



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
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PRESS RELEASE

Voices of Veterans: Cmdr. James Groesbeck Shares His Story of Service with the U.S. Navy

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AUSTIN — Today, Texas Land Commissioner and Veterans Land Board (VLB) Chairwoman Dawn Buckingham, M.D., is proud to introduce the next installment of the series highlighting the VLB's Voices of Veterans oral history program. This week, we highlight the service of Cmdr. James Groesbeck, who served in the U.S. Navy during WWII and the invasion of France.

James Groesbeck, who served in the U.S. Navy for 22 years and took part in the amphibious landings at Sicily and Southern France was born May 26, 1921, in El Paso, Texas. He grew up with both his parents in his life.

"My parents were originally from Illinois, and they moved to El Paso because my father had a business partner in Torreon, Mexico, and he ran the American end of the business which led my parents to moving to be closer to Mexico," Groesbeck explained.

Groesbeck graduated from the University of Texas with his bachelor's degree at the age of nineteen in January 1941. His degree led him to landing a job at The Hughes Tool Company. Shortly after Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, Groesbeck joined the U.S. Navy.

"I was living the typical college life, I had taken a date to the UT Longhorn football game with the University of Oregon the day before, on December 6," he recalled. "The next day on Sunday, December 7th, we saw the movie about the World War I hero, Sergeant York, and we came out and the news boys were hollering 'Extra!' that Pearl Harbor had been attacked, and so that came as a shock."



VOICES OF VETERANS

name Groesbeck, James		
military branch Navy	rank Commander	conflict WWII
date interviewed 06/19/2008		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> interview available on voicesofveterans.org

Mr. Groesbeck took part in the amphibious landings at Sicily and Southern France. He served in the Navy from 1942 to 1964 and was awarded a Bronze Star during the invasion of France.



Groesbeck then joined the U.S Navy in 1942 and spent just 90 days in training. He spent his first month as an apprentice Seaman in the Officer Training Program at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, and then was transferred to Midshipman school in New York City in an old battleship of Theodore Roosevelt's great white fleet.

"That ship had been converted into an armory for the New York State National Guard and then when the war started, the Navy had taken it over," Groesbeck explained about his training. "I was one of the so-called 90-day wonders."

Following his training, Groesbeck admitted he was bored and looking for something to do when they decided to send him to Army parachute school in Fort Bend, Georgia. Following a week of additional training, he was sent up to New York City to catch a flying boat because the surface convoys were going to take seven to 10 days to get over to North Africa.



VOICES OF VETERANS

VLB CHAIRWOMAN, DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

"The reason they wanted these parachute-trained naval officers was to jump with the 82nd Airborne Division onto the island of Sicily and the invasion of Sicily, which took place in early July of 1943," Groesbeck shared. "However, when we got there, there were four of us, and the Army just wanted two. I was not one of the two selected, but the staff gunnery officer kept me as an assistant because I did have a special training."

To listen to Cmdr. James Groesbeck, tell his story, click the button below.

[Cmdr. James Groesbeck's Story](#)

Veterans can email VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov to tell their stories. Please note that the Veteran must be a resident of Texas at the time of their interview.

Voices of Veterans is a state agency's first Veteran oral history program. It records the stories of Texas Veterans through their time in service and after returning home from combat.

The VLB records interviews with veterans over the phone or in person. Their interviews are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the GLO, where they join the historical documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barret Travis.

Veterans' interviews are also available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and the public. These precious records inspire future generations and remind us of our Veterans' sacrifices.

To listen to the over 500 archived stories of Veterans documented through the GLO's Voices of Veterans oral history program, click the button below:

[Voices of Veterans](#)