

Friday, 26 September 2008.

New York Military Museum, Saratoga Springs, New York,

A telephone interview with Mr. Edwin L. Luck

Interviewer: Friday, 26 September 2008. We are at the New York Military Museum, Saratoga Springs, New York, we are doing a telephone interview with Mr. Edwin L. Luck: Sir, for the record, would you state your full name and your date and place of birth.

Edwin L. Luck: Edwin L. Luck, born June 19, 1922.

Interviewer: Whereabouts were you born?

Edwin L. Luck: Amsterdam, New York.

Interviewer: OK, and did you attend school in Amsterdam?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes I did. **Pitt Wood was my elementary school type???** In Amsterdam.

Interviewer: What year did you graduate?

Edwin L. Luck: 1939.

Interviewer: What did you do after you graduated?

Edwin L. Luck: After I graduated I did various jobs there wasn't much to do around there. Mostly farm work. At the same time I had joined Company **G** in the National Guard in Amsterdam..

Interviewer: What was that like?

Edwin L. Luck: Well I had a short time with the ??? at the Armory it was very interesting sort of the thing to do then, a lot of my friends were in it. Wasn't too long a period, really, that we were at the Armory. (020).

Interviewer: Since they entered in January 1940 - was the the Guard or was that the Army?

Edwin L. Luck: The Guard. I'm talking about the Armory, the Amsterdam Armory.

Interviewer: Were you put on active duty?

Edwin L. Luck: On October 15, 1940, the National Guard was Federalized.

Interviewer: At that point, had you attended any basic training?

Edwin L. Luck: I had done CMPT, up in Plattsburgh. I think it was the Board of Education. All the high schools sent their people there. That was while I was in high school that I did that.

Interviewer: Once you joined the Guard, you didn't go through any regular???

Edwin L. Luck: No, that was just done within the company.

Interviewer: Once the unit was federalized, where did you go?

Edwin L. Luck: We went to Fort McClellan, Alabama.

Interviewer: Was that your first time away from home?

Edwin L. Luck: It was except for my time up at Plattsburgh with CMPT.

Interviewer: What was it like down at Fort McClellan?

Edwin L. Luck: When we first got there it was pretty bad. Cold - we lived in tents – there was no preparation for our arrival - I think that was widespread in those days, pretty miserable, but being 18, it didn't really matter.(032)

Interviewer: What did they have you doing there?

Edwin L. Luck: Most of all, organizing the tent city that we lived in. Wood platforms, we had squad tents we had to put up, to live there, during that time we were also doing basic training.

Interviewer: Did you go on any kind of maneuvers?

Edwin L. Luck: From Fort McClellan, we went to the Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana maneuvers. That was in July, 1941. That was with the Third Army Maneuvers.

Interviewer: What about your equipment, was it all World War I?

Edwin L. Luck: My job, a for instance, I was in a mortar section, we had wooden mortars, pieces of wood painted olive green - so we had to pretend.

Interviewer: So, you hadn't actually trained with any real mortars then?

Edwin L. Luck: I think there was one in the whole regiment. We got to train with the sight mechanism and all the gears that went with a mortar. We were familiar with the weapon but we didn't have it.

Interviewer: How long did those maneuvers go on?

Edwin L. Luck: Like July through August. It was miserable.

Interviewer: In what way were they miserable?

Edwin L. Luck: It was so hot, there was little transportation, a lot of time hiking on the road.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Edwin L. Luck: We were there in Alabama. Actually, we were getting ready to be demobilized – go back to our armories in the various States, that was being planned. December 7 changed all that. Everyone wondered where Pearl Harbor was - you've heard that story? That's about it.

Interviewer: Once they kept you, what happened next?.

Edwin L. Luck: That was in December. We immediately started getting ready to move. Our division was moved to the West Coast. (068) All our trucks and everything else was put on flat cars. We just boarded trains for the West Coast.

Interviewer: They didn't give you any leave time at all?

Edwin L. Luck: No. We did spend some time drying an arsenal in Alabama - I think it was Guntersville - no, that was a dam. I think we got a dam and an arsenal there somewhere.

Interviewer: Where did you go on the West Coast?

Edwin L. Luck: Fort Ord (on Monterey Bay, Pacific Coast, California).

Interviewer: They prepared for you to ship out to Hawaii from there?

Edwin L. Luck: Actually, I think the big plan was for us to go to the Phillipines. That was changed for obvious reasons. We ended up in Hawaii. (081)

Interviewer: How much time did you spend in California?

Edwin L. Luck: We went there in December/January, that was 1941/42. and, California, we stayed there until April. Then we shipped out for Hawaii.

Interviewer: Did you go in a convoy to Hawaii?

Edwin L. Luck: Not that I know of. We took a ship by itself, it might have been a destroyer, I'm not sure, I think it was the President Wilson, one of the President Lines.

Interviewer: Did the whole division go?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes the whole division went.

Interviewer: Whereabouts in Hawaii did you land.

Edwin L. Luck: I was fortunate to land, of course it was spread all around, we landed in Hilo, Hawaii

Interviewer: What was it like once you hit Hawaii - did you have to set up a new camp?

Edwin L. Luck: Well, no we didn't, first of all, myself, I was sick I think with the yellow jaundice and I ended up in a makeshift hospital, along with many others. The division had been broken up the 105th we were splitt up into various beach divisions around the island.

Interviewer: Was there more training in Hawaii?

Edwin L. Luck: During that period only when we gathered at Schofield barracks on Oahu.(131)

Interviewer: Once you left Hawaii where did they send you next?

Edwin L. Luck: We went directly to the invasion of the Marianas. (110)

Interviewer: When did that invasion take place?

Edwin L. Luck: That was in June 1944

Interviewer: Was that your first time under fire?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes

Interviewer: Can you tell us what that was like? Did you go in in like a landing craft?

Edwin L. Luck: We landed in a landing craft but it wasn't an opposed landing, we were follow-up.

Interviewer: So you weren't in the first wave? So what was it like when you hit the beach?

Edwin L. Luck: The thing was the landing craft got all hung up on the reefs – apparently that have not been studied too well - it happened a lot in the Pacific anyway tides would determine where you could get all the way in or not - was a little tricky - had to transfer into amphibious tractors'

Interviewer: So you didn't find any resistance?

Edwin L. Luck: Not at that time no

Interviewer: Where were you off to next?

Edwin L. Luck: We landed at go a place called Charon-Kanoa. It was like a sugar mill we were off of the South end of the island – then it got pretty bad

Interviewer: Do you want to talk about it at all?

Edwin L. Luck: (pause) That's pretty hard

Interviewer: That's all right. So I take it your unit suffered a lot of casualties?

Edwin L. Luck: We did we got hit pretty bad along with that I think one of our cruisers came in and petty much wiped out one of our battalion headquarters

Interviewer: Was that the first time you saw combat against the Japanese?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes it was.

Interviewer: What was your actual unit at that time?

Edwin L. Luck: I was with the First Squad, First Platoon, Company G, of the 105th Infantry Regiment. At that time, I was the Squad Leader.

Interviewer: OK, so you were a Sergeant?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes, I was.

Interviewer: Did you have the M-1 Durand at that point?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes, we did.

Interviewer: What was your impression of the M-1 Durand?

Edwin L. Luck: It was so good that I have one to this day. I actually bought it.

Interviewer: What did you think of the Japanese as an opponent?

Edwin L. Luck: They were very skilled. They were first rate soldiers.

Interviewer: After that skirmish you went through - how long did that last?

Edwin L. Luck: I wouldn't call it a skirmish, it went on for three or four days, It was wild. Sugar cane field, people laying in there,

Interviewer: Did you receive any air support?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes, we did. That was a very humorous thing. We had PBS, Navy, I think that was a torpedo bomber they called them. That was when rockets were first coming into use. We had a cave pinpointed, very good target for them, that we couldn't get at, but it would have been a good thing for our rocket firing plane to get at. So, this plane made one sweep in, and the missed the entire island, and we never saw the plane again. Disappeared. Went somewhere else. That was so much rocket warfare that I saw.

Interviewer: At that point were you well supplied? (166)

Edwin L. Luck: Oh, yea, a little bad for water, water was quite difficult. At this time, the Battle of Coral Sea was shaping up, and ships were needed elsewhere. That was a disheartening feeling to look out at sea and see all your ships gone. Give you a feeling of abandonment. Didn't last long. That was the biggest thing, lack of water for a couple of days. Outside of that, we were well supplied.

Interviewer: Where did you go from there?

Edwin L. Luck: From there - the south part of the island was pretty well wrapped up by that time - it took awhile - from there we went up the opposite way, towards Garapan. Still on Saipan. That's when we were when the banzai, the fire attack, came.

Interviewer: Were you involved in that attack?

Edwin L. Luck: My battalion was. But the First Battalion got it worse, they were down on lower ground. We were sort of higher up. That was where I got hit anyway. I left the scene.

Interviewer: Could you easily observe the attack?

Edwin L. Luck: Oh, yes, it was like a sea of people. It was incredible!

Interviewer: I heard that they were pushing civilians in front of them.

Edwin L. Luck: Yes. That's what they did before, on the other part of the island, used them as a shield.

Interviewer: During that attack you were wounded?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you want to tell us where and how you were wounded?

Edwin L. Luck: Sort of on higher ground, we were on the fringe of this surge of people, of troops and... (???) there was a Japanese machine gun, one of the big heavy ones, Hotchkiss, they had a two man crew and they were trying to cross this road. I had this beautiful vantage spot three or four attempts them to get that gun across the road I got hit with a mortar splinter. (202)

Interviewer: Where were you wounded?

Edwin L. Luck: The upper left chest. Splinter went into the shoulder bone. Immobilized me.

Interviewer: Were you evacuated at that point?

Edwin L. Luck: I was picked up and taken to 31st Field Hospital. Right there in Charon-Kanoa - I was operated on there. I have the piece of metal yet, a little souvenir.

Interviewer: Did they send you to a hospital ship? (213)

Edwin L. Luck: Yes, I went to the Hospital Ship Relief.

Interviewer: How long were you on the Hospital Ship, or did they send you back to Hawaii?

Edwin L. Luck: I think the only way to get back to Hawaii was to lose a limb or something like that. We ended up in Kwajelein. In the Marshalls, I believe. Like a rehab place.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to get well again?

Edwin L. Luck: We were there for about two months.

Interviewer: What was that like, was the food good?

Edwin L. Luck: Oh, yea, it was OK for those times. I can't complain about that.

Interviewer: Any entertainment, USO Shows, anything?

Edwin L. Luck: A funny thing, no. We didn't see any!

Interviewer: Did you suffer at all from any kind of tropical diseases like malaria?

Edwin L. Luck: I did. Only malaria.

Interviewer: Once you recuperated, were you sent back to your unit?

Edwin L. Luck: I was assigned to my unit. At that time they were in Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands. In those days it seemed like we were always hitchhiking, on ships, I managed to hitch a ride on a supply ship.

Interviewer: Once you caught up with the unit, were there a lot of new guys?

Edwin L. Luck: There were a lot of new guys. I took over my old squad,

Interviewer: How many of your original guys from your squad were left?

Edwin L. Luck: There were about two.

Interviewer: Just two guys left?

Edwin L. Luck: Yea. Two or three.

Interviewer: Where did you go next?

Edwin L. Luck: We did a lot of training there. That would have been the end of '44, we're getting into the beginning of '45 now. We did a lot of training, amphibious training, and ??? stuff, but there were a lot of shows there, if you were going to ask that, but I was never interested much in those. Never went to them. Long as I had paperbacks and stuff to read I was fine.

Interviewer: Did you get any leave time at all?

Edwin L. Luck: No. They had a lottery system – I think they picked one person from each battalion, something like that – but it didn't fall my lot.

Interviewer: You went through a lot more training...where were you at that time?

Edwin L. Luck: Espiritu Sancto – that was the name of the island.

Interviewer: Where did they send you guys next?

Edwin L. Luck: Next, Okinawa was the big one

Interviewer: That must have been pretty bad, too, huh?

Edwin L. Luck: Pretty bad. I didn't get there initially, with the others, of all things, , me with a bunch of others contracted the mumps! So we missed that sailing for a couple of weeks. That was probably a lucky thing.

Interviewer: By the time you got there, they were mopping up?

Edwin L. Luck: They were doing a lot of patrolling up in the mountains. That's where I joined them again. One time we were strafed by our own planes. Excitement there.

Interviewer: After Okinawa, what happened?

Edwin L. Luck: I was at Okinawa when the war ended.

Interviewer: Let me go back a little bit. What was your reaction when you heard about the death of President Roosevelt?

Edwin L. Luck: That was in April '45. Shock, I guess. That's the only reaction I can think of. He was a respected leader. Even though he was a Democrat!

Interviewer: When you guys heard that the war was over in Europe did you think the war would be ending soon with Japan?

Edwin L. Luck: No, I don't think any of us thought that. The Japanese were tenacious. That wasn't going to change them. That was my opinion.

Interviewer: What did you think when you heard about the dropping of the atomic bomb?

Edwin L. Luck: We heard all kinds of rumors. We heard that a bomb the size of a football had destroyed an entire island.

Interviewer: Once Japan surrendered, was there a lot of celebration?

Edwin L. Luck: There was a lot of celebration, a lot of shooting. When they surrendered, I was on another island, off of Okinawa, one called ??? Jima. Two days after the surrender, we were hit with suicide planes. (296) We almost got wiped out. We were in a little schoolhouse in a little town on this island. We had these Coleman lamps lit, sitting around reading the paper, doing nothing, just waiting, suddenly this plane came over the top of the schoolhouse, I don't know how they missed us. You could hear them!

Interviewer: Was it Kamikaze?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes, he hit the road, just up the road, and blew up.

Interviewer: Did he have any bombs on board or just the plane itself?

Edwin L. Luck: I don't know. A huge crater. But I don't know much about that. I do know half the pilot, in his white robe, was laying out in the road. I do remember that.

Interviewer: So the war was actually over and you had Japanese soldiers who had yet to surrender?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes. That's when we had to be on our guard again. Seemed like it had started up all over again. I don't think anyone knew where the planes came from.

Interviewer: Were there any other close calls or incidents after the war ended?

Edwin L. Luck: We went to a main camp on Okinawa. All wired in. Because the Division was going to go on to Japan. Guys like myself, who had the points, were sort of segregated and we were told we were going to be going back to the States.

Interviewer: I'll bet that made you happy.

Edwin L. Luck: Oh, yea, been quite a while, five years.

Interviewer: Since you'd been home.

Edwin L. Luck: Yea.

Interviewer: So, you left Okinawa, by ship?

Edwin L. Luck: Left Okinawa by ship and went to Port Lewis, Washington.

Interviewer: How long did the trip take to get back to Port Lewis?

Edwin L. Luck: I think it took maybe ten days. Just guessing..I remember, that trip, throwing grain overboard. To this day, I don't know why. Left surplus food in the sea behind us. Seems like a waste but I guess it would have spoiled.

Interviewer: OK, so you were discharged in Fort Lewis, Washington?

Edwin L. Luck: No, from there we were put on trains to go to Fort Dix, New Jersey. That was the actual point of discharge.

Interviewer: So you were discharged in September, 1945, at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Did you take a train back to Amsterdam?

Edwin L. Luck: Yep. I took the train back to Amsterdam.

Interviewer: What was it like coming home, was there a big homecoming for you?

Edwin L. Luck: No. People were coming back in dribbles, no great big parade, nothing like that. There never was a parade that I recall.

Interviewer: I'm sure your family was glad to see you.

Edwin L. Luck: Oh, yea. Funny thing, I had a Model A Ford. I had it in a barn near where my grandparents lived. That Ford had set up on blocks for five years. That was my happiest time, I guess.

Interviewer: Did it start right up?

Edwin L. Luck: I'm happy to say that it did! Put tires back on it, such as they were, put a battery in it, oil, and it started right up!

Interviewer: When you were discharged, did you make any use of the GI Bill?

Edwin L. Luck: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Didn't use it to buy a house or anything?

Edwin L. Luck: No, I didn't. I didn't get married either.

Interviewer: Did you stay in contact with anyone you were in service with?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes, I did. At that time, we had reunions all over the place, we would have company reunions and division reunions. We stayed pretty much in contact in the Armory there, especially in Amsterdam.

Interviewer: Out of the whole group of you who left the Armory in 1940 how many of you made it back?

Edwin L. Luck: I'd say about fifteen. Of the originals.

Interviewer: You belong to any Veterans organizations?

Edwin L. Luck: I belong to the American Legion and the VFW and the 27th Division Association.

Interviewer: How would you say your time in the service affected your life?

Edwin L. Luck: I have often wondered what would have happened had we went through the Depression. I'd have ended up working in the mills there. In Amsterdam. Those mills, incidentally, are now all deserted. Empty. It did change, got us out of town, that's for sure. Does that sound pretty positive?

Interviewer: What did you do after the war, what kind of work did you do?

Edwin L. Luck: After the war, I was working here in Amsterdam. I was working in the shipping room with one of the knitting companies. Loading a truck one day and I said this is not for me. So, I went and reenlisted.

Interviewer: When did you go back in?

Edwin L. Luck: April 1945. (1946?)

Interviewer: How long did you stay in?

Edwin L. Luck: The next three years. My purpose in that was that I wanted to do some traveling and I sure did – I went to Europe.

Interviewer: Were you a part of the occupation force?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes. I wanted to in the constabulary. I was sent to Vienna, Austria. It was a four-power city at that time and I was a military policeman there with the four-power MPs.

Interviewer: What does four-power mean?

Edwin L. Luck: Britain, United States, France and Russia.

Interviewer: What was that like?

Edwin L. Luck: That was very interesting – I put in the rest of my tour there. We would patrol the city in the different zones. I think there was a movie made about it but I don't recall. I remember being there when they were filming *The Third Man* with Orson Welles. I recall that movie.

Interviewer: So you really liked it in Europe?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: There must have been a lot of reconstruction going on.

Edwin L. Luck: Oh, yea, rebuilding all over the place. Food was a real issue at that time. Of course, that would have been in '45 and '46. People were in bad shape there.

Interviewer: How much time did you actually spend in Europe?

Edwin L. Luck: Finished up my tour there in '48, I think. At the time, they were hiring security forces for the various legations. The State Department. So I took my discharge there in Vienna, and went to work in Security in Budapest, Hungary.

Interviewer: Really? For how long?

Edwin L. Luck: From there I became part of the Foreign Service. I stayed there for three years. Got married there, incidentally.

Interviewer: Where did you go next?

Edwin L. Luck: From there, I was posted to Rome. Stayed there for three years.

Interviewer: So you had a career with Foreign Service?

Edwin L. Luck: Yea, Foreign Service.

Interviewer: How many years did you spend with Foreign Service?

Edwin L. Luck: Ten or eleven, I guess.

Interviewer: To what other countries were you assigned?

Edwin L. Luck: From Rome, I was posted to Tehran, in Iran.

Interviewer: What was that like back then?

Edwin L. Luck: That was pretty bad living, wasn't dangerous or anything, just miserable living, that's all. We had a small son then too. For a single guy, it would be OK. But, being married, it was pretty tough.

Interviewer: So, you worked mostly security?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes. Back up a bit. While I was in Budapest, I used to be a courier. Trains mostly. Had to meet the train going to Prague, Bucharest, Istanbul. Exchange pouches and all that. I was involved with communication services. Very interesting work.

Interviewer: Did you carry a weapon?

Edwin L. Luck: No. That was forbidden.

Interviewer: Any other incidents you'd like to talk about?

Edwin L. Luck: Related to this period of time? I would say the closest call I had was in Vienna, of all places. We were on a call. Some American was holed up in an apartment. I think it was in the American Zone. We had to go there. I had to go upstairs first. It was dark. I walked right into a .45. The .45 was touching my head. The guy didn't pull the trigger! Happened to be an American, too.

Interviewer: Did you talk him into surrendering?

Edwin L. Luck: Yea. It was amazing. He was pretty much around the bend.

Interviewer: Any other incidents or stories you'd like to share?

Edwin L. Luck: Also in Vienna we had a drunk Russian with a tommy gun. Blew up the windows in one of our patrol cars. Killed a couple of MPs. The Russians immediately shot him! Shot one of their own. Pretty tough. But I got to make some nice friends there.

Interviewer: When did you leave the Foreign Service?

Edwin L. Luck: I left the Foreign Service in 1955 – something like that. Then I joined another agency.

Interviewer: Government agency?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes. With that agency I was sent to Japan. I stayed in Japan for six years. Of all places. I got to like that, too.

Interviewer: All security work you were doing?

Edwin L. Luck: Not then, it was something else. I got to like the Japanese.

Interviewer: How long have you been retired?

Edwin L. Luck: About twelve years. My wife also worked for the government.

Interviewer: Sounds like you've had a pretty interesting life.

Edwin L. Luck: Yea. Now we're trying to keep the house together. The last reunion we had was up in Saratoga.

Interviewer: Oh, was it?

Edwin L. Luck: The division had a reunion there. We stayed at the Marriott, I remember.

Interviewer: The reunion was here at the Armory, wasn't it?

Edwin L. Luck: Yea, it was really nice. We haven't had one since because most of the division has gone to Afghanistan. With the 10th Mountain Division. I hope we have another one up there

Interviewer: Several years ago, we had interviewed quite a few 27th vets out of Troy, but unfortunately, most of them are gone now. Just a couple of the World War II guys left.

Edwin L. Luck: You probably know someone from Amsterdam – you probably know Gilbert Koxiba.

Interviewer: What was that?

Edwin L. Luck: K-O-X-I-B-A is his name. First name is Gilbert.

Interviewer: Let me write that down – maybe I can give him a call. And he's from Amsterdam?

Edwin L. Luck: Yes. He hasn't been well, he had a stroke. Difficult to talk.

Interviewer: Thank you very much for the interview.

Edwin L. Luck: Thank you. Sort of disjointed, I guess.

Interviewer: No that's just fine. I was just looking at the application to see if there is anything I missed. You listed guys you were in the service with, a Joseph Backle(??)

Edwin L. Luck: Bochal. B-O-C-HA-L

Interviewer: You guys were in the same platoon?

Edwin L. Luck: He was in the 2nd Squad.

Interviewer: Is he still living?

Edwin L. Luck: No, he's not.

Interviewer: Arthur Hampton?

Edwin L. Luck: Yea, he just died a short time ago.

Interviewer: There's a Fritz Neubauer(?)

Edwin L. Luck: He lives in Ohio and is suffering from a stroke – can't talk at all.

Interviewer: Thank you for your interview, it has been very interesting and informative.

Edwin L. Luck: I want to thank you for your patience.

Interviewer: I will send you a copy of this in a week or so.

Edwin L. Luck: Anything I can do to help, just let me know.

Interviewer: I appreciate it. Thank you again for your participation.

Edwin L. Luck: Thank you, now. Bye, bye.

END OF INTERVIEW