

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
EDGAR LENZ  
Mechanic, Army, World War II  
2000

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**Lenz, Edgar** (1921-2006). Oral History, 2000.

Master: 1 videocassette (ca. 82 min.); sd., col.; 1/2 in.

User: 1 audio cassette (ca. 82 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips.

**Abstract:**

Oshkosh, Wisconsin native Edgar Lenz discusses his service as a mechanic with Service Company, 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 32<sup>nd</sup> Division (Red Arrow) in the Pacific Theater during World War II, his postwar military service, and his veteran experience. In response to the Great Depression and still in high school, Lenz joined the Wisconsin Army National Guard in Oshkosh in November 1938. Federalized in October 1940, he and his unit went to Camp Livingston in Pineville, Louisiana in February 1941. He briefly covers his time spent on maneuvers, his duties conveying homebound troops and labeling equipment crates, his departure for California via the East Coast, and the April 1942 embarkation of the 32<sup>nd</sup> from port in San Francisco bound for Australia. Lenz relates his experiences in Australia. A bout of dengue fever incapacitated Lenz and the 127<sup>th</sup> shortly after arrival at 7 Mile Drome in Papua, New Guinea in September 1942. A bout of malaria befell him in Buna, and Lenz tells of the course of his affliction and treatment in New Guinea and Australia. Lenz alludes to participation in the landing (April 22, 1944) at Aitape on the northern coast of Papua, New Guinea. He was tasked with ensuring delivery of unloaded supplies up to the troops. He arrived back in the States in October 1944. Lenz speaks of the six months spent at camp in Texas with college men in an Army Specialized Training Program who were sent on to the Battle of the Bulge. Discharged and plagued by recurrent malaria, Lenz resumed civilian life in Oshkosh. He discusses his postwar military service with the Naval Reserves and the National Guard; being called up during the Berlin Crisis of 1948, sent to Washington State and assigned as a motor sergeant of a combat support company; and retirement from his full-time post at the age of sixty after thirty-six plus years in the National Guard. He remained active in veteran reunions and maintains contact with surviving fellow vets. Lenz ends the interview assessing his World War II training and equipage. He also shares a not so common tale—of a father who served in the same company in the same war and at the same time.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Lenz (1921-2006) served as a mechanic with Service Company, 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 32<sup>nd</sup> Division (Red Arrow) in the Pacific Theater during World War II. He took part in operations on New Guinea. His postwar career involved service in the Naval Reserves and the National Guard. He retired from the Guard in 1981.

Interviewed by James McIntosh, 2000  
Transcribed by Alex Rosinski, 2009  
Corrected by Channing Welch, 2015  
Abstract written by Jeff Javid, 2015

## Interview Transcript

McIntosh: If you could just set that there and if you could just avoid smacking them with your knee, I'll give you a little more slack here. Just don't wanna get it too far away from your head, you see.

Lenz: You're with the military museum down there, huh?

McIntosh: Right. I'm a retired physician who does this as a volunteer

Lenz: Oh, okay.

McIntosh: And this is what we do.

Mrs. Lenz: You know, the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry is having their reunion this weekend at Marinette [Wisconsin].

McIntosh: Are they really?

Mrs. Lenz: Yeah, that's where you should get a lot of stuff from.

McIntosh: Fred Smith will be there. The colonel lieutenant from Neillsville [Wisconsin], he was a colonel—

Lenz: Schmitt? Oh yeah—

McIntosh: Smith, S-m-i-t-h, there were two Smiths—

Lenz: That's right, Herb Smith—

McIntosh: One was in the 126<sup>th</sup>, and one was on the 127<sup>th</sup>. They used to call them, one was "Red Smith" and one was "White Smith."

Lenz: Yeah [McIntosh laughs], well the Herb Smith, he was with the 128<sup>th</sup>—

McIntosh: Oh, was it the 128<sup>th</sup>?

Lenz: But he wound up as a regimental commander of the 1-2-7, and he wound up as a general of the division when we went to Fort Lewis [Tacoma, Washington]. But the Herb, his was Herbert A. Smith, and one from Neillsville was Herbert M. Smith.

Dan Lenz: This is what you wanted, right pop?

Lenz: I guess so.

Dan Lenz: That stuff right on the—

McIntosh: Hi.

Dan Lenz: Hi. I'm Dan Lenz.

McIntosh: Jim McIntosh.

Dan Lenz: Nice to meet you, Jim.

McIntosh: Nice to meet you. [Lenz's wife and son talking in background] Are they all set? Remember this will pick up any noise, so if you have something to settle with mom, settle it. Okay, we're off and running here. Talking to Edgar Lenz, 22 September, year 2000. Where were you born, Edgar?

Lenz: Right here in Oshkosh.

McIntosh: Right here in Oshkosh, I see, and when was that?

Lenz: 22<sup>nd</sup> of February of '21.

McIntosh: Okay, and when did you enter the military service?

Lenz: 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, 1938, I joined the Guards in Oshkosh here.

McIntosh: Was that a big unit?

Lenz: There was three units in Oshkosh at the time. There was Service Company of the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry, H Company, and the band from 127<sup>th</sup>, and I joined Service Company.

McIntosh: This is because of the Depression, that is a source of, you know, you couldn't get a job, and this was a source of money?

Lenz: Well, yes, I was still in high school, and it was for the dollar—

McIntosh: Sure. How much did they pay you when you first got in? Do you recall?

Lenz: A dollar a drill, and we had, we drilled one night a week. Yeah, one night of the week, and in a three month period we had thirteen, twelve dollars.

McIntosh: That was a lot of money in those days.

Lenz: That's right, right.

McIntosh: Yes sir, I remember. And then, you had a summer that you had to spend a month in camp, or two weeks, or something—

Lenz: We still went usually for our two weeks in camp, and—

McIntosh: Was that in Wisconsin, or did you go south?

Lenz: No, we went usually up to Camp Douglas or Camp Williams [in the village of Camp Douglas, Wisconsin], as it's known now. It was the summer of 1940. We had a big maneuver, and that time we spent twenty-one days up in camp. I think it was in winter of '38, we went up to McCoy for a winter maneuver for one week.

McIntosh: A dollar a day?

Lenz: Dollar a day, right, right [both laugh], yeah.

McIntosh: Well, that two weeks was great, then.

Lenz: That's right, yeah.

McIntosh: So then all of a sudden the war came. That changed everything, didn't it?

Lenz: That's right, yeah.

McIntosh: And then what'd they do?

Lenz: Well, we were inducted into federal service on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, 1940. Then we left and went down to Camp Beauregard. We were hauled from Oshkosh here to Camp Williams. We had to go up there and build a kitchen, or a cookstove onto railroad cars so we could cook for the troops going down on the train.

McIntosh: Did you have a specific duty in the military at that time?

Lenz: I was a mechanic, yeah.

McIntosh: Just a mechanic.

Lenz: But we had no trucks [both laugh]. I was listed--

McIntosh: Slight deficiency there [laughs].

Lenz: I was listed as a mechanic, but we had no trucks. In fact, when we left Oshkosh here they came down from Camp Douglas to haul us up there, and from there all the troops went down on train to Camp Beauregard, Louisiana, and I think there was one truck from Oshkosh went down to Camp Beauregard.

McIntosh: And so there they put you in tents there.

Lenz: We were in tents, and—

McIntosh: You became what part of what unit now at this point?

Lenz: We were still Service Company, 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry out of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division.

McIntosh: 127<sup>th</sup> out of the 32<sup>nd</sup>, and still listed the same way then?

Lenz: Right, yeah. Then, oh, while we were down there, I can't even remember exactly when, but we went down there as a square division [composed of four regimental units]. We had four infantry regiments: 125<sup>th</sup>, 126<sup>th</sup>, 127<sup>th</sup>, 128<sup>th</sup>. But somewhere between October and I think February of '41 we lost one of the regiments. The 125<sup>th</sup> was transferred out, and we became a triangular division [three regiments].

McIntosh: They did that throughout the whole Army then?

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: Right.

Lenz: Yeah, and so I'm pretty sure when we got over to Camp Livingston [Pineville, Louisiana], which was in February of '41, we were already a triangular division.

McIntosh: You're the 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, and 28<sup>th</sup>?

Lenz: Right, right.

McIntosh: You know, I interviewed [Lt. Colonel] Herb Smith at Neillsville [Wisconsin].

Lenz: You did?

McIntosh: Charming, ninety-six years old, lives alone, makes his own shirts and things. That guy is a marvel, he carves wood. What a charming, charming guy.

Lenz: Yeah, I got his book around here somewhere.

McIntosh: I do too.

Lenz: And yes, it was pretty interesting. In fact, I'm pretty sure his battalion was the one that walked over the Owen Stanleys [Range; mountains in Papua, New Guinea] on the Kappa Kappa Trail.

McIntosh: He said he took twelve hundred men across there and didn't lose one.

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: That was a real feat.

Lenz: That was quite a walk, too.

McIntosh: Oh [laughs], yes. Well, back to 1941.

Lenz: Okay, then we were in Camp Livingston, and that summer we went on maneuvers down there in Louisiana, and we were out on maneuvers for about two and a half months, I guess. During that period of time is when they automatically extended all enlistments. You could no longer get out.

McIntosh: It wasn't subject to discussion? [both laugh]

Lenz: No, it was not subject to discussion at all.

McIntosh: It's an edict.

Lenz: They just—Congress said no, you can't get out no more, and I remember—

McIntosh: But the war hadn't started yet?

Lenz: No, this was about in August of '41, and I remember one of the guys saying, well, his enlistment ran out right after that. So he went up to headquarters, and he asked 'em, he said, "What should I do?" They said, "Just carry on like as though nothing happened." [both laugh] So actually, that's a—we were still, in October, we were still hauling troops back to their home stations, to the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, from the maneuvers, and when I got back to Camp Livingston I got a furlough finally and went home for a couple weeks. Then when we got back down there, shortly after that Pearl Harbor happened. And so after Pearl Harbor, it was in February of '42 that we left Louisiana and went, some of us by motor convoy and some by train, up to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and we had all the equipment stenciled "Port of Embarkation, Brooklyn, New



York.” We were supposed to ship out of there. Well anyway, we got up to Fort Devens, and they said paint all the crates out and just assign a number to ‘em, and so after I think we were up there for about, probably about, yeah, probably about five weeks, four weeks—

McIntosh: Doing nothing?

Lenz: Oh no, we were still training. But, anyway, mainly we were just, we went up there and restenciled all the crates and stuff, and then we start loading it on the train. We had to load all the motor equipment, all the crated equipment—

McIntosh: You had some trucks by then?

Lenz: Oh yes, we had, I’ll tell you, when we left Louisiana, we had 193 trucks in our regiment, and there was two other regiments like that.

McIntosh: Six bys [6x6, “Deuce and a Half,” six wheel drive Army cargo truck]?

Lenz: Six bys and jeeps and stuff like that, you know, and weapons carriers. We had quite a few weapons carriers. Yeah, when we got up to Massachusetts then, they start loading that stuff on the train, and shortly after we got on the train, and it took about a week to go cross country. We went out to California, and while they were loading the ships, we got out there I’d say about, well, we left California on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April. So we got out there probably around the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, and we went out to Fort Ord [on Monterey Bay, California] for about a week when they were loading the ships. And then we finally got on the ships, left San Francisco the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, and then we arrived in Adelaide, South Australia, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May.

McIntosh: Did you know you were going to Australia?

Lenz: No, not until we were, oh, a couple weeks out.

McIntosh: You had no idea where you were going?

Lenz: No, unh-uh, no. After a couple weeks out on the ship we had a pretty good idea we were going to Australia, and we were at sea when the Coral Sea Battle was going on, and I don’t know if that was the reason we landed in South Australia, because when we got there, there wasn’t really nothing there for us. Tentage [a group or supply of tents] and stuff wasn’t there. The Australian military forces had put up a little kitchen and had us some coffee there—

McIntosh: How big of a unit now was on that ship? How many guys were on that ship?

Lenz: Well, on the ship, there were seven ships in the convoy going over, and I think pretty much the whole regiment, which was probably around 3,000 to 4,000 troops, was on one ship.

McIntosh: So the entire 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was really with all those ships together?

Lenz: Yeah, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was the first full unit to go over in one convoy at that time. When we landed in South Australia, like I say, we went up to a place out of Adelaide, which was called Sandy Creek. Now the 128<sup>th</sup> and them went over to another camp called Woodside. I guess I was there about a month, I think, and I went on the advance to Brisbane, up to what became Camp Cable.

McIntosh: For what purpose was that, do you recall?

Lenz: Well, 'cause the whole division was gonna move up to Brisbane, and each unit sent some advanced troops along to lay out the camp, you might say. When we got up there, this Major Schroeder was in charge of the advance at that time, and we layed out the 127<sup>th</sup> in the woods. We got in a wooded area. I remember we stopped and got off the train up there, and some Aussies were gonna haul us out to where the camp was gonna be. I talked to this one Aussie, and I asked him, I said, "Where are we?" [both laugh], and he said, "I don't know." He said, "I've lived in Brisbane all my life," and he said, "I've never been this far out in the bush." [both laugh] So—

McIntosh: [both laugh] Oh, that's cute.

Lenz: Anyway, they dumped us off there, and we put up a tent. We were there about three or four weeks before the troops came up, and that was what became Camp Cable.

McIntosh: Did you have a chance to get in town then, or did they restrict ya?

Lenz: Never really got into Brisbane. There was a little town down the road by the name of Tamborine, and they had a little grocery store there, and I don't know where we got the truck from, but we did get a truck while we were on advance, and we used to go down there every morning and pick up the paper and a little bit of doughnuts or something, I guess. But it wasn't much of a town. I don't know if it's still there or not.

McIntosh: Didn't they have any place to sell beer?

Lenz: I don't think we had any beer out there at that time.

McIntosh: Oh my.

Lenz: Nope.

McIntosh: That's too bad.

Lenz: Not when we got first up to Camp Cable. The only place you could have went and got some beer, I think was, we were about 100 miles away from this Tweed Heads, Coolangatta, which is now their Gold Coast, and probably over there, I don't know, we never got over there. While we were up on the advance I don't think anybody got into Brisbane, that I know of. Brisbane was only about thirty miles away. I'm sure they had some beer down in there.

McIntosh: Oh, I'm sure they did.

Lenz: Yeah, and pretty soon, like I say, then the troops start coming up. Then about, I don't know August, September, somewhere in there, this would have been probably in the end of July, I think is when the troops came up there, or a little later. Shortly after that, they stopped flying the 128<sup>th</sup> out. Then I think November, we were all up in New Guinea.

McIntosh: In Port Moresby?

Lenz: At Port Moresby, right.

McIntosh: You set up camp there again.

Lenz: There was another camp set up, yes. We were kind of spread all over again. 127<sup>th</sup> was set up somewhere out around 7 Mile Drome [Jackson Airport]. Shortly after we got up there, everybody got dengue fever pretty bad.

McIntosh: Really? Everybody?

Lenz: Everybody, [laughs] everybody got dengue.

McIntosh: I'll be darned. They put you in bed for that, or no?

Lenz: Well, I'll tell you what, when you got dengue, it didn't last very long, but you were so weak you couldn't get out of bed.

McIntosh: And the backache was fierce?

Lenz: What?

McIntosh: When you had the backache, the pain in the back.

Lenz: No, no, you were just so weak, and you had the diarrhea pretty bad, and you probably could get down the hill to the latrine, but you probably couldn't get back up.

McIntosh: Oh my.

Lenz: Yeah. It lasted a couple of days, usually. But once you got it, you were all done with it. You seem to be immune to it. Shortly after that, then we got on a plane and flew over the hump to Buna, up there to Dobodura really.

McIntosh: When was this, now, do you recall?

Lenz: That was about in November—

McIntosh: Of '42?

Lenz: Of '42. Yeah, November '42, right.

McIntosh: The 126<sup>th</sup> had already taken Buna?

Lenz: No, no, Buna didn't fall until about the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> of January of '43.

McIntosh: Right, that was my recollection, yeah.

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: But you say they flew you up there before that?

Lenz: Oh yeah.

McIntosh: I mean, outside of Buna, or—

Lenz: Well we went up to Dobodura, and then from there we start moving up, we worked for a couple days at a little village called Barua, which had an airstrip out there, and they were at that time dropping rations to us. After about three or four days of dropping rations, then they start coming in and landing. We were out there unloading some planes and stuff, and—

McIntosh: How far away from the Japanese were you then?

Lenz: Probably about two miles.

McIntosh: Two miles.

Lenz: Yeah, and shortly after that they start bringing up some prisoners of war, what they captured there in Buna, some of 'em. I know there were some Japanese, there were some Koreans, and there was for sure one Chinese, and I've got a picture in there of some of 'em that were in that group. Well, then right after that the MPs came in there and took that over, and so we moved up the forward ration dump and stayed at Buna there until it fell then, and after it fell they had to take a little bit of a strip along the coast up to Sanananda. Finally then, I think about, I don't know, I went back to the hospital with malaria. I can't remember exactly when I was flown back to Port Moresby, to the hospital.

McIntosh: Because of the malaria?

Lenz: What?

McIntosh: Because of the malaria?

Lenz: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: What were they treating the malaria with? Did they give you quinine pills?

Lenz: When we were up there, we were using quinine pills as a suppressant, and when I got treated in the hospital, I think in Dobodura yet, I was getting quinine. But when I got back to Port Moresby they start giving me atabrine and plasmatein, and I think that was it.

McIntosh: There's still no cure for malaria, you know that?

Lenz: There isn't.

McIntosh: No, you get over it by yourself.

Lenz: Yeah [laughs], it wears out.

McIntosh: It wears out, exactly.

Lenz: It wears out.

McIntosh: Or you wear out, one or the other.

Lenz: Yeah, right.

McIntosh: So did most of the guys have malaria?

Lenz: Out of about 100 of us that went over there to Buna, only five I know didn't get malaria. They came back, out of that five, I'd say another three got it later on.

McIntosh: Now when you got this malaria, you could tell it was coming on because of your headache? When you're temperature started going up, was that the first—

Lenz: Well, what happened, you would—

McIntosh: Get the chills?

Lenz: You would get the chills first. Then you would get the chills so bad you couldn't find enough blankets to cover you up, and then you would start sweating—

McIntosh: Then the temperature started to warm up.

Lenz: Temperature would go up first, and then you would start after that broke, you'd kind of start sweating, and when you got done with that you were pretty damn weak. You couldn't hardly stand up. In fact, just about everybody got malaria. In order to get off the line, you had to have a fever of 100, I think it was 104. If it was under 104, you didn't get off the line.

McIntosh: Well, that was a matter of timing 'cause the temperature didn't stay at 104, you know, when it bounces up it stays up there a bit, and then it drops down.

Lenz: Right, right, right. Now, see the kind I had, I had malaria that would every other day—

McIntosh: Falcipain.

Lenz: Yeah. Tertian I think they called it. But mine would come on only every other day, but—so—

McIntosh: But they didn't keep you in the hospital then, they sent you back to Australia—

Lenz: No, no—

McIntosh: To another hospital?

Lenz: I stayed in the hospital in Port Moresby until I was just about through with their cure, you might say, and then the troops were gonna go back to Australia, so I rode back on a ship with them to Australia. When we got back there, they put us—everybody was so full of malaria they put you out

on a beach where nobody was around. It happened to be a beach out there by Coolangatta. Beautiful beach, but all sand dunes, you know. Anyway, they kept us there for about three weeks, to kind of get all this—

McIntosh: Get your strength back.

Lenz: Bugs out of the [laughs]—so you wouldn't contaminate the civilians.

McIntosh: Right.

Lenz: Then we moved back to Camp Cable.

McIntosh: Camp Cable, I forget, Camp Cable was where?

Lenz: That is the camp that we went to up in Brisbane. The reason it was named Cable, when we left Adelaide, where we landed from the ship, most of the troops were coming up by train. They had one ship loaded with some of our equipment, and it was a Liberty ship, and it got off right around Sydney, and the Japanese sunk it.

McIntosh: Wonderful.

Lenz: And one of the people on board was a private by the name of Cable, and that is the reason. He got killed. That's the reason they named the camp Cable, because he was the first man from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division to be a casualty. So that's why it's named Camp Cable. It was our camp that we came back to when we came back from New Guinea. We came back to Camp Cable again, and then about—we were there probably from about April of '43 to about November of '43 again. Then we moved back up to New Guinea, to Milne Bay. We were there I know over Christmas, and then we—

McIntosh: What was your duty there, Edgar, in Milne Bay?

Lenz: Milne Bay? We primarily, I'll tell ya, we were getting, we left all our truck equipment and stuff back in Australia, so we were getting all new equipment, came in in crates, primarily putting that together. Troops more than likely went out and did some hiking and stuff around Milne Bay. But we were there for, I don't know, about another month. We were supposed to go up and make a landing off of an island, New Britain, and I know our executive officer of the regiment had stopped in in Milne Bay to get his shoes repaired by some guy that repaired the shoes. The guy said to him, he asked him what outfit they were from, and he said he was from the 127<sup>th</sup>. The guy repairing the shoes says, "Oh, I hear your show's been called off." This colonel asked him, he said, "What do you mean?" "Well," he says, "Your show on New Britain has been called off." So he

came back and he asked the colonel how come he gets all this information from [McIntosh laughs] the guy repairing shoes. And the colonel said, “Yeah, that’s right, it was called off.” Apparently they went in there one week, took aerial photographs of the beach and stuff, and nothing was there. A week later, they went in, took photographs, and there was 10,000 Japs waitin’ for us. So that’s why it was called off. Anyway, from there we went up to Finschhafen, and—

McIntosh: Hollandia [New Guinea]?

Lenz: No, Finschhafen. Then we went from Finschhafen—the 126<sup>th</sup> made a landing at Saidor then. Shortly after that, the 127<sup>th</sup> went and made a landing at Aitape at the same time they landed at Hollandia. And we were up at Aitape there till—we landed there I think on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April of ’43, no ’44 that would have been.

McIntosh: Did you oversee getting those trucks off the ship?

Lenz: What?

McIntosh: Did you oversee getting the trucks off the ship?

Lenz: No, not really.

McIntosh: Somebody else had to do it.

Lenz: Not really, no. No, we went in—we primarily when we went in there, we were mostly out to help the supplies get in—

McIntosh: Oh, I see.

Lenz: And get ‘em up to the troops. That’s mostly what we were in there for. And then I think—then they came out with that rotation and I came home on the—I left there I think around the end of July, first part of August. And the rest of the unit shipped up to Hollandia, and I went back to Milne Bay to wait for a ship to come home. And finally when I did get a ship, we got home somewhere around October, end of October in ’44. Went on furlough, got reassigned to Camp Maxey in [Paris] Texas, Advanced Infantry Training Center. And then—well, after Europe surrendered then I had enough points to become discharged. So after a couple weeks or a month or so I got sent up to Fort Sheridan [north of Chicago], and then they finally did discharge me.

McIntosh: Right. Now in your review here, it says you had a Bronze Star, What was that for?



Lenz: For the meritorious service on—just a minute.

McIntosh: Where ya goin' [laughs]?

Lenz: I was gonna go get the—

McIntosh: [laughs] I know you were. [Dan Lenz talks in the background]

McIntosh: [laughs] He didn't plan on moving.

Dan Lenz: He didn't plan on moving either. [laughs]

Lenz: No. There are two or three of them in there, ain't there, Dan?

Dan Lenz: Bronze Stars?

Lenz: No, the one for the Meritorious Service Medal.

Dan Lenz: Yeah, hang on Pa, I've gotta pool through the junk first. [McIntosh laughs]

McIntosh: I had a friend, Paul Severson, I think was in your regiment. He was in construction. He ran one of the construction machines, the layout of air-fields and that sort of stuff—

Lenz: Oh yeah, yeah. You mean the Seabees [or CBs, Navy Construction Battalions]?

McIntosh: Yeah, well no, he was in the Army.

Lenz: Oh yeah?

McIntosh: And I think he was in your regiment. But he was at Hollandia, I remember, laying out an airstrip in Hollandia. He ran a turnapole [earth moving machine], you know what a turnapole is?

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: That was his job, he was the turnapole operator.

Lenz: Okay.

Dan Lenz: I ain't taking that other one off there, you put them on there so they're not coming off easy.

Lenz: No, okay.

McIntosh: Oh, thank you. There we go, now we're back on camera again. It says, "The Bronze Star for meritorious achievement in the ground operations against the enemy, on or about 8<sup>th</sup> April of '44."

Lenz: Well, you know—

McIntosh: Was that a particular time of day or a time of the month that happened?

Lenz: That Bronze—no that Bronze Star, actually I think it was given for the Buna campaign, but at that time there was no Bronze Star yet.

McIntosh: Ah, so this was a delayed action.

Lenz: That's right. Yeah, and so when they gave it out they didn't—they just generally put down whatcha got it for.

McIntosh: Okay. Then after you got home, you were discharged rather quickly?

Lenz: No, I put in about six months in Texas down there, and then [**End of Tape 1, Side A**] after I got home—

McIntosh: But you didn't have many duties down there, did ya, or—

Lenz: Oh yeah. I'll tell you, we were down there, and they were training a bunch of Air Force personnel that had about three or four years service for infantry.

McIntosh: Air Force people?

Lenz: Oh yes.

McIntosh: They must have been thrilled with that.

Lenz: They were very, very thrilled.

McIntosh: [laughs] Jeepers, they must have been angry.

Lenz: And it was kinda a hard group to work with.

McIntosh: Sure. They were mad, I'm sure.

Lenz: And that's the bunch they loaded up on the airplane right out of Texas and flew 'em over to the Bulge.

McIntosh: Right. You know what they were? Those were college students. A lot of those were college students, ASTP [Army Specialized Training Program]. They had college students—

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: They pulled them right out of those college programs, you see. They were training them to go through college, and then go to the military service. They stopped that, and they only had basic training, and they shipped them over, and they put them on the line right at the point where the Germans came in.

Lenz: That's right. A lot of 'em got killed.

McIntosh: Or captured.

Lenz: Or captured.

McIntosh: That 102<sup>nd</sup> Division, 5,000 were prisoners of war. Well, they didn't know what to do.

Lenz: Yeah. You know, I got malaria pretty bad down there, and I had to go to the hospital in Texas. I know I was laying in the ward there, and there were some of these Air Force people in there too. The doctors came around and started questioning us on the malaria, and I remember they got in front of this one guy, and he said—well, he was one of these Air Force guys. They asked him what he was in there for, and he said, "Well, for malaria." They asked him, they said, "Where'd you get it?" "Well," he said, "in New York." I thought, "No, that's the wrong answer." [both laugh] You don't get it up there. But, shortly after that, he was not in the ward no more, either.

McIntosh: He didn't have malaria?

Lenz: No, no. But there was an awful lot— a lot of guys that came back from the Pacific were assigned to that camp.

McIntosh: Was that your only recurrence after you got home, or did you have symptoms—

Lenz: Oh no. After I got home, after I got discharged, I would get, oh, two, three times a year I'd get it.

McIntosh: Lasting what, a day?

Lenz: No. The first couple times after I got home, I'd say it lasted probably the better part of a week. And each time you got it, it got a little bit less, and I think the last bout I had with malaria was probably in 1954, so that was almost ten years after I left New Guinea.

McIntosh: Sure. That's the common experience, by the way. That's the norm, as they say.

Lenz: Yeah, after about ten years then I really didn't get it anymore, that I know of.

McIntosh: Sure. Okay, and when you got out of service, did you use your GI Bill?

Lenz: No, I did not.

McIntosh: You had a job to go to, and—

Lenz: Yeah. I started working I think as a mechanic—

McIntosh: Back here in Oshkosh?

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: Well, you were an expert by that time.

Lenz: Well, we had quite a bit of experience.

McIntosh: I guess so.

Lenz: But anyway, then in '47, they started the Guard up again. See, when I got back there was no Guard.

McIntosh: Right.

Lenz: So they started it up again in '47 and joined. And, first of all, I joined the Navy because I thought, "Well, I'm not gonna carry my bed on my back no more. I'm gonna go in the Navy, where they ride it around for ya."

McIntosh: Unless you end up swimming, of course.

Lenz: [laughs] Yeah. Well anyway, I got in the Naval Reserve out here, and at that time they were taking cruises on the Caribbean. Well, then I found out that was only gonna be for ex-Navy personnel that were gonna get on a ship. So a major from the Guard here asked me, he said, "Come on in." So I joined the Guard in '47, told the Navy, I said, "I want a discharge." So in 1950 I get a letter from the Navy extending my enlistment. So I

wrote 'em a letter back, said, "No, I've been a member of the Guard since '47, and I was discharged from the Naval Reserves." Well, they sent me a letter back, and they said, "No, you weren't discharged. You were transferred from the active to the inactive" [laughs] And so, I had to get out, out of the Guard. So I think a year later, '51 or '52, I get a discharge from the Navy backdated to '47. [coughs] Well anyway, about '54 then I rejoined the Guard, went with 'em to Fort Lewis [Tacoma, Washington].

McIntosh: What was your duty?

Lenz: My duty at that time was—well I had quite a few different ones. I joined up, I was a truck maintenance sergeant. And then, first of all, when I—'47 to '50 I was the regimental motor sergeant.

McIntosh: You were a master sergeant by then.

Lenz: Yeah, right. Then when I came back in in '54 I came in as truck maintenance sergeant.

McIntosh: You weren't on active duty, or was this active reserve?

Lenz: Yeah, at that time, right.

McIntosh: Okay.

Lenz: And then we went on active duty—oh, well I went to Aberdeen Proving Grounds [Aberdeen, Maryland] to school. I graduated honor student, but when I came back to Oshkosh I got busted.

McIntosh: Honor student in what?

Lenz: I took a course in fuel and electric out there at Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

McIntosh: Oh, yeah.

Lenz: Well, the reason I got busted is because I was working full time for the Guard, and in order to stay in a TO & E [table of organization and equipment] position, I had to take a bust because there were only so many positions open.

McIntosh: Oh, I see.

Lenz: Anyway, we finally got—we got called up for duty in the Berlin Crisis then in shortly after, and so I went out to Washington. Then I was a motor sergeant.

McIntosh: And what was your duty then?

Lenz: Well, at that time I was a motor sergeant of a combat support company, and my duties then consisted of dispatching the trucks, running the maintenance of the vehicles.

McIntosh: Sure. What outfit was that, do you recall?

Lenz: That was Combat Support—that was 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle Group of the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and Combat Support Company.

McIntosh: Still under the 127<sup>th</sup> then?

Lenz: Yes, you see—in I think it was '58 or '59, the division went pentomic, they called it. They had five battle groups. They were not as big as the regiments. And you had three battle groups from the 127<sup>th</sup>, and two battle groups from the 128<sup>th</sup>. By the way, along the line, you know, after the war when they restarted the 32<sup>nd</sup> Division it used to be Wisconsin and Michigan. After the war it no longer became—Michigan wasn't connected with it. It was all Wisconsin. And the 126<sup>th</sup> stayed over in Michigan so we acquired the 426<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

McIntosh: [laughs] A lot of jackin' around.

Lenz: Yeah. Anyway, about '59 they went into this pentomic, and it consisted of three battle groups of the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry, two battle groups of the 128<sup>th</sup> Infantry, and so I happened to wind up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battle Group of the 127<sup>th</sup> and Combat Support Company.

McIntosh: So were they gonna do anything with your group, or keep 'em there? Did they plan to send 'em anywhere?

Lenz: No, no the—well, while we're at Washington we did go down and had a maneuver down there in the Mojave Desert in California. And then after we're done with that and just before they were gonna release us they put us into a maneuver out in Yakima, Washington. And shortly after that one was over with then they got ready to discharge us.

McIntosh: Again?

Lenz: Again, right. [McIntosh laughs] Yeah, so we reverted back to National Guard status, and I was still working for 'em full-time so I had to stay a full—a member. So I stayed in until '81 till I got to sixty years old.

McIntosh: How many years now did you put on active duty? Did you add all that up? Enough to make twenty?

Lenz: Ah—

McIntosh: Enough to make twenty?

Lenz: No, no, no. No, not on active duty, but I—between the active duty and regular service—I mean on the Guard service—

McIntosh: Well, that's forty years.

Lenz: No, I had, yeah, but you see—

McIntosh: From '41 to '81.

Lenz: I had them couple years I was out with—under that Navy deal.

McIntosh: Ah. So you tuned up [??]

Lenz: See, so I had thirty six years and some months in.

McIntosh: In some service, right?

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: In the Army as [??] well.

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: So when they retired you, did you retire on regular half pay?

Lenz: No, I retired—see, with a full time job working for the Guard was Federal Civil Service, and I retired with that. And then you get the Guard pension which is based on the number of points you get.

McIntosh: Right, so—

Lenz: So I got those two pensions right away.

McIntosh: That's for life [inaudible].

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: Do you get a pension from the National Guard?

Lenz: Yeah?

McIntosh: And one for the federal—

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: Well, that's pretty good.

Lenz: See, if you get a pension from the Guard, after twenty years it goes by— each point that you accumulated for every drill and every camp date and stuff-- rank you had—

McIntosh: Hold it, hold it. Did it relate to the rank you were, too?

Lenz: Yeah, and it goes by the rank you had and—

McIntosh: So how much does that Guard pension give you then per month now?

Lenz: Well, I don't know, probably about six hundred a month—

McIntosh: That's pretty good.

Lenz: Yeah. Like I say, each point that you accumulate is worth so much, like ten, twelve cents or something, and then the higher the rank the more you get, you might say. So that's how they base it, on how—

McIntosh: You didn't get any disability from your malaria?

Lenz: No. One year—

McIntosh: They generally don't give that.

Lenz: I'll tell you what, I did get a disability for malaria for one year, and—

McIntosh: For that recurrence in Texas.

Lenz: Well, this was after I was discharged, and I got a check for every month for about thirteen dollars, ten percent I was getting'. Well then, after a year I had to go down for a reexamination. I went down there, I think to Fond du Lac [Wisconsin], and they said, "Have you had a recurrence of malaria?" And I said "Yes." And they said, "Well, when was it?" I told 'em just when I had it, and he said, "What did you do?" I said, "Well, I took some atabrine and cleared it up." They said, "You didn't go get a blood smear? And I said, "No." I said I knew what I had.

McIntosh: Right.



Lenz: And they said “Well, if you ain’t got no proof you had it,” he said, “we gotta cut ya out of the pension.” So I lost my disability there.

McIntosh: Oh well. Did--do you keep track of any of your buddies from the regiment?

Lenz: Oh yeah. There’s quite a few of them right from Oshkosh here that a few of them are left. But, yes, we always did. We usually went to the—the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry always had a reunion the last weekend in September.

McIntosh: On a yearly basis?

Lenz: Yeah, on a yearly basis, right. It used to be every other year at first when it started out. It used to be when the division convention was in Michigan. Then the 1-2-7 had a convention in Wisconsin. But now it’s every year. It has been for the last fifteen years, I guess.

McIntosh: Right.

Lenz: And, yes, you kinda kept track—

McIntosh: How many are left now?

Lenz: I don’t really know offhand, but I’d—

McIntosh: You’d guess what?

Lenz: We left—I know this, we left Oshkosh, Service Company had about seventy-five men. H Company had about seventy-five men, and the band had probably about thirty. I think out of the band there’s only two left. Out of Service Company, I guess—I don’t think there’s ten left, and H Company I’m not too sure, but it seems like as though we have one hell of a time gettin’—

McIntosh: Sure. Well everybody our age, you know, we’re all dyin’, a thousand a day.

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: Or more. So—oh, well. Circling the drain, I always tell everybody, is what we’re doin’ [laughs].

Lenz: And I know this, I had the 127<sup>th</sup> Infantry reunion about five years ago, and we had 281 for the banquet, and now I think they’re pretty lucky if they get seventy-five.

McIntosh: Right. Do you correspond regularly with any of these people?

Lenz: Well, I keep in touch quite a bit by phone and stuff with some of them here in Oshkosh, and not as far as written correspondence, no.

McIntosh: Not particularly. Okay, well, that sounds very good. Anything you forgot to tell me?

Lenz: Not that I can think of.

McIntosh: Okay. Well your experience—were you trained as well for what they asked you to do? That was another question I forgot to ask.

Lenz: You mean when we first went in?

McIntosh: Yeah.

Lenz: No. [laughs] We had to—

McIntosh: You learned on the job.

Lenz: We had to pick it up as we went along.

McIntosh: Yeah, that was the experience of others who went in very early in the war—

Lenz: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: Is that the training facilities were not very good.

Lenz: No, and I'll tell ya, when we went up to Buna there was nobody knew what in the hell was gonna happen, and we had very little equipment. I know I carried a Springfield bolt action rifle up to Buna [McIntosh laughs], and shortly after I got myself an M1 that I found on the field.

McIntosh: You weren't issued carbines? Weren't you issued carbines [inaudible]?

Lenz: No, no, no, that carbine came out, hell—

McIntosh: Later, huh?

Lenz: Oh yeah, quite a bit later. In fact, I don't think—well, yes, up at Aitape we had some carbines.

McIntosh: Well that Springfield 1901 was better than their carbine.

Lenz: That 03, oh yeah.

McIntosh: Yeah, the 03, yeah, that's what I meant.

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: That's a pretty good gun.

Lenz: And the M1 was a good gun.

McIntosh: Yes, it was. They still have those issued in the service, you know.

Lenz: They do?

McIntosh: M1s are still—for sharpshooters.

Lenz: Oh yeah?

McIntosh: Yup, because it's heavier than the M16—

Lenz: Yeah, of yeah.

McIntosh: And it's a good weight for sharpshooting, is what it is.

Lenz: Okay.

McIntosh: So there's still a few still issued in the service, interesting, some of those guns. No .45s? You didn't see any of those?

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: And that's another gun who's gone through several wars and still being issued.

Lenz: Yeah, the '45, the one I had, my dad was over there in Australia with us. We went over on the same ship.

McIntosh: What was he doin'?

Lenz: He was a—well, he went over, he was a mess sergeant, and—

McIntosh: Attached to where?

Lenz: Well, he was attached—he was in Service Company when we went over on the ship, but then when we landed in Adelaide he was—

McIntosh: You mean in your regiment?

Lenz: Yeah.

McIntosh: Your father?

Lenz: Sure, he was in the same company I was.

McIntosh: Jeezus [laughs].

Lenz: And, yeah, we went over on the same ship together. Anyway—

McIntosh: That's a story in itself.

Lenz: Anyway, when he landed in—we land in Australia, and we were gonna move up to Brisbane. At that time they put him—took him out and put him in what they called the Base Section. So he was gonna move up to Brisbane, and all they had on his records was that he was a mess sergeant. He wanted to get out of the mess. So I guess he got a hold of his records and kind of tore 'em up.

McIntosh: How long had he been in the service? Before you?

Lenz: No. He was—I'll tell you what, he was in the Guard in 1921, and he got out, and then he rejoined the Guard in 1938. No,--well anyway, somewhere around then, '38 or '39, he joined the Guard.

McIntosh: Honest to God.

Lenz: And then he was working as a cook. When we got ready to go to—in 1940 he was working as a cook, or a baker down in the asylum down in Fond du Lac, and makin' eighty dollars a month. And the major, the S4 of the regiment, came and said, "Oscar," he said, "Come on along." "Well," he says, "I can't," he says, "I've got to make at least eighty dollars a month." And the major says, "Okay," he said, "We'll make you eighty dollars a month." So he came along as a mess sergeant. No, he came along as a cook, and when then the mess sergeant was discharged before this extension so he became mess sergeant. Anyway—

McIntosh: You mean he never went through the standard recruiting process or anything? They just sort of absorbed him into the outfit?

Lenz: Oh yeah. Well—

McIntosh: You mean that's why he didn't have papers?

Lenz: He came along as a cook, yeah. He enlisted [both laugh]. Anyway—

McIntosh: Well, this is a story right there.

Lenz: Yeah. But anyway, then he went and came up to Brisbane, and they said, “What did you do?” And he said, “I was in supply all the time.” And they said, “Well what the hell, we requisitioned a mess sergeant. We don’t need a supply sergeant.” “Well,” he said, “that’s all I know is supply.”

McIntosh: He wouldn’t tell ‘em.

Lenz: No, he wouldn’t tell ‘em. [both laugh] He wanted to get out of the kitchen.

McIntosh: Right [both laugh].

Lenz: Finally he became a supply sergeant, and he stayed—I was at—

McIntosh: He stayed in Australia?

Lenz: Stayed in Australia, right, when we went up to New Guinea, and when I came back, he was out in a prisoner of war—a prison camp, at a place called Beaudesert. And he was a supply sergeant out there, and he belonged to the 1<sup>st</sup> Provisional MP Company, and that was the only one over in Australia. So when he went downtown to requisition some stuff and get it from the warehouse, he’d kind of walk through the warehouse. He’d say, “I need that, I need that,” and the guy says, “Well, does your TO& E authorize it?” “Oh yeah.” He knew damn well they didn’t have a TO & E on that company. So [laughs] he just authorized everything, you know. So—yes, he was—then he came home.

McIntosh: When did he come home?

Lenz: Fall of ’43 I think, no, yeah.

McIntosh: Well my God, how old was he? Do you recall?

Lenz: See, that’s the reason he came home, on that over thirty-eight.

McIntosh: Well he was well over thirty-eight.

Lenz: Oh yeah, yeah. So—

McIntosh: But you don’t remember how old he was then?

Lenz: Probably about forty-three.

McIntosh: Okay.

Lenz: Anyway, that's the reason he came home, was on that over thirty-eight.

McIntosh: He came right home then after that?

Lenz: Yeah, yeah.

McIntosh: How long did he live?

Lenz: He lived till about seventy-one.

McIntosh: Seventy-one?

Lenz: Mm-hm.

McIntosh: Boy, he'd have been fun to interview [laughs].

Lenz: [laughs] Yeah.

McIntosh: Did you see him often when you were in Australia?

Lenz: Yes, that Beaudesert was probably within twenty five, thirty miles of Camp Cable, and while I was back in Australia, yes, I did go over and see him, oh, a couple times a month, I'd say. But then when we we'd go back up to New Guinea, again, well, then he couldn't make it back there no more.

McIntosh: Right, yeah.

Lenz: So I did correspond with him a little bit, and I know—when we were back—just before we went up to New Guinea I think the second time, he asked me, he says, “Well, what do you think? Should I go home?” He had a chance to get promoted to a warrant officer in MacArthur's headquarters down there, but if he'd stayed. So he asked me, he said, “Do you think I oughta stay, or do you think I oughta go home?” I said, “Well, I think you better go home.” ‘Cause there was myself, my brother, and him, all three of us in at the same time.

McIntosh: Right. Go home and take care of mom.

Lenz: Yeah, right. So that's what he did then.

McIntosh: Fantastic. Thank you, what a story. I've interviewed two other guys who had parents, their fathers, in the service. One of them was in the Navy,

and he came to London briefly, and his father worked as a liaison with the British in London—

Lenz: No kidding.

McIntosh: And they ran into each other accidentally. [laughs] The father didn't know where the son was, and his son knew his father was somewhere in England, but not gonna be in that same hotel, that was cute too.

Lenz: That would have been something, right.

McIntosh: Yeah, right, what a surprise. Wonderful, well that's a great story, great story.

Mrs. Lenz: Both of our sons were in the Gulf War, too. And they were both National Guardsmen. One of them is still in the National Guard, this one right here.

McIntosh: You're in the National Guard? Well, this has been great, thanks a lot. You're my 131<sup>st</sup> interview.

Dan Lenz: Well, you've gotten—

**[End of Interview]**