

Waseca County Historical Society
Waseca, Minnesota

Summary of Oral History Interview

Oral History Participant: Orlan Bergerson
Date of Interview: 12 November 2007
Interviewer: Joan Mooney
Accession Number: OH.4

See agreement form for further details

- 1) Inducted into the Army early spring of 1945 (late January – February) at Blue Earth, Minnesota. Arrived by bus.
- 2) From there directly to Fort Snelling by bus. There about a week. Beginning rank of private.
- 3) Then by train to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for about a week.
- 4) Transferred to Camp Hood, Texas for four months of training (basic). Left Camp Hood in June, very hot.
- 5) Transferred to a camp in Oregon for weapons training. Used rifles and live ammunition in Oregon – and set fire to a forest. Had to put out the fire.
- 6) Saw mother for the last time in Thanksgiving, before we shipped out for overseas. She was slowly dying of cancer.
- 7) Sent to San Francisco by train where we boarded a ship headed for the Philippine Islands.
- 8) Passed the Marshall Islands – saw it surrounded by at least 50 ships – then passed Truk and landed in Manila. Ships all around as far as we could see. Taking on fuel. Saw first flying fish.
- 9) Ships were aircraft carriers and destroyers. There for 2 or 3 days and then escorted out of port by the Navy.
- 10) While at the Philippines, went up into the mountain sides for 3 or 4 days. During this time, while in formation, told by an officer “all those who have graduated from high school, step forward”. Only two of us. I became the mailman and the other fellow, the company clerk (radar). I became a corporal.
- 11) Escorted by truck back down the mountain to the seashore. It was covered with ammunition that we had to move to make camp. Three to five days there.
- 12) Aboard ship again. Japanese had surrendered so we were sent to Japan as occupation forces. All ammunition and weapons were removed before we left for Japan.
- 13) Three rows of ships heading for in a line. A big typhoon while onboard. I stayed toward the middle of the ship, so I didn’t get sick.
- 14) By end of a week, we landed in Japan, southern most island. Took a train from the south to the north end of the island. Saw no destruction on the south end. Stopped at a Japanese army base. At this base for at least two months.
- 15) While there, Army sent a jeep to take me to the post office. Many soldiers had not been paid for months, so were given large amounts of Japanese money. They

- had to change this into American dollars to buy money orders to be sent home. As postal person, it was my job to pack the money into a foot locker and sit on it to get it shut.
- 16) I was escorted with this locker to the post office (by jeep) to exchange for money orders to bring back to the GIs, so they could send it home.
 - 17) Conditions for the Japanese were very bad. Many were hungry. At camp, our garbage was put in cans outside the base fence. People came and cleaned them out.
 - 18) There was a Norwegian GI from North Dakota in charge of garbage. When he saw this be made sure they were never hungry again. He got food and took it out to them.
 - 19) While in Japan occupation forces, I received notice from home that mother was very ill. Being the oldest son and needed on the farm, I was given a hardship discharge and sent home. I did not know she had died till I called home while in Seattle.
 - 20) Took a train through Hiroshima to Yokohama to a ship and then onboard to home. At Yokohama, saw several soldiers on the dock, sitting, singing, seemed to be “biding their time”. Songs were wonderful. They weren’t boarding the ships – not anxious to go home. They said “Go home to what?”
 - 21) As we entered Seattle harbor, we were met by a yacht filled with beautiful girls. Two or three thousand men on board ship were so anxious to see the girls, they all rushed to one side of the ship to see them. Ship leaned way over.
 - 22) Then a train to Wisconsin Camp McCoy where I was discharged and sent home. This was January of 1946. I was very lucky to just have missed the actual fighting.