

**Howard Amy
Veteran**

**Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke
New York State Military Museum
Interviewers**

**Interviewed at The Buffalo Historical Society
Buffalo, New York
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MR: This is an interview at the Buffalo Historical Society, Buffalo New York, it is the 16th of May 2007, approximately 4PM, interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke.

Would you give me your full name?

HA: Howard Edward Amy Jr.

MR: When and where were you born?

HA: I was born in Detroit Michigan on July 1st, 1921.

MR: What was your educational background prior to going into service?

HA: I didn't even make it out of high school, they took me out of high school and took me into the service.

MR: When did you join the National Guard?

HA: 1938.

MR: Why did you join the National Guard?

HA: Something to do I suppose.

MR: How old were you when you joined?

HA: Well, let's see, in 1938, I was 17.

MR: Your parents signed for you? (1.20)

HA: Yeah.

MR: What armory were you in?

HA: 106th Field Artillery, over on Maston Avenue, I'm still a member over there. I got my card and everything. (takes out unit member card, shows it to camera and interviewer.) I have been a member over there since I joined.

MR: What kind of money did you get back then?

HA: Well I started out with \$21 but after 30 days I got \$30 .

MR: How often did you go over there?

HA: Once a month we had drills over there at the armory, and then twice a year we went upstate for a week to Pine Camp. One time, I can't remember the name of the town, way up north in New

York State, near the state line, but they had troops assembled there from all over the state, and from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. We were reviewed by President Roosevelt. We stood out there in that hot sun for hours, until "ATTENTION!" and if I had blinked, I would not have seen the car go by, he was going so fast.

MR: Now, with the field artillery at that time, were you using horses?

HA: No, we had halftracks, we were motorized.

MR: And what kind of guns did you have then?

HA: 155mm howitzers, and little 37mm guns that you fastened onto the barrels.

MR: Were these left over from World War I?

HA: I would assume they were, before we shipped out, they took those away and gave us all new ones.

MR: And you had the World War One helmets?

HA: Yeah, they curled up on the sides, (gestures with hands, cupping) you could wash in them.

MR: And you had the 1903 Springfield?

HA: No, every cannoneer, when we got in, carried a .45, then when they shipped us to Fort McClellan, they took away the .45s, gave them to the officers, and gave us the carbines. It's a good weapon.

MR: Now when did you go to Alabama?

HA: That was the end of '39 or '40 (?)

MR: That's when you were federalized?

HA: Yeah.

MR: What was it like in Alabama, how were you treated?

HA: Hot and wet! It was just outside of Anniston Alabama it was surrounded by mountains. It was not that bad, spent about a year and a half down there.

MR: How did the southerners treat you?

HA: Oh they treated us great, they took carloads of us into town for dinners, stuff like that, we went shopping, sometimes the stuff was half price, other times, a smaller item, they would give them to you. We were treated great by the people down there.

MR: Were you down there when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

HA: Yeah, we were supposed to come home for Christmas, they had the sleeping cars waiting on sides to bring us home, then on December 7th, we were supposed to go two days later, for a 30 day furlough, instead they loaded all our truck and guns onto flat cars, and off to California we went.

MR: How did you hear about Pearl Harbor, do you remember?

HA: Yeah, we were mad, they were cutting into our 30 furlough (laughs).

MR: When you went by rail out to California, what did you do out there?

HA: Well, the first 30 days, we lived in tents, they pulled the train off to a siding, in a farmers field, we lived there, and then after that, they shipped us down to Fort Ord, California, stayed there until April of '42, then we shipped overseas to Hawaii.

MR: Now were you still assigned to the 106th?

HA: Yeah, I was assigned there the whole time, except for a short time. The navy needed a shore fire control team, they would land with the first two waves of infantry, and we would direct the fire onto the islands, until they shipped the guns in. Otherwise, I have been in the 106th the whole time.

MR: What division were you assigned to?

HA: The 27th division.

MR: When you went to Hawaii, how long were you there?

HA: Well, we went to the Big Island, we spent a year there, building gun emplacements because they were in bad shape, and they got attacked by the Japanese, they got lucky that the japs didn't come back and attack those islands, they had 16" guns disappearing types (fixed coastal guns), but we went all around the islands with our 155s, building up gun emplacements. That took us about a year to do that, then they sent reinforcements from the states, they took over all that, shipped us over to Oahu, it was nice over there.

MR: What were your duties there?

HA: We made gun emplacements, had a lot of pass time, went into Honolulu, most of the things I did was take pictures, I brought some with me. I had a little box camera, a reflex camera, you looked down through it, you put the film in the bottom, it had a lever on the back, and once you put it in there, you turned the lever, and however invented it put the lever in wrong spot, because we were on the train going out to California, and I had volunteered to work in the Kitchen, serve the food because they had a cot to sleep on. And I am standing in the sliding door, on the train, and the motion, all of a sudden, the camera was around my neck, and that lever caught on the door, and it flipped open, and all that film spilled out, all over, so I just took off that camera and threw it off the train. When I got to California, I got a reflex camera sent.

MR: How did you get film during the war?

HA: You could get film in town.

MR: (Looking at snapshots with Mr. Amy) Where was this one taken?

HA: This was taken at Fort Ord. This picture is called, 'Me and my radio', We lived in tents.

MR: Now this other picture, is this one of the gun emplacements that you helped to build?

HA: No, that is another unit, I just took the picture.

MR: How long were you on Hawaii?

HA: I was on the big island for over a year, then on Oahu for 6 months. From there, Oahu was our main base, from there we went to Saipan and Tinian, took that operation, then we came back to Hawaii, and then while they were refitting us, they needed radio specialists, I had gone to radio school, that's when they put me on this special assignment to Kwajalein and the atolls, then we came back to Hawaii, then we went to an island off the coast of Australia, and we stayed there for 3 or 4 months, and then we went to Okinawa, and that's where I got shipped home from, after I got wounded.

MR: Can you tell us about Saipan?

HA: They needed Saipan and Tinian, because that's where the bombers took the atomic bombs to Japan from. Otherwise, the planes would have had to go farther, and ended up in China. And they didn't want that, they wanted to get them back from where they came from.

MR: Did you go ashore on Saipan, can you tell us about that?

HA: yeah, I was a radio operator, I sat there, waiting for someone to talk to.

MR: Were you there for the banzai attack, on Saipan?

HA: To tell you the truth, I do not know. All I know is, I landed with the 2nd wave of infantry because being a radio operator, had to land and communicate back with the ship, these atolls are just a bunch of islands, on board the ship, they were so low, you could not see over the horizon, so our job was to in, and radio back all the information we could find, let them know where the targets were , stuff like that.

MR: So you were calling in fire support at Kwajalein and Eniwetok?

HA: Right.

MR: So you were separated from the 27th Division at that time?

HA: Yeah, I don't have anything about that in my record. I would assume that someone would send back thing (records and reports) while I was there. Never did find out. I go to the armory every year for a reunion for the last 60 years. It's a great bunch of guys.

MR: How long were you on Kwajalein and Eniwetok?

HA: Not very long, we were on ship, then we were off shore for a couple of months, then they sent us down to some island off of Australia, recuperation and rest, and after that we went to Okinawa.

MR: You talked about Okinawa, what happened there?

(17:01) STOP

HA: A got a piece of shrapnel at Okinawa, and that's what sent me home.

MR: Where were you hit?

HA: In the side and back here (gestures to his back with his hand). We were riding along in a jeep, and I saw someone up ahead, and there was an old truck that had been damaged, and I said, ' This does not look right to me.' And, there should not be anybody around that area so I told the driver, 'You better take this off to the left.' So we started off to the left, and whoever was in there must have known that we were planning to pull away, and he threw a grenade, and if we had gone straight, I probably would have got it right here (touches his stomach). But by the fact that I was facing this way (turned), that's how I got the shrapnel. Just a lucky move.

MR: How badly were you wounded?

HA: Ah, I was laid up for about 4 days, because they don't let you lay around, as long as you can eat, they will let you around.

MR: Did you have to go to an aid station?

HA: Yes, they removed the shrapnel, every day I had to go the doctor, at the aid station, and then for two days, and after that, they had to take me about 15 miles down to the beach, where the doctors were, they had to get a tetanus shot, but then I was all set. That 5 points really paid off.

MR: How long did you stay on Okinawa after that?

HA: 2 or 3 months, they kept saying I was going home, I says, 'Why?' Well, we added up your points, and compared it with everybody else in the outfit, and because of that piece of shrapnel gives you 5 points, that is going to get you out of here. There was another fellow in another outfit, we went home at the same time.

MR: What did you do on Okinawa, with your battery?

HA: I was a radio operator, send messages, also a telephone operator, if they needed extra help I would string telephone lines, I keep busy.

MR: When did you finally leave Okinawa?

HA: Well, I got home in October, October 10, so I must have left Okinawa in September. I was discharged in Camp Atterbury, Indiana. If I had lived east of Rochester, they would have flown me to Fort Dix, and I would have been discharged from there. Because I lived west of Rochester, I had to take that stupid train all the way across the country. Then I had to spend three days in Camp Atterbury while they processed all my paperwork. The army is great for passing out clothes. When I landed in San Francisco, got all brand new clothes, shoes, socks, everything. Got on the train, come to Camp Atterbury Indiana, mind you now I am wearing all my new clothes, got there, they took away all my clothes, gave me all new clothes. The only problem is, they did not give me an Eisenhower Jacket. It was five years and eleven months I will never forget.

MR: And you found a bayonet?

HA: Yes, I found a Japanese bayonet. I got it off a dead jap. I was out forward, figuring out targets for the guys to shoot at, there was a little hill, and there was a cave, and I walked around inside, and there was a woman, dead, and so walked around a little farther outside, around a corner, and here was guy laying there, I did not know what he had, he was wearing very little clothes because of the hot temperatures, so I rolled him over, see what he looked like, and there was this brand new bayonet, on the ground, underneath him. So I picked it up and brought it home. Then I put the stupid thing up in the attic, and over the years, it got rusty. It was a brand new one, everything was perfect.

MR: Are there any other stories you remember that you want to mention? Did you see any entertainers?

HA: Oh yes, I saw Bob Hope, yeah they had shows, not in the battle zones. But in the rest areas they had entertainment.

MR: Will you tell us about the troopship going over to Hawaii?

A; Oh yes the HMS Warden, it was a British cruise ship, it would hold 1500 passengers, and they had 500 of us aboard ship, we had the whole ship, we would go down to the staterooms, pick up the mattresses, bring up to the promenade deck, and stack them up three high, and that's how we went overseas, sleeping on deck on those mattresses. I volunteered to work in the kitchen, when they served the food, it was a British ship, they would bring the food in big dish pans, and you would help yourself. Well you got this action (gestures, ship is rolling on the waves), and anything juicy in the pans is rolling, and by the time the meal is done, everyone is up over the rail (sick). I volunteered

to serve the food. I did not even look at the food, because I knew what the last item was going to be given out, and that was fresh fruit, apples, oranges, bananas, plums, all sorts of stuff. I traveled the whole way to Hawaii, and I ate nothing but fruit, and I was one of them who walked off the ship! The rest of them were quarantined until they got well enough to get off.

MR: Did you make any close friends while in service?

HA: I went with a unit from Buffalo, 500 from the 106th, I did meet a couple of Australian soldiers, but I did not have their names and addresses so I could not keep in touch with them. We always seemed to click and I loved their accent. When I got out of the service, and I went to New York City, I took the boat ride around the island and out to the Statue of Liberty, and I am up on the front of the ship and this family is there, and they talked kind of funny, and they had a little girl with them about 7 or 8 years old. I asked, 'Are you people by any chance from Australia?' Met quite a few people.

MR: Here are some more photographs.

HA: This was taken down at Fort McClellan Alabama. (video time 28.08, holding picture of soldiers marching). And the one with the horses, and the airplanes in it, those were taken at Louisiana on maneuvers. This was around 1940.

MR: And this is one of your guns?

HA: Yes (29.01, picture of a howitzer.) They were hard to steer, the halftracks, you had to use levers.

MR: Is this a picture of you?

HA: No, this is my buddy who lived on Amherst St.

MR: After you got out, did you use the G.I. Bill?

HA: I bought my house.

MR: Did you use the 5220 club? Unemployment money, \$20 a week for 52 weeks?

HA: I did not know it existed. I got out, got a job working for Lindy Air. That ran out after a while, then when I got laid off, I got a job working for Morrison Steel on Amherst St. I put in 40 years, retired from there, didn't do too bad.

MR: Did you join any veterans organizations?

HA: No, I still belong to the 106th Association. I never joined the American Legion or the VFW.

MR: How did the service affect your life?

HA: It limits what you do. I did not dislike it because I chose it for myself. How can you dislike it if you stick with it?

MR: What are those awards?

HA: Conspicuous Service from the State of New York, Purple Heart. Discharge papers.

MR: Okay, thank you for the interview.

(Video cuts, then starts again.)

MR: Tell us about when the explosive blew up, when you got off the ship?

HA: OK, I was on an atoll, on the beach and there was a hill with a gun on it, just a small hill of sand. So I set up my radio, and I was getting ready to contact the ship and let them know what was going on, and one of the infantry guys comes out, and he has a demo charge, pulls a pin, and throws it into the opening where the Japanese were. He got the Japanese, but it was such a powerful charge, that it blew the whole front end right out on me, I was buried in sand, my radio was shot, so there I am, sitting on the beach, nothing to do, one of the officers come along, asks, 'Are you lost fella?' I says, 'Not only lost, but lost all my equipment.' He says, go back down to the beach, they will put you back on the ship. So I was on the ship, all those nights when those guys are on the island, I am just watching!

MR: Ok, thank you very much.