

## G.I. Bill - Sidney Byrd - OSEU #2

I hitchhiked from Fort Bragg, North Carolina... on the [UNKNOWN WORD]... made good time. They picked up servicemen for that part of the war effort. They served four years in the army in the southwest Pacific. I was instructing a jungle training outfit...and my army buddy said, "Chief, how come they selected you?" I know why they kept asking me. Finally, I got 'em together. I said, "Alright. I'm going to release a military secret. But if one of you leaks that secret, I'm gonna take you out to the jungle and shoot you. So you promise not to tell anybody."

The reason they selected me is because us Indians are real sneaky...get outta here. South Dakota paid a bonus for its servicemen... \$550...that was a lot of money in those days...and I got the max overseas in the Philippines. We have a nurse here at our clinic and... I've been to her village...Annie Garcia... Tacloban, Philippines...and I've been there. I was part of the invasion force. "MacArthur, I shall return." Overseas, the guys would say "The Golden Gate in 48." And someone else would say, "Stick with Mac and you'll never get back." But the thing is that they welcomed us home when we came. There's was a huge blimp flying over... "Welcome home..." flying right over our ship coming in. People welcomed us with open arms.

My nephew was in Vietnam... and they were spit on. They were not welcomed home. They were called "children killers." He is gone now but... if it had not been for the Army service and the G.I. Bill, I probably would've never been able to go to college. It enabled me to go to college. I remember this professor was envious of these veterans: "You get your tuition paid for, your books paid for, and you get a another stipend every month?" He said, "I sweat for everything I got. I sweat for my books. I sweat for my tuition." Finally, one of those veterans said, "Sir, I did all of my sweating in a fox hole." Yeah...four years.