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FEATURED

## Man keeps the faith during service time

By Barbara Jolly-Deakle News Herald Correspondent Nov 11, 2018



A Morganton resident shared his story of working on the farm at a young age to help support his family and how hard it was leaving them to serve in World War II,

not knowing if he would ever see them again.

Elijah B. Rasnick, 97, has lived in Morganton for the past four years. He previously resided in Valdese for 30 years with his wife, Louise.

Rasnick grew up working on his family farm in Dickenson County, Virginia, during The Great Depression. At the age of 16, after completing the ninth grade, he went to work with the Civilian Conservation Corp known as the CCC. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, and the onset of WWII, Congress closed the CCC program. Rasnick and his brothers decided to enlist into the military.



Rasnick and his three brothers planned to enlist in different branches. One brother who chose the Navy couldn't pass the physical due to a heart issue, but the others joined anyway. Rasnick selected the Marines in 1942, when he was 20 years of age.

“One brother went into the Army, (serving) in

Germany,” Rasnick said. “The other went in to the Air Force, (serving) in Korea.”

He said the hardest thing that he had to endure while serving was leaving his parents.

“I couldn’t take care of them,” Rasnick said. “It was the first time that I had been away from them other than visiting (people) on the weekends here and there.”

After boot camp at Parris Island in South Carolina, Rasnick was stationed at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, then Camp Pendleton in California, before deployment to fight in the South Pacific. He explained what he enjoyed most while in service.

“I liked boot camp the best,” he said. “I was burning up at boot camp at Parris Island. That was hard for me, but I liked the training. That’s what helps you stay healthy.”

After being deployed to the South Pacific as a Rifleman, Pfc. Rasnick was stationed at Guadalcanal and fought in the Battle of Peleliu, which lasted two months. The National Museum of the Marine Corps

has labeled this battle “the bitterest battle of the war for the Marines.” Rasnick shared his experience.

“I was just a regular private and all I did was go with the rest of them in the platoon,” Rasnick said. “I was in the U.S. 1st Division, 7th Marines. A shell hit near me when I was running across the airfield. Shrapnel flew everywhere and hit me in my leg and gave me a concussion. They sent me to a hospital in San Diego, California, for three months, until I was discharged. I wasn’t in long enough to make it to the next rank.”

Rasnick received a Good Conduct medal and a Purple Heart for his service overseas and a Certified Disability Discharge with Excellent Service and other awards that he can’t remember.

After being honorably discharged from service in 1945, he went to school to be a sheet metal aircraft worker. He learned riveting and welding for aircrafts. Later he was shipped to work at the Norfolk Navy Shipyard where he worked for 19 years welding and riveting ships, until he retired.

Rasnick still has the same Bible that he carried with him in the left pocket of his uniform while he was

deployed. He shared how God answered his prayers and his proudest moment of service.

“The main thing is that I asked the good Lord to let me get back home to see my momma and daddy because they were getting old,” he said. “And I did, so I guess he had something to do with that.

"You have close calls when you are in combat. That's a fact. I've tried to be a good Christian and I did a good job while I was in the service.”

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