



John Hogan

I was going for 100 years old!

92-year-old war veteran reflects on cancer diagnosis

When John Hogan's family moved to Seattle in 1941 John took the opportunity to join the Army. It was during World War II and there was plenty to do.

He was stationed at Fort Lewis, where he trained for nine or 10 months before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. A truck driver in the 41st Infantry Division and the 162nd Infantry Regiment, he eventually headed to Australia to help defend the South Pacific.

At age 92 and on hospice care, John recalled fondly his time in the Army – and the day he headed home. He saw combat in New Guinea, the Philippines and South Pacific Islands before the war ended.

"Truman drops the biscuit on Japan. Bang the war is over. I'd been there 42 months and we came home in 19 days – into Hawaii and San Francisco," John recalled. "The most beautiful sight you ever seen - we were coming home going

under the Golden Gate Bridge on a beautiful day. Your morale is 400 percent above normal. We saw three Christmases in the South Pacific and those palm trees don't look like Christmas." Back up to Fort Lewis and John was honorably discharged, a Technician 5.

November is a special month for John's family in two ways. First, it's National Home Care and Hospice Month. Second, it's Veteran's Day. While John received hospice care, his military service was also being honored by the staff of Providence Hospice of Seattle, who listened to him talk about his time in the Army and acknowledged his service.

During this year's National Home Care and Hospice Month Providence Hospice of Seattle is also moving forward with its *We Honor Veterans* program, which offers end-of-life care designed specifically for veterans.

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John Hogan didn't know anything about hospice care when he was diagnosed with cancer in May and his doctor offered him a range of choices – from aggressive treatment to care focused on comfort and quality of life.

"Two options – medical, chemo and the rest of the stuff," said John, who was chipping golf balls in his backyard until

continued on back

I was going for 100 years old! (continued)



he was suddenly diagnosed. "I said, no, I don't want that. I want this one – to live normally, live comfortably, have the nurse come in and that's the way I want to go."

And that's how it went. During his time on hospice care John lived in the Greenwood home where he and his wife Betty of 51 years raised their three children. Providence Hospice of Seattle provided the nurses, walker, wheelchair, social worker, medicine, and other services he needed. John got to enjoy time with his children and grandchildren and all the friends and neighbors who visited him.

"It's the best," he said of the hospice care. "I couldn't imagine help like this. It's wonderful."



Added Betty, "We really couldn't get along without them because I wouldn't know what to do."

John said the thing that surprised him most about his disease was having so many people come by his home to say hello. "The advantage, when you get cancer, the good Lord's telling you you're not only here for a certain period and you know that. You have an appointment with me. You don't know the date, but at least you know it's coming closer." His priest from Christ the King parish, just down the street, offered spiritual comfort.

John reflected on everything he'd gone through in life, including his military duty. Born in Butte, Mont., in 1918, John never graduated from high school, but worked several jobs – in department stores, as a waiter, in the cooper mines – before his family moved to Seattle. After being discharged from the Army he worked in the shipyard at Tacoma on flat top aircraft carriers, then came to Seattle and found a job at a lumber yard in Ballard, where he worked for 15 years before working for the railroad.

At age 41 he met and married Betty, who volunteered in the Catholic Seaman's Club coffee shop. They have three children and six grandchildren.

John's favorite thing during his last months of life was seeing those grandchildren, although he was no longer able to play ball with them in the backyard.

But he remained philosophical. "It's hard. But there's a reason. There are no accidents out there. Everything you do is providential. You've got to believe that."

As for the care he received? "Gee, it's a good program. I would tell anybody before they go to their maker to take a trip through hospice first."

Providence Hospice & Palliative Care proudly supports the national We Honor Veterans program (www.wehonorveterans.org), which offers end-of-life care designed specifically for those who have courageously served our country.

For more information about our services and locations, visit www.ProvidenceHospiceWashington.org.



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