

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
JOSEPH O. NELSON  
Artillery, Army, World War II  
2005

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**Nelson, Joseph O.**, (1918- ). Oral History Interview, 2005.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

Joseph Nelson, a Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin native, discusses his Army service with the 53<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, 6th Infantry Division during World War II. Previous to being drafted, Nelson recalls working on the family dairy farm. Initially assigned to the 50<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion, he discusses basic training at Camp McCoy (Wisconsin) and Fort Sheridan (Illinois), maneuvers in Tennessee, and transfer to the wire section of Headquarters Company, 53<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion. While at Fort Leonard Wood, Nelson speaks of getting married while on a three-day pass and making arrangements to rent a house from another soldier. He describes spending a few months doing desert training at Camp Stoneman (California). Shipped out of San Francisco, he talks about conditions aboard his troop transport, the *USS Republic*. Nelson discusses spending six months in Oahu (Hawaii), based first in the basement of a high school and then in an isolated shack. Shipped to New Guinea in 1944, he speaks of troops getting malaria and jungle rot. He gives a detailed account of the first artillery attack on his division, and states, "We were always lucky. As far as the division, our headquarters, we never lost any men through combat up there." Nelson talks about amphibious training, transferring to the message center, and handling all the mail. He touches on seeing General MacArthur come ashore to talk to the men. Nelson characterizes "Piss Call Charley," a Japanese plane that harassed the troops every night, and describes seeing it shot down. Sent to Lingayen Gulf (Philippines), he talks about seeing the coast shelled. He talks about his unit taking out fifty-seven tanks from Japan's 2nd Army Division using artillery, and afterwards his friend Joseph Call photographed the dead bodies of the Japanese soldiers before they buried them. Towards the end of the war, Nelson talks about "mopping up" operations, thoughts about the atomic bomb being dropped, and discharge at Camp McCoy. With no official homecoming celebration, he recalls seeing his three-year old daughter upon return home and finding employment at a mink farm. Nelson touches on reactions to the bombing of Pearl Harbor while he was at Fort Leonard Wood.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Nelson (b.1918) served from 1941 to 1945 with the 53<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion in the Pacific Theater of World War II. After an honorable discharge, he returned to his hometown of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by Terry MacDonald, 2005.

Transcribed by Bruce Stone, Wisconsin Court Reporter, 2007.

Abstract written by Susan Krueger, 2010.

**Transcribed Interview:**

- Terry: This is an interview with Joseph Nelson, who served with the U. S. Army 53<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, Sixth Infantry Division, during World War II. Interview is being conducted at approximately 10:00 a.m. at 508 North Seventh Avenue, Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, on the following date of March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005, and the interviewer is Terry McDonald. Joe, would you like to tell us a little bit about your background?
- Joseph: Yeah. I was born in the summer of 1918. Lived on the farm. We had only a small dairy farm at that time, it was popular in those years, and when the draft came up I was drafted on January 27, 1941, and we left Sturgeon Bay and went down to Milwaukee. Went through the processing, and everybody was accepted. At that time they didn't turn anybody down.
- Terry: Did anyone else go from Door County with you?
- Joseph: Yeah, there was approximately 15 of us that left from Door County at that time.
- Terry: Were they all your same age? Were you out of high school at that time?
- Joseph: I didn't go to high school. I graduated and worked on the farm because the folks were alone on the farm. So I just helped out on the farm, used to raise cattle, crops [inaudible] in the summer.
- Terry: They were all about the same age?
- Joseph: They were all probably about the same age. I was 23 at the time. Some of them are a little bit older. Joe Schafer from town here was I think a little bit older than us.
- Terry: And everybody passed their physical?
- Joseph: Everybody passed their physical. So the next morning they loaded us on a train again and we all went up to Camp McCoy. It was Camp McCoy then, now it's Fort McCoy. And we were assigned to the 50<sup>th</sup> Signal Battalion and we trained up there. We didn't get much – didn't get too much basic training. They put us through school in maintenance and wire telephones, and we started climbing poles, you know?
- Terry: This was during basic training?
- Joseph: This was basic training. We were up on the Siler [??] Area and at that time we didn't have any – we didn't have line trucks with hole diggers on them, so we dug all our poles by hand; set up poles and ran line. And we also ran

what was a field battery line which was used between pieces with field telephones.

Terry: Now when you were at Fort McCoy, or Camp McCoy, what kind of living conditions did you have?

Joseph: Well, see, Camp McCoy, at that time Camp McCoy, before we got there, has been a cavalry unit and there were all sorts of horse barns. They closed these horse barns in and made them into barracks there was a great big old heater stove in there, coal-fired. Of course, we – it was winter time, we worked there in January, it was winter time, and used to have the fire patrol go around at night and keep these stoves going. And then, after the summer I mean, we left McCoy, we went on maneuvers down into Tennessee and that, and when we came back we came back to Fort Sheridan. We didn't come back to McCoy, we didn't come back to Fort McCoy, we went to Fort Sheridan.

Terry: Did all the boys stay together?

Joseph: No, they were all split up, some of them went into different areas and that. We were all split up. I don't know just where everybody ended up, but some of them – some of us stayed together.

Terry: At Fort Sheridan what were you –

Joseph: Well, at Fort Sheridan then we still went into some of our training and that, then we went on maneuvers down in Tennessee. And at that time it was two different army groups, the red and green. We were a neutral troop and we just ran communications for them. And then we came back there, we stayed there for some time, and while I was home on leave, a five-day pass or something, I got notice that 50<sup>th</sup> Signal was going to be transferred to Alaska, and at that time I think they were figuring on down in the Aleutian Islands, you know, the Japs were starting to move into that territory. Well, we were looking for volunteers to join up for additional years. See, when I went in at that time it was supposedly a year.

Terry: Okay.

Joseph: And I went in in January, and this was getting towards the summer, I had probably six months left, and I said, "Well, no way am I going to sign up. I'll take a transfer." And most of the fellas that were in the signal company at that time that was in with us, they took a transfer. So they loaded us on a train again, and we went down to Fort Leonard Wood, and after we debarked off the train, set us up in formation and somebody came, an officer, this man came down, called out, said, "I'll take these twelve, I'll take this

one.” And I ended up in the Headquarters Company, 53<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion.

Terry: So you were out of communications?

Joseph: I wasn't really – well, I wasn't really out of communication because being my experience in the signal corps they put me in the wire section, which was the same thing. I mean we were running field wire in place of steel telephone poles and that. But again, we went on a lot of maneuvers down into different areas down south and that.

Terry: What time of year was that when you were down at Fort Leonard Wood?

Joseph: Oh, that was in – I don't know, in June or July sometime.

Terry: Pretty hot down there at that time?

Joseph: Yeah, pretty hot, and muddy, because the base was new at that time and it was all new barracks and that. And the division – the division was Sixth Infantry – divisions stayed in Leonard Wood until June of 1942 afterwards. But of course during the time I was at Leonard Wood I was married. I came home on a three-day pass and picked up my wife-to-be.

Terry: A local girl?

Joseph: A local girl, Carol Hanson. We went and bought a wedding ring, went back, took the train back to Leonard Wood, stopped at St. Louis and couldn't get a priest to marry us so we got married by the judge. Left the same day and went down, way down to a little town of Williamsville. We stopped at Williamsville, got a hotel, stayed overnight in the hotel. The next morning I left for Camp Leonard Wood, and I was there – I mean some of my buddies lived in the town of Lebanon. They were married. One of the fellas had a '37 Ford and son weekend passes we would drive it back and forth. So I am living in the hotel. A buddy of mine, he says, “The house we live in has got a room,” he says, “for rent. Are you interested?” and I said, “Well, sure.” So the next weekend we moved back up to Lebanon. I sometimes wonder how we made it. When I left Sturgeon Bay I think I had \$300 in cash in the bank. I took a loan. At that time I was getting about \$36 – private first-class was getting \$36 a month pay. I don't know. We sent home our pay.

Terry: What did your wife do down there then?

Joseph: She didn't do anything down there. The girls just waited for us to come in on weekends. She stayed down there for I think two months or so, then she went back to Sturgeon Bay, Belle's Harbor, and I went on with

maneuvers, and that. Oh I don't know – we went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for some time as a firing battalion to train artillery units out there. Then we went to maneuvers in Tennessee, and in December of 1942 we left Fort Leonard Wood then, and we went to Camp Stoneman in California for desert training. I think at that time we thought that the division would be called to the other theater of operations over in Africa or something, but that didn't pan out. We were out in the Mohave Desert for – oh, two, three months.

Terry: What kind of life was that?

Joseph: Well, a lot of sand; cold at night, hot during the day. We maneuvered around out there and had some firecrackers and that with our trailer. From there we went down into California, again went to a little camp called San Luis Obispo. That was a nice little place down there, north of San Francisco. There was a place called Hunter Liggett Range which was owned by the Hearst paper company and they had a lot of property up there, and we used to go up there and fire, and I was – I was still in the wire section at that time and – I think I was a corporal at that time and still used to run the communications between the switchboards in the different units. We left after our tour of duty up there. We left in July 19 – July 22<sup>nd</sup> from the port in San Francisco which was the port of the debarkation for troops.

Terry: What kind of ship did they transport you on then?

Joseph: Well, we went – we didn't know just where we were going. We shipped out the 22<sup>nd</sup>, in 1943, out of San Francisco on a boat called the SS Republic. We didn't know where we were going at the time until we got out for a while. We were headed for Hawaii and we got to Hawaii the 29<sup>th</sup> – it took us seven days to cross.

Terry: Can you describe the living conditions aboard the ship?

Joseph: Well, it was wet. We had no problems, only thing is it took us so long because we were all alone. It was a merchant marine vessel, and we had no escort and they were so afraid of submarines in the area at that time. So we zigzagged. Every 15 minutes they would blow a whistle and they would change course. And we landed on Oahu, on the island of Oahu. From there the unit was kind of split up and the headquarters of my outfit went to Roosevelt High School in the basement. The high school was in session yet, but they still had room in the basement where part of the island was set up and I went with my group. At that time I had been changed from wire section. I was a sergeant and I changed to liaison, and liaison was the forward observers for directing fire for the artillery units. We had – the 63<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division was our infantry division and we

supported their fire for them. So I was sent to a little place down around Diamond Head called Fort Rumor, and myself and my Jeep driver and radio operator. We were stationed there in just a little shack there by ourselves. We had communication. We had telephones back to anywhere's. I could call headquarters or anything that I wanted. No problem there. We had a good life in Hawaii. We were there for – we were in Hawaii for six months and we had what was called the support division on the north end of the island. At that time Waikiki Beach was nothing but barbed wire, only two hotels there. I was back there afterwards, a little different.

But we left Hawaii and went on another mission and – we left Hawaii in January of 1944 and this time we were on a luxury liner, the SS Monterey, and of course this time we had a lot of escorts. This time we didn't run alone. We headed for New Guinea and we landed in New Guinea in February of 1944. New Guinea is a island that – you can look on the map – sits over the island of Australia, like a big turkey you used to see, and we landed on Milne Bay, which is down at the bottom of it. And we went ashore there and there was no – there was a coconut plantation owned by Palma Pete Company [??]. There was really no activity, no Jap activity in the area at that time. I mean everything was out – most of the activity of the Japanese was up around Surroun [??] and Maffin Air [??], what they called Maffin Air, which they controlled at that time. And the island of New Guinea was a very large island, I think it's about 1300 miles long. So we put in there, and we got in there at night and made camp, and the next morning we got up and was going to have breakfast and that, and looked out and here there was the natives, and of course at that time the native women in that part of the island wore grass skirts and they were bare up above. So everybody was kind of wide-eyed at breakfast time, watching these gals walking by. We used to call them "fuzzy-wuzzies". But it was like a raining mosquito-infested area. They used DDT in the water puddles, which wouldn't work now.

Terry: Was there a lot of sickness in the troops from malaria?

Joseph: Well, yeah, there was a lot of that, and after we were there for a while we got what they called, "jungle rot", which they got between their toes and feet. I never had any of it. I was lucky. Used to use the blue ointment that the medics put on it.

Mc D: Was that from being wet all the time?

Joseph: From wet feet, yeah. It was so damp in that area that you couldn't wear a watch or anything with a leather band on it or anything because it molded right away. We used to tie them to our jackets and that. We didn't wear

shoes, we wore jungle boots, which were kind of canvas that would probably dry out partially but not completely dry.

Terry: Is that something new that the Army came out with?

Joseph: At that time.

Terry: Yeah.

Joseph: I guess so.

Terry: First I heard that they changed their boots.

Joseph: Yeah, they changed them. They were canvas boots. They were about 16 inches high or so in place of a shoe. I mean anything else molded right away. So I was in New Guinea for 11 months.

Terry: Most of the time were you doing training exercises?

Joseph: Yeah, most of the time we were doing training. We really didn't get out there to any hostile area until we got up into the middle part of New Guinea, and then we started receiving artillery fire and different things. And I remember the first time that we got – the first time we got caught with artillery fire we had just moved into the area, late in the afternoon, we weren't dug in or anything. All at once you could hear a couple whooshes and a couple rounds going over. I had just been to the PX and I had a can of salted peanuts and two other guys were standing alongside of me. We looked for cover somewhere's and there was – it had been an old Japanese position at one time, I think, and there was a little hole scratched out in the ground, probably three by four feet. So we hit this hole, and crouched down, and I handed they guy some of the peanuts said, "You better finish these." Another round came over. Pretty soon there was a round short. I looked up and the top of the hill and there was a little dust scratched down through the dirt and there was a piece of shrapnel about two inches long. But then they quit firing. They had us back -- as far as that goes, a little later than – they could have really did damage to the division. But we really dug in that night. I mean we dug holes and then next morning everybody crawled out, looked like a bunch of ground hogs came out. So that was our first – that was our first baptism of fire. We got shelled a lot at other times, but we were always lucky. As far as the division, our headquarters, we never lost any men through combat up there. We moved out and moved up, up the coast again, and a lot of times we made amphibious landings. We were training to disembark from boats into landing craft. And we would go up the shore a ways and we ended up at the top of the island, at San / SU pour where the air trip was, and during this time – during this time I had transferred from being a liaison officer,



directing artillery fire, I was transferred into message center. First Sergeant came by one night and he said, "You know, Joe." I had a baby at that time, [inaudible] and he says, "Maybe you better get into a better area." Some guys had been transferred out and there was an opening and I went to the message center. Got in the message center, we took in anything that came in from division headquarters or anything. I handed all the mail, all money orders, all letters incoming. Went down to the airport where our airstrip was and picked up the incoming mail and sorted that out to the different batteries and different outfits in the unit.

Terry: Did you have anything to do with the outgoing mail then too?

Joseph: Yeah, we had outgoing mail. I picked up the outgoing mail and had it censored by an officer.

Terry: Oh, that's who did it?

Joseph: Used to – I had a couple in the outfit with me – used to lay the letters out, they weren't sealed, they couldn't be sealed. We had to seal the letters. So we used to lay the letters out in a row like that [indicating]. They would be all upright. He had a sponge and rub it across and say "sealed with a kiss." That's where they went. But when we left New Guinea from San say as I pour –

Mc D: You mentioned about you were practicing for landings, for amphibious landings? They took you out –

Joseph: They took us out on a bigger boat and – you know, they used to land maybe eight or ten LST landing crafts off the boat and you went over the side in a cargo net.

Terry: Yeah, how was that? Because I understand –

Joseph: Well, cargo net, you know, all depends how the sea was, if the sea was calm. But we had big oars out there and sometimes you would get on that net and the boat would be way below you, and the next second the boat was going up past you above you. So you had to watch when you stepped you off, you know? Well, I used to like to get on the last boat, one of the last boats that left, because the first boats that left on a mission like that they would lay in its wake, and of course guys used to get seasick. Wouldn't be out there too long you would see the guys peeling their helmets, heaving in the helmet. So if you get into one of the last boats then you make your run for shore, and after you were running for shore then you didn't have to worry about that. So that was our training there. They did some firing on the island. We used to put targets out into the ocean and

fire at them out there, and then we fired harassing fire onto the Jap positions and that.

Terry: Uh-huh [meaning yes].

Joseph: Anyway, we left. We left New Guinea on December 27, 1944. We were loading – we were downloading one of the ships that night and getting ready to set sail. We knew where we were going to. We knew we were going to go into the Philippines. We didn't know just where we were going to land, but we knew we were going to land, but we knew we were headed for the Philippines. We used to have a little – we used to have a little plane, a little Jap plane from the air strip up at Maffin at that time, and he would come out at night about 12:00 or something, drop a bomb or two, never did too much damage. We used to call him "Piss Call Charley". One night we were loading a boat and here comes Charley, and we had an anti-aircraft battery down at the bay, and by golly, the searchlight picked Charley up way up there, you know? He looked like a little white moth up there. And I don't know, they had – the aircraft guns blew eight or ten rounds and boom!

Terry: They got him?

Joseph: They got Charley, and Charley came down in the ocean. We didn't see Charley anymore. But anyway, we loaded onto offshore boats at that time and left New Guinea and we had a big escort at that time. We were headed for the Philippines and we had a big convoy at that time. I think the Battleship Wisconsin – I almost think the Battleship Wisconsin was in our convoy. And we had a lot of destroyers, aircraft carriers, a lot of the ships going with us, and we landed up at Lingayen Gulf and San Freiden [??]. We laid out there for the first day while they shelled. Of course, they just hammered her. I think that we had observers there, people in there ahead of time that notified civilians in the coastal areas what was coming and they moved up to higher ground somewhere's. And so the casualties of the civilians wasn't too great.

Terry: Were you able to observe the firing?

Joseph: Yeah, we could see it from –

Terry: What did it look like?

Joseph: Well, it just – they just fired 16-incher's. They just blew them away. You didn't see nothing but dust flying around. They really hammered the coast up there. And I was – the coxswain on our boat, he drove us up, I didn't even get wet feet. In the area the infantry was ahead of us, they had secured the beach, and we had no problem at that time. We moved around

through the island, from one end of the island to the other, as far as that goes, into Manila and different areas. And like I said, at that time I was in the message center so I was not out observing anywhere's. Fact is, the lieutenant that I had was killed as an observer, and one of my buddies was wounded in one of the conflicts.

Terry: When you were overseas in New Guinea or in the Philippines, did you ever have the opportunity for entertainment, the USO shows?

Joseph: No, not too much. No, there wasn't too much there. I saw General MacArthur one time in New Guinea. He came ashore and talked to us.

Terry: Really?

Joseph: And dug out his corn cob pipe.

Terry: Did you get very close to him?

Joseph: Yeah, he came right into our area. And I think the biggest conflict that our battalion had was in a little town that they called Munhas [??], in the Philippines. We heard from the reports that the Jap Second Armored Division was stationed there, holed up there. They were a light tank battalion. And we were on the move to another town that was beyond there, and in place of taking the highway that ran – they had fairly decent highways in the Philippines, I mean they had blacktop cardivan roads and that. And in place of taking the highway we detoured around the town, through the back – through rice paddies, and at that time of year rice paddies were dry. There was no water – there was no water in them.

Terry: Uh-huh [meaning yes].

Joseph: And we got on the other side of the town and we poured artillery fire into the tank area. Well, somehow, in a day or so later, these tanks decided that they were going to pull out. At that time I had a little trailer at that time that I had made up for my office and I had – **[End of tape 1 side A]**

Terry: We were talking about they just had a artillery attack on the village and the Japanese were pulling out.

Joseph: Yeah. My – I saw this tank and I rang switchboard and asked for G-6, which was the cannon officer, and I says at that time, "I'm identifying tanks" and he says, "I've got the report." And I had – well, I left my area and walked out to an open area and the tanks were pounding down the highway there, and our artillery unit loaded their guns and started firing. They started firing point – in place of observers or anything they just fired pointblank at these tanks. It ended up that we had – the count they had was

that we had destroyed 57 tanks from the Second Army. We depleted this whole Second Army division. We went down the highway the next – the same morning, after breakfast, and all these tanks were burning. Of course, all the Japanese dead bodies were laying on the highway, you know? It was a mess. I had a buddy of mine that I still have contact with that had a camera, and while we were overseas he used to take pictures of different things in the outfit. And he would take about 15 snapshots and he would send these back to his wife and she got them developed, and then she would put them in groups, in packets, and send them back to him and he would sell them at \$3 a pack and the guys would want them. I was out there with Clyde Call. We were walking through there and he was taking pictures and he says “Jeez, I don’t know how many of these I should take because the way it looks I’m afraid they won’t pass censorship.” So he took some – and I have copies of them. After breakfast that morning the – I [inaudible] dug entrenchments, buried the dead. You know, it was – there was a lot of them. But then things kind of changed. I mean after that we developed some artillery fire in different areas and we moved through the whole area of the islands. In fact, I was living – had one night, a close evening our bivouac area, when some foreign guys came in, got word from the – they weren’t from my division or my battalion. They said they were Rangers – and this is getting towards the end of the conflict a little bit. I mean things were getting pretty well cleaned up. And they said they were in there to evacuate and free prisoners.

Terry: Uh-huh [meaning yes].

Joseph: And it happened that Doc Leasum [Dr. Charles Leasum] was one of the prisoners –

Terry: Doc Leasum was from Sturgeon Bay? He was a doctor and he was with –

Joseph: Yeah, he was with the medic outfit and he was captured on Bataan and I found out the next day that they had released him.

Terry: And then Rangers, they were the Darby’s Rangers?

Joseph: It was a Ranger outfit, I don’t know what unit they were with. But they stayed with us overnight and went in the next morning and took the camp. There was a camp that they were in and they took that camp, and after that we just kind of moved around the island, covered the whole island. And at that time there was a point system coming up at that time in the Army, and if you had so much service, if you had so many dependents or something, you gained enough points, and I think it was 15 of us that had points enough that we were about ready, we could be shipped out and shipped home.

- Terry: Because the war was getting –
- Joseph: Yeah, the war – they had dropped the atomic bomb and that and things were more or less – you know, we were more or less mopping up operations.
- Terry: What was the reaction of the soldiers that were with you when they heard they dropped the atomic bomb?
- Joseph: They figured that's it, boy, we are out of here – you know? The saying used to be in the outfit, "Back alive in '45 or the Golden Gate in '48."
- Terry: Wow!
- Joseph: There were 15 of us and we got – departed again, got on a boat and headed back to the USA. Landed in San Francisco on Angel Island.
- Terry: What kind of ship did you come back on?
- Joseph: I don't know what that was – wasn't too particular; it was a regular troop ship. But we landed on Angel Island and stayed there for a day or two, I guess, and then they shipped us back to Camp McCoy.
- Terry: Now were you being discharged?
- Joseph: I was being discharged, yeah, and we went back to Camp McCoy where I started from, and that's where I got my discharge from – I don't know, stayed there for a couple days. I remember the morning that we walked out to get our discharge papers, I mean we filed out in formation, and some guy started singing, "Oh, What A Beautiful Day, Everything's Going My Way."
- Terry: Yeah?
- Joseph: Kind of – got our papers signed and got our travel pay, which I think was \$11 or something, and \$300 discharge amount, and I head for Sturgeon Bay. Not next for Sturgeon Bay, I think we went to – at that time we took a train to Manitowoc and from Manitowoc we took a bus and – took the bus, and my brother had a tavern up at Peninsula Center and I had called him and there was a tavern in Jacksonport and I had him pick me up at Jacksonport, any my parents at that time were living in Peninsula Center, and so my wife was there with my little three-year-old. I was back home. So that was it.
- Terry: Well, when you come to the states was there any – you went on the cruise ships back? Was there any kind of celebration?

- Joseph: No, there was no celebration. No, there was no celebration. There was nothing. No, you just melted back into the –
- Terry: So when you got back and first saw your child what was that like?
- Joseph: Well, you know, it was like I say, my parents were living in Peninsula Center there, and went to bed that night, and when I came home – of course, it was late at night, and she was – Judy was sleeping in her crib. Woke up the next morning and she's standing up in her crib and she said, "That's my daddy."
- Terry: Really? Oh, terrific. Wow!
- Joseph: Well, then I took a little leave around at that time, and of course had to find something to do.
- Terry: There was quite a few men coming back at that time.
- Joseph: Yeah, there was men coming back at that time, and I – I knew a fella by the name of Babizon [??] and I knew his wife, I mean from way back and they had a mink ranch in Sturgeon Bay and my dad says – well, he was thinking that he was looking for somebody to work. "Why don't you give him a call?" So I called Al DeLoal [??], and they said, "Sure". So December or sometime – I came back in September. I was discharged in September, and in October or so I moved to Sturgeon Bay and started work at a mink ranch. And I worked at the mink ranch for 15 years and – the mink ranch was kind of depleting and I was looking for something else, and they were looking for somebody at Door County Hardware, so I worked there 21 years.
- Terry: Really? How many other children did you have, you and your wife?
- Joseph: We have got one more daughter and we lost two – two little boys through birth afterwards.
- Terry: Okay, now you said you had some real good friends when you were in the Army. Did you keep in contact with them?
- Joseph: Yeah, I've got a good buddy that was down in Arizona by the name of Clyde Call.
- Terry: Call?
- Joseph: Call, yeah. He's the guy used to take the pictures. And that's when we had lived – that's the ones we lived with when we were in Leonard Wood.

And he had a camera shop in Kankakee, Illinois and we went down there a couple times and visited him when my wife was living and – while Carol was living. After I retired, we used to vacation in Arizona. We would go down there in the month of February and stay the month of February and Clyde and his wife lived in Sun City, Arizona.

Terry: Uh-huh [meaning yes].

Joseph: So on the way back we would stop at Sun City and we would stay there for a week or two, and they have been up here and we have been down there several times, and now we are getting to the age we don't travel that much anymore. But I still keep in contact with him.

Terry: Did your unit ever have any reunions?

Joseph: Yeah, reunions – they had reunions. I only attended one. Reunions are always held in Springfield, Missouri, which was a long ways to travel, and with work, I mean sometimes – it was always over the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Fact is, I just had a letter here a week or so ago. Most of the fellas are gone from the outfit and now the grandchildren have carried on the reunion. Now they are having the last one they figure, this year over at Springfield, but I don't think I will go down either this year. It was pretty well to the end, as far as that goes.

Terry: Did you join any military organizations when you got out, Veterans Organizations?

Joseph: No, I belonged to the American Legion for a while and after they lost the building for that it kind of petered out. I don't belong to any reunions now.

Terry: How did – what was your overall feeling about serving in the Army?

Joseph: Oh, I think it was nothing to worry about. I think it was something worthwhile. Saw a lot of the country. And as a matter of fact I was walking – because I had no – I was lucky, had no problems, didn't suffer or anything. I had my appendix taken out in Hawaii, but nothing in battle.

Terry: There was a lot of people that – well, overall, you're probably wondering, most important – probably one of the most important things you ever did?

Joseph: Right – right.

Terry: Serving your – serving your country during that time, because if you guys hadn't gone –

- Joseph: Like I said, we were supposedly – we were supposed to be for a year, and of course when they bombed Pearl Harbor that changed.
- Terry: How many years did you end up serving?
- Joseph: I had almost five years. You know, before Pearl Harbor we were at Fort Leonard Wood, and I used to go through the mess line and one time they were giving half a pint of milk with your breakfast, and that, and of course I was figuring – this was in probably December 15<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> or something – I always figured out, “Well, in January, I’m going to get out of here, I’m headed for home,” you know? And I would take my milk [inaudible], and the guy said, “You can take your milk and you can shove it.” So December 7<sup>th</sup> they bombed Pearl Harbor, I came through the line, he says, “How much milk do you want?”
- Terry: Yeah, I can imagine. What was the feeling for the rest of the men when that happened?
- Joseph: Well, when that happened they figured, “this is it, we are probably out of here, we are going to get into it then.”
- Terry: Beginning of the end, right?
- Joseph: Yeah. Like I way the saying was “Back alive in ’45 or Golden Gate in ’48.”
- Terry: Uh-huh [meaning yes]. Have you got any other comments about your experiences?
- Joseph: No, not too many. Think about it at times.
- Terry: Joe has brought out an album, a picture album that he had put together from–his friend had taken a number of snapshots throughout the war and it’s quite a lengthy album, almost a historic of all the areas he was at. One particular picture he has in the album shows a newspaper shot that was taken in March of 1941 and it’s showing a group of veterans, TPB, torpedo bombers, flying off the USS Enterprise, and they were flying over Diamond Head, Hawaii, and in the caption they stated “This is just a practice for a mock attack. But if the facts were turned about they might be enemy bombers from an enemy aircraft carrier coming in to attack the great Pearl Harbor base, which lies just the other side of Diamond Head.” This was taken in March 1941 and Pearl Harbor was attacked December 7, 1941. So it’s a very valuable picture that Joe has in his collection. He also has a collection of Japanese money that he picked up overseas. A very nice album chronicling his time in the military.

**[End of Interview]**