 May 1959. After his service in the Navy the State didn't give him any tax credits or anything like they did when he got out of the Army; even after five years' service. He sent his wife money and she brought their family to Lehi where they lived. Boyd's mother and sister met her at the airport because she wasn't familiar with Utah.

Boyd and Sally continued to expand their family and two more children were born; Kaipo and Rosanna. Boyd built a split level home in Lehi on 2nd west on ground he had there. Then he built another home at 9358 S 9200 N in Lehi. Boyd and Sally were married 19 years then Sally passed away at age 38 with heart problems in 1975. This left Boyd a widow at a very young age raising four children alone.

He was working two jobs. He rented and ran the barber shop on State Street in Lehi at night – the one ol' Rowley Goodwin had his barber shop in next to the movie house. He also worked at the State Training School in American Fork (later changed to the Utah State Developmental Center). He actually worked at the Training school twice. He was the barber there in 1963 then quit and went to work at Hercules in their Fire Department for 10 years. After he quit Hercules he went back to the State Training School in 1973 where he went back to the barber shop but was eventually moved to maintenance and became the Head of Maintenance Department. He retired from there 20 years later.

He met Carol Morrison (who had been raised in Michigan) while working at the Utah State Developmental Center in American Fork 6 months after Sally passed away and married her June 6th 1978. Carol had four children that were all about the same age as Boyd's children. At one time there were six teenagers living in the Wilkin home at the same time. There were five boys and three girls.

Boyd had a farm with pigs, sheep, and cows. His boys would help on the farm which they continue to do. He got an award from the Governor of the State of Utah congratulating him for his decision to continue to farm the family acreage that has been farmed for 100 years. There were only about 35 farms in the whole state that have existed that long. Boyd has 16 acres.

Even after retirement Boyd really had a hard time getting the military to quit asking him to cut hair. During the 2002 Winter Olympics they ask him to go to Camp Williams and cut hair. He has stayed in Lehi all his life and is a very respected citizen.