

# **VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

**Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations**

**Interview with**

**Edwin J. Hemzy (Hemzacek)**

Conducted by Martin W. Thomas

December 28, 2004

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library  
In partnership with the Library of Congress

## **Part 1: Introduction**

**This interview is being conducted on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004, at the Indian Prairie Public Library. My name is Martin Thomas. I am speaking with Edwin J. Hemzy. Mr. Hemzy was born on May 8, 1922, in Chicago, Illinois, and now lives in Countryside, Illinois. Mr. Hemzy learned of The Veterans History Project through Tony Sanda, a fellow veteran whom I interviewed the month before this interview. Mr. Hemzy and Mr. Sanda have an interesting common bond which we will cover near the end of this interview. Here, then, is Mr. Hemzy's story.**

**Mr. Hemzy, how would you preferred to be addressed during this interview?**

Just call me Ed, that'll be fine.

**Thank you, Ed. And before we went on record, going through your documents, I noticed on your discharge papers and on your immunization record that you served in the military under a different name. What is that name?**

The name, the Czech pronunciation is Hemzäcek, it's pronounced Hemzächeck and Hem'zacheck, but those are variations and then...

**How's that spelled?**

H-E-M-Z-A-C-E-K

**O.K. And we'll want to make sure that the record reflects that so that the Library of Congress can cross reference it to the name you used today and also to your service records.**

**Just quickly, how did you happen to have your name changed?**

Well after I was married to my wife [Eleanor], of 58 years, we had two daughters, and we thought that the name was kind of a long handle to carry through life, and so I talked to my Dad about changing the name and shortening it to Hemzy, and he had no problem with it. He thought about doing it himself but said he's too late in years [to do it]. So, my wife [Ellie] and I engaged a lawyer, went down to see Judge Miner in Circuit Court, and we had the name changed from Hemzacek to Hemzy.

**You did mention this to me off record before the interview. You mentioned that your son has changed his name ...**

He's changed it back to the full family name, and I told him his grandfather was smilin' from his grave. (Laughing.) Yes, that's our son, Wayne Hemzacek, and he now has a son, Noah, who's going to carry the family name even further.

## **Part 2: Entering the Military**

**Well, getting into your military story, Ed, when did you enter the service?**

I entered the service in August of 1944.

**August, 1944. Where were you living at that time?**

I was living on the Southwest side of Chicago at 5133 South Whipple Street.

**And that was the Southwestern part of the city?**

Yes. Right.

**And what were you doing before you entered the military?**

I had finished my degree at Illinois Institute of Technology in Mechanical Engineering, and I was working at Bendix Aviation in South Bend, Indiana.

**I'll be darned. (explains off record after interview that the soldier that General Patton slapped ended up working there after the war).**

And I was in the carburetor division with Bendix.

**Were you, let's see, how old were you at the time then, about 22?**

22, right, in 1944. Well, actually, I turned 21 while I was working at Bendix and turned 22 the year I was inducted.

**Ed, were you drafted or did you enlist?**

I was drafted.

**And you went into the Army?**

Yes. That's an interesting story, too, if I can just digress for a moment, Marty.

**Sure, please do.**

When I went down to the induction center on Van Buren Street, they ask you what service do you want to be in, and I said, "Navy." So, the guy puts down Navy, Navy, stamped it all over my papers when I got to the desk of the guy who was gonna make my, uh, uh, branch of service, he looked down at some kind of list and said, "Sorry, we don't

have any openings for you.” And so he just over stamped it with Army, so I wound up in, going into the Army.

**The gentleman who did that to you, was he wearing a uniform?**

Yes.

**Which branch?**

He was Army if I remember right.

**What a surprise. (Laughter) So, you were inducted. What happened next?**

From there I went to Fort Sheridan and ...

**Immediately?**

Yes. We were put on a bus and shipped out to Fort Sheridan, and we spent [just] enough time there to get our hair cut and GI issue of clothing, and then we were put on a train, and I don't remember the time period, but it was a couple of days, maybe. And headed down, never telling us where we were going, and we finally wound up at Camp Fannin, Texas. It was located between Tyler and Kilgore, Texas.

**How do you spell Fannin?**

F-A-N-N-I-N.

Part 3: Training

**Thank you. And what did you do at Camp Fannin?**

That was basic training in the infantry, and I spent, what was it, I don't know, 13, 16 weeks. At any rate while I was down in Camp Fannin, after the basic training, during which I even applied for OCS, which is Officers Candidate School, and also for ASTP which is Army Specialized Training Program.

**You applied for this while you were at Camp Fannin?**

Right.

**While you were at Camp Fannin, now, this is Boot Camp, was this your first time away from home for any length of time?**

No. I had spent my summers out in Iowa on a farm with [a family who were] friends. It's a long story, but anyhow, I spent my summers out there [living and] working on the farm and really appreciating getting to know what rural life was all about. And so, I spent the time for oh, probably, maybe four summers out in Iowa [while I was in high school].

**So your background before going into the service wasn't one where you'd never strayed from home ...?**

Yes, right.

**Or never'd been away from home? And you did have a degree in Mechanical Engineering at IIT. Was that a Bachelor's Degree?**

Yes.

**O.K. So now you're in Boot Camp with people from all walks of life. What was Boot Camp like for you?**

Boot Camp was really interesting 'cause I'd been in the ROTC in high school, so I spent three years under Sergeant Moore in Tilden Tech and did get an idea of what military could be in some ways, very briefly, anyhow. And so the training was, of course, Army training which a little lot deeper and, of course, we eventually wound up on bivouac and field exercises in our last two weeks. And it was there that I got my orders to report to Ohio State University for this ASTP Program.

**Now you said that you'd applied for both OSC and the ASTP. Would, did you have to make a choice between those two, or did they make it for you?**

They made it for me, because actually my orders were cut to go to ASTP and then as soon as I got back to base, the clerk of the company there said, "Oh, by the way, your orders came through for OCS today, but you're already going to ASTP." So that's the way it goes; they have a pecking order.

**So, anything else you want to tell me about Boot Camp before we move on to ASTP.**

I met some real interesting people down in Boot Camp with, of course, people from all over the country. And, one guy, Obie, I remember just his first name. But Obie had a "pet dog," and he was bucking for a Section 8, and interestingly enough, he did get it. I heard that he had gotten his Section 8 before I left the camp. And he had this "pet dog" that he always took care of all day long and into the night and so forth. That was an interesting guy. [He would keep this imaginary dog in his footlocker and talk to it while he was in barracks.]

**Did it seem like he was deliberately trying to get a Section 8?**

Oh, yeah, it was definitely there. But he, he was very serious, or acted very serious about the whole thing. That was a kind of comical thing. Beyond that, the experiences down in Camp Fannin, I know, one of the guys joked, he says, it's a place where you could be up to your back side in mud and breathing dust. (Laughter)

**At the same time! (Laughing)**

That's a funny one. And interestingly enough, all the fellas I went through basic with, I found out later on that they wound up in the Battle of the Bulge. So, I was a very fortunate guy in that respect that I wound up going to ASTP which was an engineering pool of people at Ohio State. And we took courses to refresh our skills in that regard.

**And you say this was at Ohio State?**

Ohio State. We were bivouacked or barracked in the football stadium at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

**So they had tents pitched out on the ...?**

No. We were right in the, in the stadium. They put bunks in the stadium back in underneath the seats. They, they had quarters in there. And so that's where we were living while we were at Ohio State.

**During this time did they actually have football games, I mean?**

No. (Laughing) We were there at a bad time unfortunately. We were there after the football season.

**Oh, O.K.**

And 'cause I had finished up my basic and got into Ohio State sometime in, what, December maybe?

**(Unintelligible)**

Yeah, I think, I know. I said sixteen weeks of basic, but maybe it was more like three months, I don't know, can't remember.

**Well, what was, what was the living, what were the living conditions like there?**

At Ohio State it was like night and day between basic and Ohio State. We had a cafeteria line of absolute wonderful food. They had professional cooks, and the diet was great!

We had choices in the morning for breakfast of about four or five items. It was like heaven after basic, (Laughing) believe me.

**(Laughing) These quarters under the stands, were they...how many people to a room?**

Oh, gosh, I can't recall just, right now, Marty, how it was. We were in bunks, you know, the usual thing. And they were lined up, and so we probably had a whole bunch of guys in this area that we were staying in.

**And how many day...excuse me, how many hours a day, on average, would you be in class?**

We would be in class from six to eight hours.

**And these were refresher courses?**

Refresher Engineering courses that we took. And I forgot just exactly what the subjects were at that time, [but probably math and physics].

**Were any of them geared in application towards military type subjects?**

No. They were really more basic, basic courses that were much like I had in college.

**And so, were they still specialized? I mean, were you strictly mechanical engineering oriented at OSU?**

Well we were in classes, and some of the fellas had different classes [subjects] that they went through.

**Did this result in any advanced degree for you?**

No.

**Just refresher courses.**

Yes, it was just refresher courses.

**And how long did that last?**

That had to have lasted until what, maybe, February of '45.

**Anything else of particular interest about your experience there that you'd like to have put in the record?**

No. We had a lot of free time that we put to good use, lookin' around and travelling and... I had a friend, uh, that I made acquaintance with, and he had lived in Zanesville, Ohio, so he was well acquainted with Columbus. And so he was a good guy to have as a friend to get around.

**And after ASTP, what happened next?**

Oh, after, in, after ASTP, I was one of seventy-eight people who were chosen to go to Portland, Oregon, and join the 29<sup>th</sup> Engineers in a training program in photo mapping, photo topography, actually. And so we trained in there for probably three months and then, typical Army, they took twice as many people [than] they really needed, so thirty-nine of us were separated and sent to Fort Lewis, [Washington].

**So, of the seventy-eight, none were dropped out for cause?**

No.

**They all made it through.**

We were probably classified by [the time we completed the training]. We took tests for our skills and ability, but that didn't mean that we were necessarily dropped because we didn't do well. It was just that they had to make choices.

**Now, at Portland, was that a military base?**

No. We were in Holman School. It [had been] an elementary school, formerly, before we got there.

**How do you spell that?**

Holman was H-O-L-M-A-N, to the best of my knowledge.

**And were your instructors military?**

Yes.

**Military instructors. Just for the record, what was photo topography at that time? How long had that existed as a science, and what did you do?**

Well, I don't know how long it existed. It was my first experience at it. And basically, what it was is, we worked with a little mobile platform that could be elevated and dropped, and we worked with two, with aerial photographs that were projected in red and green lights, and we wore red and green glasses. It then separated the different rays that

were projected, and we could intersect that on this little table platform and get elevations out of it for drawing contours, for drawing any natural, man-made objects like railroads, roads, buildings, things of that type. That's the way they developed maps.

**You mentioned the red and green rays. It sort of sounds like, like the forerunner of 3-D movies. Did you actually see in three dimension or ...?**

It was three dimension.

**Yes, but you could see the image apparently rising, or did you just have to measure the distance between the red and the green line?**

You could, those of us that had 3-D vision, we could visualize like the slopes of the mountains and the grades and so forth. But there were some fellas [whose] vision was such that they got an inverse. So, instead of a mountain, they saw a valley.

**Valley (Laughing)**

That was kind of interesting, and besides the photo mapping of that type, we did mosaics by taking aerial photographs and matching them and making an aerial photograph of areas by tearing and pasting these photographs into a big collage. And then they would print that. So that, so that was another phase of the photo mapping that took place.

**Well, the first technique that you mentioned, I know that existed later, and the Army started calling it Image Interpretation.**

Oh, O.K.

**And it sounds like you must have been at the pioneering stage of the technique, would be my guess.**

Yes, [could have been].

## **Part 4: Going Overseas**

**After your training at Portland, what happened next?**

Well, after, after training at Portland, and I was separated with the other 38, and we went up to Fort Lewis, Washington. And we were put in a, well, it was a fort, and it was barracks, and we waited our time. We had no idea what was going on. We were given leave at one time, and then when we got back, we had our shipping orders to go overseas. And we wound up going to [Camp Stoneman near San Francisco which was a port of embarkation], because we were shipping out. And we wound up being attached to the

outfit [29<sup>th</sup> Engineers] we trained with in photo mapping and went over to Manila in a convoy.

**And so what unit were you with when you went to Manila?**

We were attached to the 29<sup>th</sup> Engineers, but unattached. 'Cause we wound up, when we did get to Manila, going to the 648<sup>th</sup> Engineers Mapping Battalion who had just moved up from Australia.

**And again, before we went on record you allowed me to look at a wonderful album there, and it's called, "Of Maps and Men, A Battalion History of the 648<sup>th</sup> Engineers."**

Yeah.

**And I commented that it may be fortunate that I didn't go through that whole thing before we got on record, I would have had a THOUSAND questions to ask you.**

**So, do you remember the name of the ship that you went to Manila on?**

No, I never made a record of that and uh...

**Roughly, how many soldiers were on that ship?**

Oh, gracious, it was loaded; it was in the [several] hundreds that's for sure.

**And what was, how long did your trip over?**

The trip over? The trip over took 27 days total. We took intermediate steps at Enewetak Island.

Enewetak, uh huh. (Affirmative)

**Is that the same one that was later used for nuclear tests?**

Yes.

**O.K.**

Right. Enewetak. I'm trying to think of the second one now. My memory is giving me a hard time. [Oh, now I remember – it was Ulithi.]

**Were you allowed off the ship at those islands?**

No. We just stopped in the bay, and they refueled and got more supplies, and we hooked up with a convoy at the last stop to go over to Manila.

**Were there any, at that stage of the war, any threats against your ship from the Japanese Navy or submarines?**

Well, there was always a threat because we were still at war with Japan, so there was always the submarine threat. We never encountered any trouble on our way, so it was pretty much trouble free.

**And did your ship sail right into Manila?**

Yes, into the Manila Bay, Manila Harbor.

**And roughly, how many of you from the 648<sup>th</sup> were on that ship?**

Well there was nobody from the 648<sup>th</sup> on that ship, we were just thirty-nine guys going to the 648<sup>th</sup> who was already established inside of Manila in a warehouse that they had taken over for their operation. So we were in barracks, and the actual operation was carried out in this warehouse.

**Roughly, how many men were in the 648<sup>th</sup> counting your thirty-nine that they were added to.**

Oooh, I'm going to say they had to be somewhere between a hundred and a hundred and fifty, at least.

## **Part 5: Experiences**

**What was the 648<sup>th</sup> Battalion's mission?**

Their, their mission, actually, they had a lot of history before World War II. I think they were involved with the Alaskan Highway and a couple of other things. But their primary mission was working with Japanese Army Imperial Maps and updating them to give information to the Air Force and combat troops that would be needing them as the war wore on.

**So your clients weren't just the ground troops maneuvering men and tanks and equipment but also the air?**

Oh, yes. Army Air Corps.

**Yeah. Was your unit entirely assigned to Manila or were you, did you have other ...?**

We were all in Manila. We never moved from there.

**What were the living conditions like in Manila for you?**

Well, it was kind of interesting. I was describing this to my wife just the other day. I said it reminded me of, with your asking me to be interviewed, that we crawled into our bunks, but we put the mosquito nets around us not to protect against insects but the rats that were running around. So, at night you'd be laying in the bunk and all of a sudden you'd hear thump, thump, thump across the beams up ahead, over the top. (Laughing)

**What kind of building were you in?**

It was an old brick, uh, but wood structure inside. You know, brick outside, brick walls. Manila itself was pretty well destroyed. There were a lot of major battles fought in and around Manila. And I think, as I was telling you earlier, the government buildings were reduced to rubble, but that caused a lot of troubles for the troops.

**You have a number of wonderful photos there showing what looks like government buildings pretty much leveled.**

Yes.

**And, you'd mentioned that the house to house fighting was much less conventional because they were hiding in the rubble.**

Right.

**Besides your quarters, what were your living conditions like as far as access to sanitation and ...?**

Well, the Army, of course, they're always looking for the men's health and hygiene and so any situations that we had, they upgraded those. But really, in walking through the village, you'd see little streams of sewage and things of that type. The...Philippines were a third world country and they had less than the best of conditions like we know now here in the United States. Yet, it was relatively healthy. 'Cause they had sprayed for mosquitoes and things like that so we didn't have too much trouble that way.

**Do you know what they sprayed?**

It was DDT.

**(Simultaneously) DDT?**

Yes. They were still using DDT when I was there.

**Sure. Did anybody suffer any ill effects from that, do you know?**

I'm not aware of anybody suffering from that, but that's hard to say.

**Now as far as, you said you were in this old building, did you have indoor plumbing?**

Yes.

**So you had showers and ...**

Yes, yes. Oh, yeah.

**Flush toilets?**

Yes. That's why I say the Army took care of [the troops]. Once they took over a facility, they upgraded it to pretty good standards.

**I've lost track. What month did you arrive?**

Ah, let me see.

**You left in about February, '45, I think.**

Yeah, I thought I had... I got thirteen... Let me see. I was thirteen and a half months in, in Manila, so we can back that up from my separation of August 19<sup>th</sup> of '46. That'll give you an idea of ...

**Oh, so you got there in the summer of '45.**

Yes, summer of '45.

**So you were there before V-J Day it looks like, by more than a month.**

Yes, I was.

**And the reason that I'm asking these questions, I was wondering, at the time, during your time in Manila, say early on, was there any fighting anywhere on the island?**

Yes there was. In fact, they were still fighting. They had just cleared out the walled city which, I'm not sure that I know, but it had a description there that there was a walled city

in Manila that they were still clearing out the Japanese. So we were not any, in any danger ourselves, particularly, but it was somewhat close in the proximity of Manila.

**There's always a chance.**

Yes!

**Did you ever hear any of the sounds of war, I mean artillery, or...**

Not, not at all, Marty. No.

**Well, during your thirteen and a half months there, Ed, what was your job?**

Well, I was working on a desk and uh, taking care of things. But then after the 648<sup>th</sup> was demobilized, I wound up back with the 29<sup>th</sup> Engineers who I trained with. And I guess I can read from my discharge which gives me, gives you the best description that I can.

**That'd be fine.**

I served in the Philippine Islands with the 648<sup>th</sup> Engineer Photographic Battalion and the 29<sup>th</sup> Engineer Photographic Battalion for a total of thirteen and a half months. Used aerial photographs in the construction of planometric and topographical maps, aeronautical charts and controlled and uncontrolled mosaics. Assembled and made planometric maps for use in constructing topographic maps with stereo comparagraph. That's that little platform we talked about [earlier during our training in Portland].

**(Simultaneously) Platform we talked about.**

Yes. And I was in charge of operations of the 29<sup>th</sup> Engineers for six months, the last six months that I was over there.

**You were in charge?**

Yes.

**How many men in your unit, your group?**

Well, we had probably about fifty men. And this included some natives who worked for us. We had natives. And incidentally, those natives, they're very artistic. They were very good at working on maps. And that one caricature I showed you in that ...

**Caricature of you, caricature portrait of you?**

Yeah. This guy was a cartoonist. He was drawing caricatures of all the guys in the battalion. So it was kind of fun. So, I had, brought that home. But these people, these natives were easy to work with, very fine people.

**And you pretty much explained already what techniques were used and who your clients were for this mission. Did you ever get specific requests from, say the Air Corps, “We need a map of this area because we want to conduct an operation in there?”**

Well, we, we had printing presses and we made the maps. And we printed them up and any of the requests would come into the battalion for these maps from any unit then these maps would be shipped out to them.

**What kind of turnaround time did you give if somebody said, “We need this tactical map for an operation?”**

If, uh, you know, my memory is probably not doing me well right now, just thinking about that.

**Did they get it in days or weeks or ...?**

Well, I’m sure that in that time if somebody needed a map that we had already worked on and put together, it would be a matter of just hours because we, we had, you know, the plates from the maps already made up and so they could be put on the presses and run off.

**That equipment, was that U.S. manufacture or was it purchased over there?**

That was U.S. manufacture. That was all brought overseas when we went over there.

**I see. Ed, what was your rank at the time that you arrived there?**

When I arrived in Manila, I think I might have been a Private First Class, and by the time I was separated, I was a Tech Sergeant.

**Tech Sergeant. So, and when you were the, in charge of these fifty men, you were already a Tech Sergeant?**

I was a Tech Sergeant, yes.

**And that would be... Tech Sergeant, is that a E-5, E-6?**

I have no idea what relationship to grades... But in those days there were just Pfc., Corporal, Sergeant, then there was the one stripe Sergeant...the Tech Sergeant was two, I

mean, two chevrons underneath, and Master Sergeant was three. So, that's all I remember of those ranks in those days.

**Yeah, that's a way to work it. How many stripes were you?**

Uh, I was three over and two under.

**O.K. We talked a little bit about your life in Manila, at least sleeping with rats. Anything else about your day to day life, your food for example?**

Well, the food was good. I remember one of the things that, well, one of our, my favorite friend over there was a Polish lad from Hamtramck, Michigan, which is a little community in Detroit. And we got hot dogs over there, and we got those from the Navy. And they had casings on them that when they boiled them they turned really green. They looked like Christmas hot dogs. To me, it left a little bit to be desired. But Hank, he loved those hot dogs. He preferred those to steak. Steak, which we didn't get very often, it was a very long shot. No dairy products. But the food was healthy. We had good breakfasts. But problems. The conditions over there were such that, like the storage of flour, the flour weevil would get in there and sometimes you'd get what you'd think was raisin bread but, no, it was these little bugs in the bread.

**(Both Laughing) Baked right in.**

But they'd already been baked to a healthy state.

**You were over there before the war ended. During that time, did you, yourself, feel any pressure or stress from the situations?**

Ah, my makeup is not to get too stressful, even in those days, Marty. I just took whatever... I couldn't change things so I'd accepted 'em for what they were.

**Now again, not that we discussed that much off record, but you mentioned somebody, a friend of yours, dying over there. That is one of the questions I normally ask. Were there any casualties in your unit?**

Yes. Well, Tom, this young man from New York, and he was tragically killed. Every place we had to go, we had to hitch hike our way and on Army vehicles or, not even the commercial vehicles because they were overloaded, but the Army vehicles. He was on a truck that got into an accident and he was killed. So that was the only casualty. It was a really, a non-battle casualty.

**Right. That was somebody that you were close to?**

Yes. He was one of the fellas that we trained with. And, oh, there was another young man who died from hepatitis. He just had a mental situation and you talk about, you know, what my mind was... But I mean he, he developed a mental situation. He wouldn't take showers; he wouldn't [keep clean habits]. His hygiene was terrible and he finally developed [hepatitis]. I know we were quarantined for about a week. Where we all had to...be examined and run through a physical every day, short arm and that sort of thing. And finally we were all cleared, but he died, and so that was the second casualty, but that was a personal thing. Unfortunately, we couldn't do anything about it.

**Sure. During the time you were overseas, how did you stay in touch with your family?**

All by letter. It was, if you remember, we had those victory letters, or whatever they called them. They were tissue paper, and so that was the only way that I had, and then when I was getting ready to be, go out of the Army, that is, went to a replacement depot, I did send a telegram to my, then fiancé, and that's what I showed you, I think, in this one book. And so that was it. There was no such thing as telephones. At least I was not aware of them at the time. We didn't have access to them.

**Well, I'm gonna, I want to ask you some specific questions about the telegram. But first on the V mail, I've heard different descriptions of what the physical V mail looked like. Now, you said yours was like a tissue paper? How did it work?**

Well, it was a one page thing, and then it was folded up and you ...

**And that became the envelope?**

Yep, became the envelope and you put the address on the outside of it. It was relatively, just a one page thing.

**And, as far as you know, that physical document made it all the way home. It wasn't then photographed somewhere else and reduced in size?**

No. Well, everything went through censorship in those days. And so, you know, some of the fellas' letters probably got a little hacked up if they said the wrong things in their letters. But, to the best of my knowledge, none of mine got that way.

**Who did the censoring for your unit?**

I don't know.

**Not somebody in your unit?**

No, not in the unit. No, this would be somebody that's connected with the post office, Army Post Office. And it would be run through them.

**Somebody that doesn't know you individually?**

Right, yeah, completely away.

**The telegram... and we will have that as an exhibit with your interview. It's a very touching telegram. How long had you known your fiancé, now wife, at the time that you went overseas?**

Well, this is a very interesting situation, Marty. Actually, I knew my present wife ever since we were in grammar school. We started out in school and graduated together from grammar school, but we went to separate high schools. And then we reconnected in our senior years in high school through a fraternal organization. And ...

**What was that?**

The Czechoslovak Society of America which is a fraternal insurance organization which we still belong to. And it had lodges and so we went through... this was our social life, really. So, I knew my wife through that activity. And my wife, we were not [married when I went into the service]. And it wasn't until I got into the service that I finally decided that this is the gal that I think I want to be hooked up with. And so I proposed to her, and she accepted, and her folks accepted, and that's the way it went.

**So the, you'd been writing to her during the time you were overseas and she writing to you. Were any of those letters ever saved?**

No. I didn't save 'em. Of course, we had a limited amount of storage capacity. Whether Ellie saved any of those, I don't even really remember. To this day, I don't think she has them anymore. I think they probably got packed. We read some of them and then destroyed them which is unfortunate.

**Yeah, but at least you have that telegram, and I thank you for sharing that with us. We will, make that, as I say, an exhibit to the interview.**

O.K.

**Now, with that background, I'm gonna rephrase my next question. How did soldiers, yourself or, including other soldiers in Manila, entertain themselves off duty?**

Oh, off duty we could [do what we wanted to do]. There was a USO in Manila which I never went to. But we socialized. We had an enlisted man's club on base where we

could go relax; we had drinks that were available to us. And there was some social life. One of the fellas in our unit, he was kind of an enterprising guy; he located some of the young ladies there and so that we, we socialized with them at the club and so forth. It gave us a little diversion and gave us an opportunity to meet some of the people.

**He was able to get them permission to come on base and enter the club?**

Oh, yes, mm mm. (Affirmative)

**The club, the alcohol they served there, was it native, or were you actually able to get American brand beers imported?**

I think we had both. It was all 3.2 beer. It was not, you know, none of the alcoholic level that we have today in beers available to us. But I do remember that there was a problem with alcoholic drinks over there. There were some of these [native] people that were taking, oh, what do I want to call it? Fuel and making alcohol, and it was poisonous, and guys would drink it. Several GI's that we heard about died from drinking that. One of the other outfits, not in my direct group, but one of the guys was found dead in his bunk one time in Manila.

**From drinking this ...?**

From drinking this liquor. Yeah, that was when I was with the 648<sup>th</sup>.

**Why were they so desperate? Was drinking regular liquor not permitted to the troops?**

Alcohol was not available to the average enlisted men. Officers' clubs had the liquor. They got their U.S. liquor. That was brought over as rations as far as I know.

**Oh.**

But the enlisted men very seldom got it.

**3.2 beer or something from the outside?**

Yeah. Well, we eventually got [some liquor] available. Remember "Three Feathers" back in the war time?

**Sure. Three Feathers.**

It was a cheap liquor, but...

**When I say sure, I've heard of it, but ...**

But we'd get some of that once in a while, and we'd share it around amongst ourselves.

**Was that an American product?**

[Yes], that was an American product.

**Was it whiskey?**

Yeah, whiskey.

**Three Feathers. But you're saying it was notoriously a cheap grade?**

Yeah, it was not a top grade kind of liquor.

**You mentioned the USO. Do you know, did they have USO shows there at that time?**

That I couldn't speak to because having never gone to 'em, I never had an opportunity to witness anything like that.

**Did you ever hear of any announcements that there were going to be any famous entertainers coming through?**

That I never heard of while I was there.

**And while you were there, did you ever have any leave, did you ever travel anywhere?**

Yeah, I traveled down to see a family acquaintance, uh, down at the southern end of the Leyte, this friend of mine. And, of course, again, it's all hitchhiking, that's the only way you could go.

**Uh huh. (Affirmative)**

And then we had one, one time we had leave, as I remember. We had a couple of days, maybe five days that we could go to a kind of a resort-like place for military guys. And it was a beach where we just did nothing but lay around. That was the only time that I can remember any kind of that sort of thing happening.

**Well, did you go down as a group?**

Yeah, just a few of us. Just a couple of us were picked. There were not many of us that did go down.

**Well, I should also ask, after, would you describe V-J Day to me as it was celebrated where you were?**

You know, at the time it happened, it was an absolute relief. Yes, we did celebrate with whatever we had. And it was...we were just so glad it was all over. After it was over, then we started wondering well, how soon is it now that we're going to go home. I'm sure it was the first thing.

And incidentally, going back to your question about entertainment. We did, somebody scraped up some golf clubs and golf balls and they had a place called "Wack-Wack Golf Course" and so that, that was some form of entertainment that I have to tell you about [what] we did. Other than sightseeing and golfing, that's about it, whatever we could squeeze in when we had the time.

**Do you know how the golf course got the name Wack-Wack?**

Haven't the slightest idea. It seemed like everything was double over there. The So So Dam, the Wack-Wack golf course. That was a native thing. I don't know much about that background.

**Did it have that name before it became a golf course?**

Oh, yeah.

**It wasn't trying to describe the sound of the ball being hit?**

No, not, to the best of my knowledge, it didn't. Somehow it got, or it had the name when we were going there.

**End of Side A**

**Side B**

We'll back up to after Wack-Wack.

**We ran out of tape, again.**

That's O.K.

**Before we realized it. I think the end of the tape we were still talking about the Wack-Wack golf course and now we're back on.**

**And what I asked you before, we'll go through it again was: at V-J Day, after the war was officially over... Well first I asked you what the celebration was like there where you were?**

Well, it certainly was [a great, wonderful euphoria]. You know, there was, we talk about gun fire, I guess that was one time I can honestly say that there was gunfire after V-J Day was announced. And there was euphoria. Everybody was so happy that we finally had reached the end of this goofy situation, and then the second thing that came to mind was, you know, when are we going home, that was, that was the most important part.

**Now, you were over there for a full, almost a year, just about exactly a year after the war was over. And I asked you this before we realized that we were out of tape. How did your life change and your specific unit's mission and your job?**

Well, pretty much, after V-J Day then it was a matter of demobilization and heading back to the States. Equipment was packaged and wrapped and boxed and so forth and sent back. And we went to a replacement depot awaiting our shipping orders to get aboard a ship and head back home.

**Now this replacement depot was at a different area than where you were?**

Yeah, it was a tent area. Tent City so to speak.

**How long were you at the Tent City?**

We were probably there a couple of weeks, three weeks, maybe.

**Before you got to the replacement, the Tent City, you were still in your old quarters?**

Yes.

**What were you doing at that time?**

Well, pretty much like I say, we were kind of winding down. Maybe I can't remember day to day because your mind is starting to really revolve around how soon are we getting out of here, and let's get going. We really didn't ...

**You didn't have a real mission anymore?**

No, our mission at that time was pretty well sealed up.

**So you had more time on your hands, how did you fill it?**

Well, we filled it with finishing up with whatever we had to do and then getting ready to pack up and leave.

**You showed me some photographs, Ed, of an athletic field and you mentioned something about playing football?**

Rizal Stadium. Yeah, well that was ...

**Rizal?**

Rizal. R-I-Z-A-L. And that was when I was still with the 648<sup>th</sup>, and so I, they formed a football team. We had a fella there who was a college gentleman who played college football. And so he put it all together. So we called ourselves The Manila Bears, and we had two games that I remember, both of which I think we lost. But we did have a lot of fun. It was a way of filling in time [during] our spare time.

**So, before we bring you back home, is there anything else that we should discuss about your time in Manila before you actually got on a ship to come home?**

Well, I think, as I told you earlier, it was my first experience being in a third world country. Getting to know a little bit about how some of the rest of the world looks like, because I had never been outside the bounds of the United States. And so getting to meet some of those people, and meeting some very fine people over there, Marty. I think that was a wonderful experience to me.

**So you actually didn't just stay in camp? You took the opportunity to get out in the countryside?**

Oh, yes, yeah.

**How did you usually travel?**

Again, we, if we didn't have a vehicle available from our own unit, then it was hitchhike. And the trucks were up and down the roads, and you'd put your thumb up, and the guys would stop, and you'd jump on board the back of the truck and take off.

**Were you ever out over night?**

Ah, well, when I went down to visit this friend of mine, I was gone for, I think, three days.

**So you really got to see the countryside?**

Yeah.

**Did you see much evidence of the fighting along the way?**

Well, you know, you saw destruction, evidence of the war itself and here and there as you went along.

**So, you were then in the Tent City awaiting your, your ship. Would you describe that, the two weeks if anything occurred then and then actually boarding the ship?**

Well, the most, the one thing I remember, we had a unit of people, they were, military people. And they were of the type you couldn't trust, because some of the guys had their duffel bags slit open and some of their things stolen from them in this replacement depot. Things like cameras and personal items.

**These were other GI's doing the stealing?**

Yeah. And so, then, we had to put a guard at the tent after that started during that three week period. And that's one of the things that I remember. After that, after putting the guard in the tent, then we didn't have any more trouble.

**Some of the photographs in the books here, that you have, the albums, are your photographs. What kind of camera did you have at the time?**

You know, I think, if I remember, it was that little 127. Oh, it was a 127film.

**Paper backed film?**

Yeah, yeah, right, exactly. And if we could get the film in the PX, then it was O.K., you know, but you weren't always sure you'd get it.

**Did you get those photos processed over there, or did you...?**

Well, of course, we had the facilities for processing the photographs being a photo mapping battalion.

**We're lucky to have you here because you brought some excellent photographs to the interview.**

**Part 6: Return to the States**

**You get on the ship and you head home, preceded by the telegram to your wife to be. Anything to talk about on your trip back home, on the liberty ship?**

Yeah. (Laughing)

**O.K.**

Of course, the trip back home was much shorter than going over. I think it only took us, I don't [remember exactly, about a week]. But we went by a circuitous route up toward Japan and then across. And about a day and a half out of San Francisco, we hit rough water, and it was about lunch time, and the ship tipped over about 45° and just sent trays and hardware all over the mess hall, and so we had to, oh, clean up. I was a mess sergeant, one of several mess sergeants that they had on the ship, and so we had to get everything put back together again before the guys came [to eat]. And, of course, the rough water stayed with us until we got to Frisco. And, uh, some of the fellas, the tray wound up on the table but all of a sudden you'd see a tray but nobody behind it. (Both laughing) They were up on topside over the railing and they were just losing some of their lunch. But, no, other than that, no. We docked in Frisco, and we went into camp and got our orders and got on a train and, and headed back home. And I always remember that train trip because every train stop we ever made in some little town, if there was a little grocery store close to a train, the guys hopped off the train and they headed there. And they cleaned out all the milk and ice cream and all the dairy products that they hadn't had for [months]. (laughing) And so that was one thing I always remember. And, of course, then we eventually got back to Fort Sheridan where we were separated and came home.

**When you got home, the war had really been over for a year, and longer in Europe. What was your welcome like? Did you lose any of the excitement that surrounded others' homecoming, do you think?**

(Laughing). No. I remember going home. I came to my home on Whipple Street, and we had a dog at that time, a little terrier, when I walked through the front door, this dog got so excited. She was kind of heavy set, and she jumped up a full three feet off the floor and fell back on her back. We all laugh about that little scene to this day.

**She remembered you.**

Oh, yeah, yeah. That is the [one] thing that [I remember]. I was gone for over two years. Well, [actually] I did get home once in between, but anyhow....

**When you came home, did they know exactly when you were going to show up, or was it a surprise?**

Oh, no. I, I think I telephoned and told them that I was ...

**On your way.**

Yeah.

**And your then fiancé, was she at your house when you got there?**

Yeah, she was there to welcome me. Yeah, between her folks and her and my folks and my siblings, uh, brother and sisters.

**Was there a party?**

Well, I can't recall. I guess everything was a party after that. (Laughing)

## **Part 7: Life After Military**

**Sure. Well, after the, after you got out of the service, what did you do next?**

Well, I got out in August. Ellie and I planned our wedding. We were married in November of that year, after August. And, of course, the first thing was to look for a job. And I got a job at Crane Company in their Engineering Department. They were very close to home on Kedzie Avenue. And so I started my engineering career there to be exact, even though I really started it at Bendix earlier, before the war. But Crane was my start.

**Did you have any more education after you got out of the service?**

Yes. First of all, I wound up in um, the field of materials and welding at Crane Company research and development laboratories, and so I took some metallurgical courses at IIT, nights.

**Were those paid by the GI Bill?**

No. I paid for those on my own. And then, I also had an opportunity to go for my Masters Degree at University of Chicago while I was at Crane Company. So I have a Masters in Business Administration. And, uh...

**And was that sponsored by the GI Bill?**

That was, no, that was by the company.

**Ah, wonderful.**

Yeah, that, uh, I fell into that one because somebody backed out of, they invited him to go, and he didn't want to go, so I went.

**Did you stay with Crane throughout your career then?**

No. I stayed for Crane, uh. Let me back it up. I was there twenty-two years, '46 – '68, yeah. And then I left Crane Company, and I went to, uh, I, I, just really resigned my, because of a plant manager. Then I went to, I worked for Electromotive for about three or four months, in between... They were close to home, and it was an interim job. Then a friend of mine hooked me up with Commonwealth Edison, and that's where I finished my working career, 18 years.

**And you were married in '46, and you have how many children?**

Three.

**Three.**

Two girls and a boy.

**And their names are?**

I have Elaine is the oldest, Phyllis [she prefers Fe] is the second girl, and Wayne is our son.

**And now is the part I sort of mentioned at the beginning of the interview we would come to. We have a general question, did you stay in contact with any wartime buddies after the service. And I'll ask you about that in general, but first I want to get to the Forty-six Club because that's why you're here today.**

(laughs) Yeah.

**That's how we found out about you, through Tony Sanda. Would you describe the Forty-six Club?**

The Forty-six Club was a unique little [group]. After the war a number of us got married in 1946, and we would gather in a group. And all the gals knew one another. And the fellas didn't know one another. The girls married different fellas. One gal met her husband at a USO. And we were at another couple's house who had been married much longer; they were married before the war. And we talked then, and somebody brought up the subject of forming the Forty-six Club. And before you know it, it was a done deal. And then this other couple said, "Wait a minute, you young people gotta have chaperones," so they also became members of the Forty-six Club. So we had a wonderful group. It was twelve people to start with.

**Six couples?**

Yeah, six couples.

**Twelve people.**

Yeah. And today, Tony and I are the only [male] living members of the original group.

**Living members. And he mentioned that you still, when you go out, you take the wives, the widows of the other men.**

Oh, yes, all, all the women from the original Forty-six, that are living, are with us.

**And so, the women were really the common connection to begin with, and they knew each other as being neighbors and schoolmates?**

Yeah, right. Or even friends through this CSA that I talked about earlier, fraternal organization. [They also were Nurse's Aides during the war].

**Oh, yes.**

That was another way of connecting.

**Well, it's a wonderful story about the Forty-six Club. Did you stay in contact with any other war time buddies?**

Not too many. Uh, There's one gentleman that I still contact. He's out on the East Coast, he stopped here on his way visiting railroad clubs and things like that. He's a railroad buff. And, uh, Elmer Fry is his name; he's still living. We still correspond by Christmas cards and things. Beyond that, I don't really have any. Another fella that I was in contact with was a fella by the name of Ray Arthur that I met up, and Ray has passed away. He's gone. So that's about the limit of my contact with old Army buddies. I know a lot of fellas have reunions either Army or Navy and uh, I never got involved with any of that. [One other fellow in the 29<sup>th</sup> Engineers belongs to the CSA, but he lives in Ohio, so I do not see him very often.]

**Did you ever join any Veteran's organizations?**

No, I never did, Marty.

**O.K. Ed, I've exhausted all my line of questions, but before we close is there anything else that you can think of, anything other anecdotes you'd like to share with, for the record?**

I think the military life, nobody may like, it's a million dollar experience, but you wouldn't take a million dollars to go back through it again. So that's one thing I can comment on. I met a lot of wonderful people in that experience, and I was very fortunate that I didn't have to face combat. So, I was lucky in that respect also. But, the thing is,

maybe it gives you a bit of a discipline, at least it did me. Not that I didn't have discipline before I went in there, because like I say I was in High School ROTC where I learned discipline. And my family life was such that my father was a disciplinarian (chuckling) so that went a long way.

**It wasn't a big shock to be in the military.**

No. no. And, so I could accept my own responsibilities.

## **Part 8: Conclusion**

**Ed, thank you very much for coming over today to share these experiences.**

My pleasure, Marty.

**You've added some very important and interesting information to the body of record that goes to the Library of Congress. And we're going off record.**

Yes. O.K.

I was going to ask you one more thing, Marty. I do have a friend who I worked with at Crane Company who, he's a WWII and a Korean Veteran?

**Do you think he'd be interested?**

I don't know, I would talk to him if you were interested.

**Please, I'd love to talk to him.**

O.K. I will, I will find out and then I will.....