

**Edward Gabriel  
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke  
New York State Military Museum  
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on  
December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008  
Saratoga Springs, NY**

**Q:** Okay. Today is Tuesday, December 2nd, 2008. We're at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York. The interviewer is Wayne Clark, and we are interviewing Mr. Ed Gabriel today. And Mr. Gabriel, for the record, would you please state your full name and your date and place of birth, please.

**EG:** My name is Edward Gabriel. I live in Easton. I was born on September the 6th, 1928, in New Haven, Connecticut--transplant for the last 31 years.

**Q:** Okay. Did you go to school in New Haven?

**EG:** Yes. I went to School in New Haven. Then I went to Commercial High School. And while I was in my last year of high school, I played hooky one day, and we were walking by the recruiting office. And you know that big sign that Uncle Sam Wants You?

**Q:** Uh-huh.

**EG:** My friend said to me, "Yeah." And he says, "Let's join the Army." I says, "Well, okay. Let's do it." Just on the spur of the moment. And we went in, and the guy gave us some papers to sign. And he looked at mine and he said, "Whoa." He goes, "Wait a minute." He says, "You're too young. You got to have your mother's signature," because I'd just turned 17. And so I says, "Well, okay. I'll go and get it." So I just walked around the corner, and I signed my mother's name to it. I walked back in, and he says, "All right. Well, go in that room." And so we went into the other room, and a soldier came out and said, "Take all your clothes off." And I said, "Well, what for?" He says, "Well, you're going to get a physical exam." So the doctor came in and examined everybody. There had to be, maybe, 12 or 13 of us there. And after we put our clothes on, somebody else came in, and they all had little-- oh, an officer came in and said, "Everybody raise your right hand." And so we all raised our right hand, and he gave us the oath. And so after that, I figured, "Well, I think I'll go home and have dinner." And another man came in and had a whole bunch of little brown bags, and he gave each one a little brown bag. I said, "Well, what's this for?" He said, "Well, that's your lunch." "What? Oh, I'm going to go home and eat." "Oh, no. You're not. You're going to be on the train in a little while going to Fort Devens." I said, "Wait a minute." I says, "I got my car parked outside. I can't just leave like this." He says, "Well, we'll give you time to run home and park your

car." So I did. I had an automobile even when I was 17. And I stuck my head in-- I parked my car in the yard, and I stuck my head into the door and I says, "Hey Pa. I joined the Army. I'll tell you about it later." And I was gone and he hardly heard me. And so we got on the train, and it was a wonderful trip to Fort Devens. And we were all telling jokes. It was just a very social time. And from there, they shipped us to-- oh, then I got a call from the captain. And he says, "Eddie, you can home right now if you want because your mother's on the phone." So I talked to my mother, and I convinced her that I should stay in. And I was in my last year of high school, so I really never completed high school. When I was in the service, I took a GED exam. And of course, when I got out, I took advantage of the GI Bill and went to college for two years. The time I spent in Japan was a wonderful part of my life. It was educational. It was a regular job that I had.

**Q:** Okay. Let's go back a bit. Okay. You were at Fort Devens. Now, did you take your basic training there?

**EG:** No. They sent me down to Fort McClellan, Alabama. And we were there for - I don't know - six weeks or seven weeks.

**Q:** What was that basic training like?

**EG:** It was infantry basic training, regular infantry basic training. And when we were all through, they came in and said to us, "You're all being transferred to the Air Force." Because I had joined the Army and we took infantry training, I thought I was going to be in the infantry. But they transferred us into the Air Force and put us on a train, and we went directly to San Francisco for deployment to Japan. At that point, I didn't know where I was going.

**Q:** But I mean, you completed basic training. Did you have any additional training?

**EG:** No.

**Q:** After that?

**EG:** No. When we got off the boat and reported to the Tachikawa Army Air Base in Japan, they simply said to us, "What can you do?" And the guy that interviewed me said, "Can you type?" I says, "Yeah, a little bit." He says, "How many words a minute can you type?" I said, "Oh, about eight or nine." He says, "Great."

**Q:** Okay. So at that point, the war was over when...

**EG:** It was right after MacArthur was on the ship with the Japanese authorities, and they signed the peace treaty.

**Q:** Okay. When did you actually enter the Service?

**EG:** May the 1<sup>st</sup>

**Q:** Of '45?

**EG:** Yes.

**Q:** Okay. All right. And so by the time your basic training was over, had the war ended at that point?

**EG:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. It was.

**Q:** Okay. Was there a lot of celebration at that point?

**EG:** Aw, man, I can remember the day, VJ Day. It is hard to describe. The joy that everybody felt was unreal. Downtown New Haven was jam-packed with cars blowing their horns and everybody shouting and laughing.

**Q:** So you were on leave at that point?

**EG:** No, I wasn't. Well, the war was, I think they signed the treaty-- the war was over in, I think it was July?

**Q:** August.

**EG:** August, July or August. Yeah. September the 1st, I went in. And I was the product of a kid that used to go to all these movies and see all the war movies, and I was ready to go there and kill Japs. I mean, they had you all psyched up. But I was surprised when I got to Japan. The people were so nice and polite, and it was just a whole different side to it.

**Q:** Okay. So basically, you were a typist or company clerk at that point?

**EG:** Yeah. I used to fill out all the reports, and I used to make sure the supplies and all the logistics of supplying the flight line with all the parts and tools and making up the weekly reports and the monthly reports. I had a regular 8:00 to 5:00 job, and after 5 o'clock I was free to do whatever I wanted to do. And it was just like having a regular job there. It was wonderful. We used to take advantage of sightseeing. We went to as many places as we could go to.

**Q:** What rank were you at that point?

**EG:** Well, when I got there, I was a private. And it was just a few months later that I got a sergeant's rating because the major that I was working for he had alcoholic problems, and I covered for him quite a bit and did a lot of his work for him. And so he was grateful and gave me a quick increase in rank. So when I was discharged, I was a buck sergeant.

**Q:** Okay. And now, how much time did you spend in Japan?

**EG:** A whole year. When I enlisted, the recruiting officer said to me, "Do you want to enlist for a year and a half, two years, or three years?" Yeah, I'm not very bright, but I said to myself, "Well, gee, let me ask him." If I joined for a year and a half and I like it, can I re-enlist?" He said, "Oh, sure." Well, I says, "I'll go for a year and a half." And my tour was for a year and a half.

**Q:** Okay. Once that tour was over, did you have the option to re-enlist?

**EG:** Well, I was offered a commission. I was offered a regular Army commission, and I didn't think that military life was for me.

**Q:** Okay. All right. And what was the weather like when you were in Japan? Did they have the winter season like they have back here?

**EG:** It was just starting wintertime, but wasn't as severe as it is here. No, it was a mild winter. Let me put it that way.

**Q:** Okay. And did you get to do any flying with the unit at all?

**EG:** Well, the only flying we did was for entertainment. If there was a C-46 going up, we'd ask if we could take a ride. And it wasn't the most pleasant thing because those things were cold. You freeze your butt off when you're up there. But when we got to Tachikawa Army Air Base, there were a whole bunch of Japanese planes down the other end. They just bulldozed them into a pile. And I was only 17. We were kids. We used to go there and play in there-- play with the airplanes, get in and check the controls. Went to Tokyo every opportunity I had, and for my part it was a vacation. What can I say?

**Q:** Did you have much interaction with the Japanese people on base at all or mostly when you're on leave?

**EG:** Well, they used to employ the Japanese workers to do some of the menial work on base. And I can remember leaving the mess hall with our trays, and there would be kids waiting to grab the food off your tray because I mean, the smoke hadn't even settled. When I hit Yokohama, you could see for miles nothing but rubble. I mean, it was unbelievable the destruction that was wrought there. And when I left a year later, believe it or not, it was like, "Was there a war here?" I mean, they were like ants rebuilding everything, and they did a good job rebuilding their country.

**Q:** I see. So you enjoyed your stay in the service?

**EG:** Oh, yes. Yeah. I enjoyed it, but I didn't feel that I wanted to make a career out of it.

**Q:** Okay. Once you returned to the states, whereabouts were you discharged?

**EG:** In New Haven.

**Q:** New Haven? Did you join any Veterans' organizations?

**EG:** No, I never did. I never joined a Veterans'-- to this day, I never did mostly because most of those organizations, they have bars there, and you'd go and drink. That was one of the things that convinced me not to make it a career because the enlisted men had really nothing to do. They'd go to the EM Club, and there'd be all these piles of beer cans, and they would bend them and get into trouble. I mean, so it wasn't for me.

**Q:** Did you stay in touch with anyone you were in the Service with?

**EG:** Regrettably, I didn't. I tried to make contact with the guy that I enlisted with and some of the-- there was one fellow who I enlisted with whose father owned the Marlins.

They use to make rifles and razor blades and stuff. And I went to school with him after we got out. That was the only contact I ever had-- went to the Junior College of Commerce in New Haven.

**Q:** Okay. That was what I was going to ask you next. Did you make use of the GI Bill?

**EG:** I sure did. Yep. I took a two year-- first thing I did when I got out of the Service was to get a job on the railroad as a keypunch operator. And it was a 11:00 to 7:00 shift, and for a young guy, that was death warmed over. You couldn't go out. You couldn't do anything. And a friend of mine came to me one day and he's, "Oh, yeah. Let's go down to the Junior College of Commerce and matriculate there." So I did. And I went up to the window-- when I did, I went up to the window, and she says, "Do you want business administration course or do you want an accounting course?" And frankly, I didn't know the difference between the two, or what she was talking about. So I took accounting, which I did okay in. I did well in. And so when I got out, I was a bookkeeper/accountant for many years. But I did a lot of other things in my life. And for the last 31 years, I have a little dairy farm here on the other side of the river. Up until the time I got old and decrepit, I milked cows. But in the meantime—

**Q:** Now, how did you get into farming? I mean, growing up in the city and--?

**EG:** I was in the city, and I had a friend that had just a little farm out in the outskirts of the city. And when I used to visit him, it was such a quiet, peaceful, pastoral place that—

**Q:** And what was his name?

**EG:** His name was John Crosby. He used to work as a foreman for Auto-[Car?] as a mechanic, and we used to visit with him. And so the other reason is I hated all the commuting I used to have to do for my work. I used to work in New York City too. I used to go on a train every day to New York City and back, and I'd rather be home. And the other thing that caused me to go from accounting and bookkeeping to dairying, which is like a 190-degree turnabout was the fact that I used to get discouraged a little bit with all the tax laws and all the politics in bookkeeping. Yeah, I worked for a guy that was creating a little Enron situation of his own, and I didn't want to be involved with that, so. I said, "Let me change my--." Plus the fact sitting behind a desk was killing me physically. I said to myself, "I have to change my lifestyle." So I was visiting my sister in Greenwich one day and I said to her, "Well," I says, "Eleanor, this is a beautiful area." And she says, "Well Ed, you always wanted to be a farmer, why don't you look around." So I was like, "Okay." So I called a real estate agent up. I bought a farm the same day, the farm that I'm on. So I moved from Massachusetts, where I was living at the time. And the day I got up here I was milking cows. But I used to read a lot and I have a mechanical-- I can weld and I can do electrical work, and I do all that stuff.

**Q:** So did you get married along the way?

**EG:** I got married. I've got a good one for you. Just before I went in, I was engaged to be married. And I mean, when I got out of the Service I got engaged to be married. And it

wasn't two weeks before we were going to be married, I got orders from-- because I was in the Reserves, I got orders from the Army to report down to Florida. They sent me train tickets and everything. And so I said, "Okay, they're reactivating me." And I sold my car, and I got all my business put together, and just before I was going to leave, I got another telegram saying, "You don't have to go if you don't want to." I've never heard of anything like that ever happening. And I said, "Well, okay. I'm not going." And that was it.

**Q:** Now, you said you were in the Reserves. Were you automatically placed in the Reserves, or did you join the Reserves?

**EG:** No, I enlisted. Yeah, I signed up.

**Q:** Okay. And where was that Reserve unit?

**EG:** I guess it was in New Haven.

**Q:** New Haven?

**EG:** Yeah. They had a couple of airplanes down at the airport in New Haven. But there was never any active duty or-- I never got involved in it. I was just on the Reserves.

**Q:** So you never got called up for Korea or anything?

**EG:** No.

**Q:** Okay. How do you think your time in the Service changed or affected your life?

**EG:** Well, it gave me more experience to see what other countries were like. It gave me a feeling that people all around the world are basically just like us. When I got to Japan, I was expecting to see the Jap with a dagger behind his back, ready to-- and it was not like that. And I realized that people around the world are all the same. It's just the politics of the whole thing that causes the problems.

**Q:** Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much for your interview.

**EG:** You're welcome. Thank you.