

**Edwin C. Frieberg
Veteran**

**Michael Aikey, Wayne Clarke
NYS Military Museum
Interviewers**

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Edwin C. Frieberg EF
Interviewer 1 Q1
Interviewer 2 Q2

Q: So it is Edward C. Frieberg?

EF: Edwin.

Q: Oh yes I don't read very well in the dark. Where were you born Mr. Frieberg?

EF: Schenectady, New York.

Q: So you are a lifetime resident of Schenectady?

EF: I am. I was born in Ellis hospital. I was a huge 6 pounds.

Q: My.

EF: No more.

Q: Where were you when World War 2 broke out?

EF: Well I was still in school.

Q: You were still in school.

EF: Yes, I was still in high school.

Q: Okay, and do you remember where you were when you heard about this place called Pearl Harbor?

EF: I can't remember but since it happened on a Sunday my guess is I would have been home.

Q: You would have been home?

EF: Yes.

Q: Okay. So what year were you in high school when the war broke out?

EF: The war started in 41 so I would have been 15. So I was probably a sophomore.

Q: As the war started did it have much impact on your life in Schenectady?

EF: No. Well, I say it had some impact, we had all kinds of clubs at high school.

Q: Oh, really.

EF: To send stuff to the veterans and people that were in the service.

Q: Were you a member of any of the clubs?

EF: Not that I recall.

Q: Did the rationing affect you at all at home?

EF: Yes. I can remember going to the meat market down State Street there in Schenectady with my mother, they rationed the meat the butter.

Q: You had to have tickets or coupons to buy anything.

EF: Yea you had to have coupons.

Q: When did it come across your mind that you might want to come into the navy?

EF: Well when I was a Senior I had an opportunity. I knew that the draft was coming and also my father was in the navy in World War 1 so I leaned towards the navy. So if I'm going in I wanted to be in the navy. So there was a test that they gave for the V5 and V6 programs.

Q: Which were for what?

EF: The V5 was for the air force, the naval air force. The V6 was for the radio technicians and electronic technicians. So I took the test along with a lot of the others and I passed both but when it came to a physical I didn't pass the V5 test because I had bad teeth and all kinds of fillings. Those days the dentists filled them frequently. Anyway I had soft teeth. So I was not eligible for the navy air force but I was eligible for the V6 program and I got picked. I think I was the only one from our entire class that went to the V6 program.

Q: Did you graduate first?

EF: Oh yea.

Q: You did graduate?

EF: Graduated in late January and then the first week in February I was on the train and was heading for Chicago.

Q: So you went to basic training first, at was it Great Lakes you went?

EF: Great Lakes. Yep.

Q: So here is a young guy from Schenectady probably haven't traveled much prior to that?

EF: No.

Q: So what was it like going off to the big city?

EF: Well we weren't in the big city very long. We went to Great Lakes, and oh jeez I remember it was a rainy day, oh it was pouring. They gave us our issue sea bag and they'd throw all the clothes in it, and then I'd start carrying it. We must have walked a mile, mile and a half. Needless to say with that heavy seabag with all those clothes in it got heavy.

Q: And was that your first time away from home?

EF: Yes it would have been.

Q: Where you homesick at all?

EF: No. It was exciting I wanted to do whatever I had to do. So we set those sea bags down in that wet mud pick them up carry them some more. Then you'd sit down, set them down. Then we'd get to the barracks they said alright everyone has got a dirty sea bag, scrub them. So we were out there in the middle of the night scrubbing sea bags.

Q: So this was your introduction to the navy. What were you thinking at that point?

EF: What did I do to deserve this?

Q: What kind of group were you in with?

EF: They came from all over. Two fellows that I went out on the train with were from Sayre, Pennsylvania. Harry Branning and Evan Manse. And we were good friends while we were in the service but then after you go through we only had about a month at Great Lakes and then they sent us out for pre-radio. I went to Wright Junior College in Chicago for pre-radio. And as a matter of fact, I didn't even get all my shots when I was in Great Lakes. A couple of them I had to get when I was there. They moved us through fast. And after a month of pre-radio, I wound up at primary school in Gulfport, Mississippi. From Chicago to Gulfport.

Q: What was that school like?

EF: Which school? Pre-radio was very nice at Wilbur Wright Junior College in North Chicago.

Q: So you lived fairly well and lived on campus?

EF: What do you call a campus? It was one big building, in those days they didn't have campuses.

Q: So this was 1944?

EF: Yes. Spring of 1944.

Q: You are off next to the south.

EF: Off the south to Gulfport, they put us in Quonset huts. And then again the rain hits oh my god we were floating in rain. You couldn't even walk out of your Quonset hut without six inches of rain in Mississippi.

Q: So what did you think of Mississippi coming out of upstate New York?

EF: Oh it was different. It was hot and wet. But it wasn't too bad we had school, primary school was three months. I flunked one month for some reason so I spent four months down there instead of three.

Q: What it good training?

EF: Oh yea, sure. I remember what friends of mine from high school were in the air force and they were in Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi right near Gulfport. And when I got a little liberty I went over. Of course in the south you wear your whites all neat and shiny in my white outfit and visit the guys in Keesler field the air force base and they had just come in from bivouac. Oh my god, they were a sorry bunch of guys. And I was kidding them. They said "you're in the navy so get the hell out of here!" They are in their tent and say "get the hell out of here we don't want to look at you!" So anyway after that primary I was sent back to Navy Pier in Chicago for secondary school which was eight months.

Q: So what did you do in secondary school?

EF: Radar. How to break down a radio, how to build a radio, sonar, IFF. Whatever electronic gear.

Q: So you must have had some sort of security clearance being involved in radar and sonar?

EF: Well you're in the navy I guess that's clearance enough.

Q: So what did your dad think about you being in the navy?

EF: Oh he was very happy very proud of me. He did very well he only had an eighth-grade education but he wound up working at G.E. for a year or two and as a result when World War 1 came and he went in the navy he wound up chief petty officer. Which is pretty damn good for a good a guy with only an eighth-grade education.

Q: So after your secondary radio school where too next?

EF: I was assigned to Camp Shoemaker in California.

Q: You're getting all over the place. So what was California like?

EF: California was nice I remember sitting in a barber chair when the announcement came that Franklin Roosevelt died. That's one place I remember.

Q: What did you think at that point?

EF: I don't know. I felt bad that he had passed away although my father was a rock rib Republican. Mother was a Democrat and at my stage in life I didn't care who was who.

Q: And how long were you at that posting?

EF: Oh maybe 3 weeks until they assigned me to ship. I was assigned to the USS Latimer which would be APA-152.

Q: And an APA is a?

EF: Attack transport. We carried about 1500 troops for invasions.

Q: How did an attack transport differ from an ordinary transport?

EF: The bigger transports would carry several thousand. I think they actually took one of the big cruise ships and made it into a transport so they might have had 5 or 6 thousand ground troops but we were strictly combat. And I was out two weeks ago to Vancouver, Washington. My son lives in Vancouver and he went on the internet and was interested in finding out all about the Latimer so he gave me this. That was named after a town or city in Texas.

Q: Were you a plank holder?

EF: No I was assigned. I think I made a little note there. I started aboard here. All this here was before I was aboard. They went through quite a bit before I was aboard.

Q: So when you were assigned to them this was 1945 was it? I was going to say I think Roosevelt died sometime in 1945, didn't he?

EF: I'm not sure about that I think it was 44.

Q: You were on the Latimer first you are saying?

EF: No I was at Camp Shoemaker.

Q: What was your thought about coming aboard this ship for the first time?

EF: Who knows? All I could think about was I'm sure I'm going to get seasick. Which I did. The first day aboard, just tied up just going like this, nice and easy and I got sick. But then we went to San Francisco and then to Seattle. At that point, I was no longer seasick. Got my sea legs.

Q: What was your job?

EF: I was a radio technician.

Q: What did that entail?

EF: Repairing the radios, the radar, the sonar for detecting what they call IFF or Identification Friend or Foe.

Q: Did you have a lot of problems with the equipment? Did they require a lot of repairs?

EF: In those days it was all tubes and just the slightest little jarring would shake a tube loose.

Q: For general quarters where was your station?

EF: At the radio repair in case anything went wrong. That was a pretty nice duty.

Q: Did you have anyone else there doing the same type of job?

EF: Yes there were two of us aboard the ship.

Q: So when you weren't repairing a radio what were you doing?

EF: Sleeping.

Q: So it wasn't a bad duty was it?

EF: It was good.

Q: Did you have any entertainment aboard the ship like movies?

EF: We made sure. We had movies at night below decks because we couldn't have anything showing topside. So I can remember between cigarettes and cigars you could barely see the screen. You get 500 guys smoking away it would get crazy. And that is where I started smoking.

Q: So you picked up troops in Seattle and where did you go?

EF: Hawaii.

Q: So what was that like? Did you get any shore time?

EF: It was nice. We got a little bit of shore time.

Q: And what was a man like you in Hawaii doing on shore leave?

EF: Well you only get a few hours and then you got to go back to the ship so it was mostly sightseeing. We went to the beach and it was disappointing. Oh jeez there is no beach there in Honolulu.

Q: So what did you do?

EF: Just watched the guys surfing. After having come back and seeing the Jones Beach State Park, what we have over here compared to what they called a beach in Hawaii, there was nothing there. There was thirty or forty feet of beach and then the ocean.

Q: After Hawaii?

EF: Eniwetok. Well, it's no longer there they moved that up...

Q: So what was that like?

EF: We got liberty. They had shark nets set out so we could take a swim without feeling too vulnerable.

Q: So you swam off the ship?

EF: No we went inshore. I think we were allowed two cans of beer and one can of coke. So those of us that were drinkers managed to hand a coke over to someone else to get an extra beer.

Q: I bet that tasted good. So what was your final destination on that voyage?

EF: I think we went to the Philippines.

Q: Did you ever have any encounters with the Japanese at all?

EF: Not directly but at Okinawa, we were tied up and they came in to bomb us.

Q: Did you see any ships that got hit by kamikaze?

EF: One of them next to us got hit not by a plane but by a bomb. What they did in those days, see we had LCVP boats all over. The front drops down and the troops go out through there. When we got notice that an air raid is coming the APAs would drop their boats and then they became smoke boats. They circled around every ship and let out smoke. Well, you get a harbor full of smoke when the Japs arrive they didn't know what the hell was down there so they just hoping they'd hit something.

Q: Did you get caught in any of the typhoons out there?

EF: Yes, that was the worst experience of my life. Worst of the war. The screw would come right out of the water.

Q: Did the whole ship shake when that happened?

EF: Oh yea. WHOOM! BANG! Down you go and then it would come out of the water again and everything would shake. I thought the ship was going to fall apart.

Q: How long did that last?

EF: A couple of days.

Q: Were you sick?

EF: Oh jeez you can't get sick. It is too wild. You are just fighting to stand up.

Q: Who was your captain? Do you remember?

EF: There were two of them. One of them was John P. Dix and he was a bastard. He was a full captain. Which was something, our ship might normally get a commander,

Q: He must have annoyed somebody somewhere.

EF: He wouldn't allow any free time on Sundays. There was no holiday routine. Those poor bastards. There were seamen that were out there with the hammer banging the rust off the ship. We had a Baptist Chaplin but he was kind of weak. He didn't stand up for the rights of

the men at all.

Q: How long did you have this captain?

EF: Oh boy. Too long. Several months. But he was a rascal. He wanted to get a jeep, so on one of our trips, I think it was one of the islands you could see that our men were being controlled until they got on the shore and then they'd go through an army checkpoint. So he had one of our drivers drive a jeep through the army checkpoint and keep on going until the other side of the island. He had one of our boats pick it up and take it back out to the ship and quickly get it down to the paint locker. Painted it blue and gave it phony navy numbers. When he got back he had a nice jeep to drive around in. Nice guy.

Q: And who was the next captain?

EF: The next captain was a guy named O'Donnell. He was great, except he had screwed up and run a cruiser ashore, so he was being demoted. I think they were both demoted. I imagine Dix got somebody unhappy. O'Donnell ran a ship ashore so he was paranoid about radar. So he was calling us all hours of the night to come up and make sure the radars work. He didn't want to run a second ship aground. So I remember we were going down the Pacific coast in California and Mexico. Of course, there are some pretty high mountains there in Mexico. We got called up once around midnight or so when the captain called Lenold (?) and myself up to the bridge. We didn't know what the hell we'd done. And he says "I just want to congratulate you guys. I have never seen this radar working so good". So what was happening wasn't our doing, [the radar] was going off the ship hitting one of those mountains coming back and created a double echo. So it looked like the mountains were thirty miles away instead of fifteen. But we didn't tell him we just went thank you, captain. So he was a very happy guy. And he was the captain we had until we got rid of the ship. We went through the canal up to Virginia and decommissioned the ship near there.

Q: So where were you when they dropped the bomb?

EF: Coming into San Francisco.

Q: And what did you think about that news?

EF: Well let's see. I think the bomb got dropped August 10th. We came into port maybe the 14th was when we came into port and that was wild.

Q: Everybody knew the war was over so there must have been a lot of celebration.

EF: You see one of our guys broke a window in a liquor store and they had a picture of them in live magazine handing out bottles.

Q: One of your guys?

EF: Yea a guy named Stone.

Q: So what did you do in San Francisco?

EF: Just got drunk, just got wild.

Q: So when you heard the bomb had been dropped any thoughts about it because it ended up being controversial?

EF: No, back then we were just happy the war was over. All anyone could think about right then was thank god it was over. All the guys that had been through the war in Europe would get pulverized when we would try to invade Japan.

Q: So the war is over officially and the Latimer is off to Virginia?

EF: That is where we decommissioned it. When I got discharged I took a bus up to Long Island up to Lido beach. And that was the discharge center.

Q: What was your involvement in decommissioning the ship?

EF: Well we just had to make sure that all of our electronic gear was covered with light plastic protected against the elements. The gun tubs had to be covered. That was a neat experience. I was offered a nice job as most all the radio technicians were by Filco and RCA. Many when they left the navy they joined them. They had a lot of work to be done overseas repairing electronic equipment.

Q: And you chose not to?

EF: Oh boy it was tempting. Going from 93 dollars a month to 5000 dollars a year. So at that point I'm about 20 or 21. So I talked to my dad and he says don't do it. They wanted me to go to Saudi Arabia, one of those either Filco or RCA. He said don't do it. Get your education, get out of the service and get your education so I listened to him. I thought I'd go to college that was an experience trying to get into a college at that time.

Q: On the GI bill?

EF: Yep.

Q: So where did you go?

EF: Well, fortunately, we had a neighbor two doors from us in Schenectady he was on the faculty at a new school called Siena. I tried to get into Lafayette and Stanford because I've been to Stanford in California and kept getting no out of state personnel accepted because everyone was trying to get into college. So I happened to be talking to him one day and he said maybe I can get you into this college so I did. I wound up at Siena but it wasn't my choice I had never heard of the school.

Q: So you got your degree at Siena?

Q: What did you decide to do?

EF: Well I majored in business administration but as I was getting ready to graduate I took a test and I scored very high in stuff for the FBI and scored low in sales. I didn't want anything to do with being a salesman.

Q: So what did you end up doing?

EF: Being a salesman.

Q: Who did you work for?

EF: Well I went to work for a little company called Eastern Chemicals in Rensselaer. And they then were acquired some years later by Ashland Chemical. I went from being a salesman to being district manager at Ashland and retired from there.

Q: Did they eventually become General Aniline or GAF?

EF: No GAF was there with General Aniline but no. We were a distributor, we didn't produce. We sold a lot to GAF. See we were an offshoot of Hercules. The papermaker chemical division of Hercules. They would acquire this company called Empire Science and Chemical in the early 1900s and they manufactured rosin for the paper industry. Hercules managers who

eventually became my bosses had a chance to buy the location from Hercules because the government got after Hercules for distributing other producers chemicals like Aniline and Dow. The trust division of the government said you can't do that so Hercules had to get out of the distributing business so they gave each manager a chance to buy one of their locations they had one in fort La Jara County and Milwaukee.

Q: So what was your overall view of your military experience?

EF: It was well worth it. I learned a lot. I learned a lot about people from other parts of the country.

Q: Do you think you wouldn't have gone onto college had it not been for the GI bill?

EF: Probably would have. I think that my dad had a pretty decent job a G.E. but I don't know where I would have gone. As a result of going to Siena, I met my wife, so I probably would have met somebody in California or Mississippi or somewhere else. So that is it.

Q: So thank you very much, very nice job appreciate it.

EF: You are certainly welcome.