

Edward A. Levey  
Veteran

Mike Russert  
Wayne Clarke  
Interviewers

Interviewed on  
January 17, 2003 10: 30 AM  
Syracuse, New York

**Q:** This is an interview with Edward Levey, at the Hampton Inn Carrier Circle, Syracuse. The date is January 17, 2003. The interviewers are Michael Russert, and Wayne Clark. Its app 10: 30 AM. Can you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth?

**Edward Arthur Levey:** DOB is March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1927, in New York City.

**Q:** What was your pre-military service education?

**EL:** I was in the NY state guard when I was 17, and when I started college I was in the ROTC, but I was taking, you know, I was only in college for half a year before I was 18, and then I went into service.

**Q:** Were you drafted or did you enlist?

**EL:** When I was 17 I enlisted in the air force, I was supposed to go to the air core. I had all the physicals and examinations, but by the time I was 18 it was March '45, and they could see the end of the war coming. They didn't need any more people in the air core, and the air core at the time was a part of the army, so when they finally called me I went into the army not the air force.

**Q:** Where was your basic training?

**EL:** Camp Rucker, AL 13 weeks there the last 4 weeks were in Camp Gordon, GA.

**Q:** How did you find any encounters with local people being in NY?

**EL:** No, they were very friendly! I got along very well. There was a lot of southerners in the basic training. And I was 18 then! During the war they were drafting men who were 18, but also a lot of men who were older too, so there was a lot of men 28-29 with us in basic training. A lot of them were southerners, but we get along just fine.

**Q:** What kind of special training did you receive?

**EL:** Just infantry.

**Q:** What unit were you assigned?

**EL:** Overseas? The first unit 508<sup>th</sup> MP in Munich Germany.

**Q:** Did you receive any special training to be called an MP?

**EL:** Absolutely not.

**Q:** When did you go overseas?

**EL:** I went overseas in November 1945.

**Q:** How did you go over?

**EL:** On a liberty ship

**Q:** Was it in convoy?

**EL:** No, no the war was over. The Japanese war was still going on when I was drafted, but the German/European war was finished in August.

**Q:** What were your assignments when you were occupied in Germany?

**EL:** Well, I didn't stay in the MP's too long, my brother was wounded in the war- he was in the 94<sup>th</sup> division and I hadn't seen him in a number of years. Christmas of 1945 I volunteered, being Jewish, I volunteered to work Christmas, one day on one day off in the MP's. He called me and said he was going home soon, and we hadn't seen each other in years plus he was wounded. So I went AWOL, and went to see him. He was working in a military government in Stuttgart. So I hitchhiked to Stuttgart. When I got back they understood why I went to see him, and they were very sympathetic. But they transferred me to a prison camp as a guard being set up in Wurzburg Germany. MP's were supposed to be guards at prisons, and it was a prison for American soldiers who were being court marshalled. So the prison was being set up there, so I was transferred up there in January of 1946.

**Q:** Could you explain your assignments?

**EL:** The prison was on a German Air Force base, and there weren't any inmates there when I arrived in 1946, it was just a muddy area. It was very flat, and they were building the blocks stockades for the inmates.

**Q:** You weren't at Gablestop (?) were you?

**EL:** No this is Wurzburg, Germany. For the first week or so we were just doing ordinary thing, but then the first group of inmates, there were 12 of them, they were going to be executed. Of course, they never did execute them, but they brought in 12 men. We were guards all around the barbed wire. And then they decided it was a good idea to have 1 guard sitting in with the prisoners! So they sent someone in-it wasn't me- but you know they sent him in and the inmates just destroyed this person. They had nothing to lose, they were condemned men. They had committed very serious crimes while in service. In the meantime, they decided this prison wasn't very safe, but they had already brought in inmates from other prisons. One is St. Loux (?) France- they didn't want a prison there anymore. But our prison wasn't set up correctly, we had a lot of men escaping. So, we got onto a train and we brought all the inmates to a prison down in Marsay, France. This was until they were able to construct the prison correctly and safely on the air force base, so we were empty for about a month or so until they brought the inmates back. In the meantime, I had been transferred to the special services in Wurzburg, and I knew how to run the special motion picture projector. So they assigned me to special services, so I was no longer a guard. I provided movies and sports equipment. I had to go to Frankfort every few days to pick up more films, and that was quite pleasant!

**Q:** Well what were some of the favorites!

**EL:** Oh! Oh well I forgot what I showed, but you know I had to keep changing the reel, it wasn't continuous! You know, and the guys would get to hooting and hollering and say "Let's get going!" and things like that. You know, the funny thing was we had a transportation group of Negro soldiers in Wurzburg and they came up to the camp. I showed one of them how to run the projector because we didn't sit together! After we showed the movies to the white soldiers then the black soldiers saw theirs, and run by a black projectionist—really nice fellow. But that's the way it was in those days.

**Q:** Was it the same movies?

**EL:** Same movie! But after we showed it to our men.

**Q:** Were you- I realize this was after the war- but were you aware of the existence of concentration camps?

**EL:** Yes, when I was in Munich, we went up to Dachau to get German prisoners to bring them into Munich to clean up the place. And I went up to Dachau a few times to do that. Every morning we would go up there to pick up these guys with a "P" on their neck. And yeah, I was quite aware of it, being Jewish it was very emotional for me, but uh-we didn't really know that much about it in those days. We didn't know the horror-the complete horror. But I remember here were "SS" men that were stationed at Dachau that we would pick up. I remember one that was quite evasive, and I went over to him and took away a folded picture of Adolph Hitler, and I brought it back with me and donated it to a Holocaust Museum in Spring Valley, NY. It was a beautiful portrait of that...monster.

**Q:** What did they do with the German prisoners that they brought back?

**EL:** Well we had to guard them, but you know some of these areas needed to be cleaned, some of the areas were a mess-bombed out, and Wurzburg was completely destroyed as a city, Munich at least had some evidence of areas that weren't destroyed. They were just picking things up, cleaning things up, ya know doing the dirty work they should have done.

**Q:** did you ever attend any U.S.O shows while you were over there?

**EL:** I don't think so, I can't recall anything like that.

**Q:** Where about were you-what was your reaction to hear about Roosevelts passing?

**EL:** I wasn't in the army yet, that was in April, and I didn't report for duty until May, but I was very saddened of course.

**Q:** How about when you heard the atomic bombs were being dropped?

**EL:** Oh well we were in basic training then! We were all set to go to the Pacific, because they were training us to go to that area, and they were gradually taking water from us in basic training, I can remember almost being able to go a full day without water at that time, I couldn't believe it! We knew we would be able to come out of the war alive at that point, you know with the war being over.

**Q:** When did you leave military service?

**EL:** In October 1946

**Q:** How do you think your service changed or effected your life in anyway?

**EL:** I think it did slightly, no regrets at all, I was very proud to be a solider—I'm very proud that I was a solider...I served a very short time, my life was never in danger of losing my life, never in combat or anything like that, but it did effect my life slightly. I was going to college before, and my wife and I were boyfriend-girlfriend at the time. It just took a year and a half away from me, and I could never get back into studying again. I wanted to get on with my life, I tried college when I got back but it didn't suit me.

**Q:** So did you use the G.I Bill at all?

**EL:** I did, I did use the G.I. Bill when I got back, but for some reason or another I just couldn't concentrate effectively to be a good student. So I quit that and went to work and we got married at a very young age.

**Q:** So did you use that 52-20 club?

**EL:** Yes I did, because I got out in October of 1946, and I didn't start college until January. So for a few months I was under the 52-20 club.

**Q:** Did you join any veteran's organizations?

**EL:** I did, I joined the AVC-Americans Veteran Committee and it didn't last long, and I don't like veteran's organizations, I voted against the NY State bonus, I thought that was taking it out of one pocket and putting it into another. And I don't think being a veteran you should be entitled to "special" privileges, it was an honor to serve, I don't regret it. It was important at that time that I serve. So when the American Legion calls me up or Veterans of Foreign Wars. I've been solicited by them to join, but I just won't do it. I was a member of the Jewish War Veterans for a while because my father in law was a veteran of WW1 and I stayed with him for a while, but I wasn't a member of the JWV for very long.

**Q:** Did you ever keep in contact with anyone?

**EL:** Funny you should mention that, because a couple of years ago I found a friend-computer wise- I was close to him in Germany, and he was from Pennsylvania. Now we are corresponding again! A man I hadn't seen/heard from in 45 years and now we send each other Christmas cards, and we e-mail each other every so often, but that's really the only person I contacted again.

**Q:** Okay well thank you for the interview, is there anything else you'd like to add?

**EL:** My pleasure.

Woman (What about the trials)

**EL:** Oh, I did go to Nuremberg Trials in Passover of 1946. They allowed the Jewish soldiers to attend a service. We all went to Nuremberg, and we attended Passover services and while there I attended the Nuremberg trials and found that quite fascinating.

**Q:** Did you go on a tour of the cells or anything?

**EL:** No, I just witnessed the trials themselves you know with the \*point to head\* with the ear things on, the translation for the different languages they spoke.

**Q:** How long were you there?

**EL:** Just a couple of days, there was only one other Jewish soldier on Wurzburg, so he and I took a jeep, and I remember we took a jeep from Wurzburg to Nuremberg, and they told us when we get to Nuremberg—take something out of the jeep so the car couldn't be started. You know you didn't have a key for it in those days, you just clicked it to the side and because so many Russians were in Nuremberg, and they were stealing our jeeps! So we had to take something out of the motor and put it in our pocket (MR: probably the distributor) Yeah, it was a little cap! Ha-ha, but I remember because the Soviets would lose our jeeps. (laughing)

**Q:** Did you ever have any encounters with the Russians?

**EL:** No never. We had a really interesting trip taking the prisoners from Wurzburg to Mosel. It was on a train, and we had about, I don't know, ten different cars and they were all set up for prisoners, almost like a freight car almost, but at the end of each car was a barricade—so there was a guard at each end of the car and you couldn't touch the inmates they were inside. There wasn't a bathroom inside for the inmates, so there was like a little telephone booth with a hole in it, and they would use that. When we got to Mosel there was one inmate/prisoner missing from the car I was guarding, and he must have gotten out through that hole! And they quizzed us, but we don't know how he got away! But uh, they had a great deal of initiative those inmates, they knew what they were doing. But they quizzed us because every time the train stopped one man got out on one side, and the other fellow on the other side of the car got out on his side, just to be sure, and watching underneath of course, but he escaped. And then we had the hang man, the European hang man station at Wurzburg prison. He was the hang man for Europe. He was a master sergeant and he had a Native American Indian as his helper. As far as I know he didn't do anything other than hang people. The only ones I think he ever hung were the Germans. But that was we had the gallows at Wurzburg.

**Q:** But they never used them you said.

**EL:** Not for American, not for our boys, no. but you get used to it, it was a big deal the gallows you accept that things are different in the service. Everything that happened you just accept it. So that was my army experience!

**Q:** Okay, well thank you very much!

**EL:** Great.