

Eldon 'Paul' Johnson

as interviewed by Judy Hansen

Paul was born May 12, 1926 in American Fork to Urban and Emily Wanlass Johnson. Although he lived in American Fork, his family moved to Lehi when he was four years old so the only thing he remembers is growing up in Lehi. They lived at 588 North 200 East. He is the youngest of five siblings; Dick, Boyd, Jean, Don, and Paul. He went to school in Lehi and graduated from Lehi High.

Paul joined the Navy May 9, 1944, four days before he turned 18 because he didn't want to be drafted into the Army. They sent him to Farragut Naval Training Station in Bayview, Idaho for his basic training. After that they sent him to Ordinance school at Norman, Oklahoma a U.S. Naval Training School that had just been newly established and commissioned on September 20, 1942. After he finished there they sent him to Fort Lauderdale, Florida where he was assigned as cook. He said, "I sat around the flight line making hot dogs and stuff." All those hungry men sure appreciated his efforts. He was then shipped up to Edenton, North Carolina where he was assigned Ordinance work which was servicing all the planes. He had to load all the guns on the planes that went on the carriers. He also had to keep them clean. In August 1945 they had just got a flight crew with four different types of airplanes completed and the flight crew left when the war ended.

Even though the war was over he had to stay in the Navy until his enlistment ended. After the war, they sent everyone down to Memphis, Tennessee where he stayed for almost two years. They had old airplanes there they were decommissioning so he was assigned to take the weapons out of them. They found out Paul could type so he ended up in the office. He was assigned to complete the watch list (duty roster). The Chief would give Paul the records and he would type them up. It only took him a couple hours to type it so he had a lot of spare time and got to play a lot while he was there. Someone else would run the list over to make copies and post. Paul was discharged May 12, 1947 and went home.

After he got home, him and Wayne Peterson went down to Provo and enlisted in the Navy Reserves. In the Reserves they sent him to Denver for a while then the National Guard took him to Fort Douglas, Hill Air Force Base, but finally they decided they needed them in Alameda, California where he ended up going most of the time for years afterwards. He would have to go



once a month for a weekend and then for two weeks once a year. Paul did this for 47 years. He enjoyed it in Alameda because it was always cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

While he was serving in the guard he was assigned ordinance work loading the guns for the regular military. Then again they found out he could type so he ended up in the office.

The Reserves don't start paying retirement until age sixty (60) so he stayed in the reserves until he was able to get his retirement pay. He started getting his pay two months before they shut Geneva Steel down. He was in the military 42 years and 4 days. When he retired he was E7 (Chief). That was the highest rank he could have earned at that time because then they didn't have E8 or E9.

When he was young he started working in the open hearth at Geneva Steel after he got out of the Navy and ended up in the foundry. Geneva sent him to school to learn the trade of boilermaker. The last three years he worked at Geneva his boss called him and gave him a two job class upgrade to work with him. All he had to do was go around an extra hour each shift and make sure all the jobs had the material they needed. He worked there for 39 years and 2 days.

Eldon married Shirley Jean Felsted on June 19, 1948. They raised a family of five children, David Paul (Riverton), Mark F (Tennessee), Gary Brent (Washington), Lorrie Swain (Hawaii), and Lisa Welsh (Tennessee). His sons Mark and Brent both served in the US Navy.

