

Edward A. Hanselman
Narrator

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Hoosick Falls Historical Society Interviewer

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Hoosick Falls Historical Society
Hoosick Falls, New York

Q: Please state your name.

A: Edward Hanselman

Q: Where do you live Ed?

A: Right now, I live on Boehe Hill Road

Q: Did you live in Hoosick falls long?

A: All my life

Q: I see you were born in Hoosick falls

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: A local school, center street school, main street school and the old high school

Q: I see, and you graduated?

A: I did not graduate. I dropped out my junior year and enlisted in the army core of engineers

Q: And when was that

A: In November of 1942

Q: Now tell us what were you doing before you went into the service?

A: My father had gotten hurt and couldn't work so I left school and worked at Knowland (?)wood on a machine and I was working under Loui wright to become a machinist. But then all of my friends started leaving for the service so I left and enlisted.

Q: When was that? I don't know if we have it on record?

A: October of '42 I went to work at Knowland wood. I enlisted on November the 12th

Q: What happened to you in the service?

A: well a lot happened

Q: Well let's hear it. We would love to hear it

A: I was shipped into port Melbourne in Virginia for my basic training. I spent 8 weeks in training. I was held over and put on training new recruits for 12 weeks. So for those 12 weeks my platoon commander said "I want you to apply to OCS" so I passed my physical and everything else. Then I had to leave that company and go into a holding company where all the candidates from OCS were gathered and they had a list of all the men on the board that were ready to go. Low and behold one day they had a notice posted on the board that they were cutting back and they took a red pencil right between the sheet of paper and I was on the bottom half. So, before I knew it my orders were cut to ship out and I went to a staging area in Shenango, PA. It was a tent city for staging of troops. I was there about a week and they put me on a train to camp Myal (?) Standish over in Boston. I was there and they started issuing us more equipment. We didn't know what it meant but all of this equipment was meant to be used in the cold extremes. Next training, we were brought into Boston right by the dock area. We all piled on board of a ship and took off.

Q: You didn't know where you were going?

A: We didn't know where we were going. But usually scuttlebutt started coming through. It had been a passenger ship in its day but they converted it to a military ship. We got so far out into the ocean we couldn't see land anymore. But then low and behold we look around and I have never seen so many ships gathered in one place in my entire life. There were destroyers, cargo ship, any description you want. We were part of a convoy headed for England. Next day we get up and everyone wants to beat it up to the deck because it was terrible down in the hall sleeping 3 decks high. And we got up top and we were the only ones there on the ocean. All but one destroyer as an escort. The next day we pulled into Halifax Nova Scotia. We sat there for a whole week on board ship. The USS ranger with her escorts and submarines were all in there. After a week, we took off and we got the scuttlebutt that we were going to Greenland. They said it would take 23 days to get to Greenland from Boston. Well when you get near Greenland it is just rocks so we were on deck and we were getting closer and we said "gee we are getting pretty close to that rock" and boy that captain must have been a cracker jack. He comes around and slips right through that mountain early enough to get the ship through it. We come out into another natural harbor and off to the right side there was a little settlement. The reason the US was there was because in 1941 Hitler took over Denmark and tried to claim Greenland. The Danish government wouldn't hear of it and contacted the US embassy. At the settlement, there is an open pit mine. It's a cryolite mine. I would say it was probably 1000 feet in diameter and at that time it had to be at least a half mile deep. Down in there was an old-style shovel that cryolite was being mined, put on freighters, and sent back to the united states. So, the government built a base there and it was manned by the artillery to protect that mine. And I was there as an engineer service person. We had carpenters, electricians, anything that you could think of

to maintain that base. All of our piping and everything were above ground all boxed in on piers with insulation in them to keep them from freezing so I spent only a few months there and a notice came out. They were looking for a company of volunteers to go over to the east coast of Greenland to set up a weather station, so I volunteered. It was funny because we were in Greenland where it gets to negative 65 degrees and I was a refrigeration mechanic. They put me on another Navy ship called the USS Laramie. This big huge refrigeration ship bringing in supplies to all the bases to run them for about 6-8 months because during the winter months up there no ships got in because it was frozen. So I went down to the tip of Greenland where there is an air field and the trip to the east coast materialized and they decided they weren't going to do it so here i was in limbo again. So, a week or two later I got my orders to go to the air filed and get on a plane that would take me north up to another base. The bases were numbered the base I went to was 120 miles above the arctic circle. So, I flew up there over the Greenland ice cap and I tell you it was scary but it was beautiful; you wouldn't believe it. So I got to that base and took up my job as a refrigeration mechanic. They had these huge freezers that all the food was stored in so while I was there I had a freak accident. I was thrown off the back of a truck and that's how I got my skull fracture. I got over that very well and went back to duty. A tour of duty up there was 12 months and I had been up there already 18 months. Eventually I was there 22 months before I got relieved. So, I came back to the states after that. While I was in Greenland I crossed the arctic circle 8 times; 6 times in a boat, 2 times in a plane.

Q: What did they use this big airfield for?

A: That was a refueling point for fighters and bombers going from the states over to Europe. You wouldn't believe the 50 gallon drums of fuel that were stacked higher than this building here. And as far as the eye could see just like a pyramid. The planes left the states and either went to New Finland or Nova Scotia and then hopped to Greenland over to Europe. If you were there when a bunch of plains were coming in on a good day it looked like a flock of birds. Back in the states the y sent me to a refrigeration school down in camp Lee Virginia. I had been doing it for 22 months though and was trained by a civilian. I worked with that one civilian for a month and he took off and gave me a bunch of books.

Q: So, you got back to the states? What did you do then?

A: Well, I got ahold of my wife and I said let's get married. So, I got a three day pass and came home in June of '45 and we got married and I took her back to Virginia were we had a one room sleeping quarters. From there she came home and I got transferred up to Albany and put in the military police up there in steamboat square. We did guard duty at the union station there in Albany and up as far as the Washington park. From there I was working on my points to get discharged and I was pretty close to being ready to go so they didn't know what to do with all us guys, so they sent me to Syracuse to a recruiting place overnight

and as soon as I got there I got orders to go back to Albany. So I came back to Albany and I had ny orders to go down to camp dix for discharge and that was in December of '45 and then I went back to Hoosick falls on the 23rd of December.

Q: Ok so you were married already then what happened in your life?

A: Well I went back to Nolan wood and they decided they wanted to train another wood pattern maker so I accepted that position and took a 5 year apprenticeship under Al Chris Jensen. He taught me and he was a good teacher.

Q: After Nolan Wood who did you go and work for?

A: They probably closed down in '58, so I had landed a job down at Eddy Val down in Waterford. They made water main valves and fire hydrants. I left there after 2 years because I couldn't stand the drive. After my two years there I went into construction as a carpenter and I was not built for that kind of work. One day I was 30 feet high working on steel and I injured my back. I had to have an operation after that to have a disk removed. I was out of work for 8 months. When that was over I knew I had to have a job because we had 3 children. So I went to work at dodge fibers where they made extruded tape. So I stayed there until they built the new building in '64. In '67 or '68 they moved the building and I went to work for Mr. Dodge doing research. I was there for 5 years and I could see things weren't going as they were promised to me that they were going to go. So Gary Barbara called me to work for him. About that time he was having problems over at the shop on liberty street so he said to me "How would you like to go over there and be the manager of the excrutated tape department?", so I took it and stayed over there for 7 years. So I stayed there until '82 and they had a big layoff. They cut 17 of us 3 weeks before Christmas. So I went back down and talked to Mr. Dodge and he said "sure come on back to work". So I went on back and started doing drafting and design work. I stayed there until '86 and I became 62 and retired.

Q: So you had how many children?

A: I had four children. Two boys and two girls.

Q: So what are they doing now?

A: Well my oldest boy works with Vermont power in Rutland. He lives in Carver Falls NY, just over the border from Fare Haven. He is now chief of their hydropower. My other boy Bill, he lives right across from me. I gave him a piece of the farm and he built a home there. He is a shift supervisor down at Oakwood Sewey (?). He worked his way up through the ranks there during school and after school they offered him a full-time job there.

Q: And then you have two daughters?

A: My oldest daughter became a nurse. She is disabled at the moment and can no longer work and she lives down in Scotia with 3 children. My youngest daughter

lives down in New Orleans, right in the French quarter and she is a chef down there at one of the restaurants.

Q: Well great we got your whole story. Is there anything else you would like to say about Hoosick falls or the service, or anything?

A: There is no place like it.