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Brian Rockowitz

World War II, 4pm

Interview

The day Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese, my grandmother, Jean Davis-Rockowitz, was listening to the radio and heard that the war had begun. Jean was visiting her sister Sara the day it was announced. She was struck with complete and total shock. All of them could not believe that this was happening. The Christmas after Pearl Harbor would be the first one my grandparents had together and the only one for awhile.

Jean married my grandfather, Ed Rockowitz, two weeks before he left for the army and he would not live at home again until five years later. Ed joined the Army in March 26 of 1941 and was stationed in Camp Upton, Long Island New York until they transferred him to Ft. Belvoir, Va. Any chance he got, he would try to make it home. This happened at least once a month before he got deployed overseas and that was in the middle of January, 1942.

Ed was apart of the 59th Engineers Americal Division which was formally the Yankee Division, he started his training by making bridges and pontoon crossways. During this training time he was being paid twenty one dollars a month, once completed the pay check rose to thirty dollars a month and the training took three months to finish. The highest rank Ed made was Tech Sgt. During the war, Ed worked to making the water wells and maintaining the water tanks. Ed made good friends with the cook, the handyman and the washing

machine people for the most obvious of reasons.

The one time Jean was able to visit Ed while he was on base was in May, she notice that he had to stay in uniform and it was made of wool. The weather was hot and the uniforms did not help any of the soldiers. She felt bad for him, but that did not stop her from removing her stocking and girdle.

The thing that bothered my grandmother the most about Ed being deployed was the lack of speedy communications. Letters would take many long weeks to get back home. When they did come in there was usually a stack of them all together. To keep track of where Ed was, my grandparents developed a code. The second letter of the first word in the second paragraph would be the beginning letter of where he was. This worked to get past the inspectors who looked for lose information that could not be let out. Lose lips, sink ships.

Extra money was earned in odd ways in military life. Ed would pitch quarters. City boys were used to playing against the sides of buildings, but my grandfather was a country man and playing in the dirt is different then against the side of a building. Ever once in awhile Jean would get a pitching quarters check. Some other soldiers they knew made their side money by painting Christmas cards. Another fellow soldier made his money by selling bed sheets to the natives in Africa.

All this time, Jean worked in the Empire State building working for Mac Trucks. She loved this job. She worked in the advertising department as a secretary. The work Mac Truck did for the war effort earned them the Navy E award. Jean also sold stamps in the lobby of the local theater to support the war

effort.

The Bulldog that sits on the hood of Mac Trucks was getting a new look during the time of the war. Jean remembers the new bull dog design, but since all the metals were being used in the war, the bull dog new look was put on hold. Others things that affected everyday life was the rationing of things and needing a stamp book to get those items, like food. Though food was rationed, Jean still remembers that the restaurants always had a good selection and never seem to be low on food.

When Ed returned from the war, his reunion with Jean was an odd one. She met him at the door, and all they could say to one another was hello. It was nothing like the movies. The next day family came to celebrate Ed's return. The police came that night to check on a noise disturbance. Ed then had to go to Atlantic City to be re-socialized to get make into the swing of living back at home. His last couple of months in the army were as a MP in Ft. Dix, New Jersey. His last day was April 15, 1945. When he left the army he was done. After that Ed applied to both the New York city Police department and Fire department. The police called him first and that is how he became a NY police officer.

When the bombs were dropped on Japan, both Ed and Jean thought it was wonderful news. Although the mood was depressed walking around the city. On V-J day, they breathed a sigh of relief that it was finally over.

The thing that Jean learned from the war, was that even in the most scary moments people can come together and work through it. Working in NYC was a great experience, even with the blackouts. Jean remembers playing cards in the

closet with some friends during one such occasion.