

Walter Greczynski
Veteran

Allen Greczynski
Interviewer

Interviewed on Sunday March 27, 2005
American Legion Post
Saugerties, New York

Q: Walter, were you drafted or did you enlist?

WG: Enlist

Q: What service were you enlisted in?

WG: United States Army Air Force

Q: Where were you living at the time you enlisted?

WG: Manhattan, Lower East Side

Q: Where did they send you on your first day?

WG: Atlantic City, Knickerbocker Hotel'

Q: Fort Dix after that?

WG: No basic training was at the hotel. They had about three or four hotels, the Air Force, and they had people who were drafted or enlisted there. We were taking tests to designate where they were going to send us for training. And for MOS to see what trade you would be qualified for. Just a job in the Army Air Force

Q: You took?

WG: I went to radio school in Illinois, to a military camp in Illinois that had a technical school. I was sent there to learn how to deal with radios and so forth. A radio operator

WG: From there I was sent, after finishing six weeks or so, I was sent to Laredo Army Airfield in Laredo, Texas for training as an aerial gunner.

Q: You were training on planes there?

WG: After finishing six weeks of basic training there as an aerial gunner, I was sent to Boise, Idaho where I was assigned to a flying B-24 squadron.

WG: I went up in a B-24 on three different occasions. After the third occasion, we landed and my pilot sent me for a medical evaluation. And they found that over 10,000 feet in the air, once I put on the oxygen mask because after 10,000 feet in a bomber you are supposed to put an oxygen mask on while flying at that height, after examination by three medical doctors, they decided they were going to ground me. That I would not survive as an aerial gunner once I went into combat.

WG: So from there they transferred me to the military Massachusetts Institute of Technology where I was trained as a LORAN.

Q: That's long range navigation?

WG: Yes, long range navigation equipment. From there I was sent to Key Largo, FL. I spent over a year or more down there as an operator of LORAN equipment.

WG: By that time the war with Germany, Germany had surrendered. I was sent to Fort Dix and from Fort Dix I was discharged from the Army.

Q: So you never got to go overseas? Never got to see any action?

WG: I never went overseas.

Q: I know at one time you spoke about B-25's. You never got a chance to go B-25's?

WG: No. The B-25's, I asked the medical officers to send me to a B-25 or B-26 bomber school and they said no. That we did not have the time necessary to start training us to different aircraft.

WG: I imagine that they knew, Washington figured the war was starting to come to an end. Which we didn't know this was up, the Generals and all would know. So from there I was discharged from Fort Dix and came home and that was it. Period.

Q: The B-24's though that you were trained, they went to where? Ploesti?

WG: Oil fields? They probably were. I don't know. I never flew to overseas. I only flew the 24's in this country.

Q: When you were in the service, how did you keep in touch with your family?

WG: By mail.

Q: How was your food in the Army Air Force?

WG: The food was very good. I have no quarrels with the food in the Air Force of the United States.

Q: So did you, how did they entertain themselves?

WG: Just USO

Q: You ran a video didn't you? You ran movies I mean. Didn't you go to movie school?

WG: Oh, that was a side job in the Army. I was an assistant projectionist on my time off and they paid me, I think it was \$1 an hour and with that money, I saved it and was able to buy a ticket on the train and came home on furlough. I had a 30day furlough. The money I made as a projectionist brought me to New York and back to Idaho.

Q: So you were in Idaho and Key West, FL?

WG: Key Largo, FL

Q: And also in Idaho?

WG: Gowen Field in Idaho was a B-24 training school.

Q: Was that one of the best places you were in?

WG: Yes

Q: So did you have any friends that you met that you kept in contact with?

WG: Yes a friend of mine, I used to pal around with in Boise, Idaho. I was waiting to go on deployment to go to New Guinea but by that time the war with Japan was over so we never got sent and that is when I was sent back.

Q: See any USO shows or entertainers?

WG: Well, on the base whenever they had them, otherwise we didn't see them. We just saw regular movies. They had a movie theater.

Q: You saw Anthony Quinn didn't you?

WG: Yes, in Idaho. On stage.

Q: I know for photographs. Let me hold this one up. (photo shown) There you are. That was radioman school? This photograph was radioman school?

WG: The radio school? Belleville, Illinois

Q: Where were you when WWII ended? Where were you stationed?

WG: Florida

Q: So Key Largo

WG: Yes, I was assigned there.

Q: So after you had been discharged, you go back to school or to work? You use the GI Bill?

WG: No, I came home and got a job. But I used the GI Bill to take school training with Delehanty to become a police officer and different civil service tests.

WG: Delehanty was like a civil service school that you paid and they trained you, showed you how to take these tests and they qualified you for them and so forth. I took six tests and I passed six tests.

Q: What was the deal, I remember there was a story you telling me, the mining engineers?

WG: When I got discharged and came home. I was a candidate for geology school to become a geologist, a mining engineer.

Q: What happened?

WG: Well, it never occurred. I did not have the resources or the money.

Q: Anybody else you kept in contact with?

WG: No, just the regular bunch that I knew before we went to the service and after the service

Q: Fellow in Boston?

WG: What fellow in Boston?

Q: Arinello?

WG: Well he was one of the few close friends that I kept in, (pause) he died. One son's a doctor and the other a dental expert. His wife's name was Francis.

WG: He was a close friend. We used to keep in touch with each other. Then there was Bob Hedges, was supposed to be my best man from Idaho and he couldn't make it. He didn't have the money to come. And he died in his 50's, he died young.

Q: Veterans organizations? American Legion and DAV?

WG: DAV and American Legion

Q: Now you had gotten a hernia in Idaho.

WG: In Idaho, yes.

Q: I remember you told me they operated on you while you were there.

WG: Yes

Q: So, your experiences you had. Do you want to say something, anything about your experiences? Your military experience

WG: There was none. It was just regular experience. I did a lot of general duties at the bases I was at, waiting to go where they assigned me. By that time, the war was over. With the hernia it prevented me from a lot, taking jobs. But on different bases they have a term general duty. While you are waiting to go on assignment somewhere they assign you to general duty. You work mostly days, cleaning day centers on the base, you know and different jobs; messenger, deliver films or movies and so forth. In other words, general duties. And winter time, winter jobs. Summer time, summer work.

Q: There is a story, I know you gave blood for one of your friends.

WG: Yes, Bob's sister's baby so she could have an operation in Wyoming at a children's hospital. She had a problem, she couldn't keep her head up. As far as I know, she is okay. She teaches children with handicaps somewhere. I don't know if it is in Idaho or at one of the other states but at a school.

WG: Clemens, what was her name? Rosemarie Clemens. Well whatever, I gave her two pints of blood. She came out ok.

WG: I haven't talked to that family, well I talk to Ellen the Aunt once a year around Christmas. Most of the family is gone.

Q: Anything else you would like to talk about? Anything from the interview or anything we didn't cover?

WG: (Jokingly) What am I doing here? (laughs)

Q: This is all part of the Veterans History Project. You're my father and on for this.