

**Edward McEntire**  
**World War II Veterans History Project**  
**Interviewed: August 17, 2009**  
**By: Miguel Garcia**  
**Transcript by Miguel Garcia**

**0:00-3:00**

**Family Background**

MG: We'll start with your parents. What were their names and where were they from?

EM: They came to Arkansas from Arizona in 1910. My mother was Lilly May Mock. She came from Oklahoma through there.

MG: What kind of work did your father and mother do?

EM: My father was primarily an auto mechanic and he had a shop there, apparently for a long time. My mother was a postmaster for years in Higley.

MG: When were you born and where?

EM: I was born in Santa Barbara, California in 1923, December 11.

MG: Do you have siblings?

EM: Yes, one brother and two sisters.

MG: Where did you grow up?

EM: In Higley, that's right outside of Chandler.

MG: When did you or your family live in Chandler?

EM: We didn't. We live in Higley, which is seven miles east of Chandler.

MG: Why did you and your family come to Chandler?

EM: My granddad, he homesteaded out there in 1911 and had a ranch out there.

**3:01-13:30**

## **Entering Military Service**

MG: What were you doing before the war began?

EM: I was just a high school student and had paper routes. I was kind of a manager of paper routes.

MG: Can you tell us briefly what the town was like before the war?

EM: The only thing of any importance was the San Marcos hotel. There was two grocery stores of any size. There was two drug stores that were across the street from one another. And over there we had a hardware store there. And that was about it.

MG: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

EM: I was in the gas station that me and my folks were running.

MG: What was your reaction when Pearl Harbor war attacked?

EM: Of course it was pretty well covered and everything. At the time we first heard about the attack, we were surrounded by people from Williams Air Force Base there. Of course, they were all in a hurry- started to head back- and most walked back to the base.

MG: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

EM: I actually enlisted before the draft. I went through the draft but I did enlist.

MG: What motivated you to enlist, sir?

EM: Well it was easy for me. It was for the country. It wasn't just me, it was everybody. I figure I would have been drafted too.

MG: What was your branch of service?

EM: I was in the Army.

MG: Can you tell me the unit you started out in?

EM: I started off in Service Company in the infantry. That was in the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division.

MG: Why did you choose that branch of service?

EM: I didn't choose. In fact I asked for the Air Force and they put me in the Army.

MG: What were you thinking when you were given an army post?

EM: I couldn't tell you much. You did what they told you to do.

MG: When did you enter the service?

EM: It was February 23, 1943.

MG: Do you remember where did you enter the service?

EM: I went in Phoenix.

MG: Where did you receive your basic training?

EM: In North Carolina.

MG: Can you describe your basic training experience?

EM: Mine was a little easier than most of them because I was working in regimental headquarters. So I was only on activation training for about half a day. I worked half a day in regimental headquarters, and marched off to the guys, and took a half a day for basic training. So my basic training was not your typical basic training at all.

MG: What was your military specialty?

EM: My specialty was artillery at that time.

MG: Can you describe any further experiences during your airborne training?

EM: I mean, when I went in to parachute training, I volunteered for that. And during that I had to make five parachute jumps. It was pretty strenuous time during the parachute training.

MG: Can you describe to me your first jump?

EM: I went up in the plane, and we came through and hooked up the parachute to the extension cord that automatically opened up the parachute. And then I jumped out the plane when they told me to. And then floating down the sky, that was great. It was great to see the stuff all around you without any problem from heights, where you can see stuff really good. And that was about it on the jump training. It was very exhilarating.

MG: Can you describe the people you trained with in basic training.

EM: They were a varied bunch in that training. There were all types from all over the United States. They were from all over and all kinds. Each was an individual from different places from different backgrounds. That's all I can say.

MG: Are there any in particular that stand out?

EM: Well no, not really, there weren't. I didn't have any that stood out for me. It was so rough going through that, I didn't have enough time to think about anyone else or anything. I had been sitting behind a desk and then went in to that all of a sudden. It was just an experience just getting through it. In fact I thought I wasn't going to quit. They were going to have to carry me out. And until I got up for the jumping, it was about the way I felt.

**13:31-19:43**

### **Military Service**

MG: When did you deploy overseas?

EM: I guess it was in '44 or sometime. Then we went to New Guinea first.

MG: So you were in the Pacific theatre of operations?

EM: Yes.

MG: What was your port of embarkation for deployment?

EM: San Francisco.

MG: How long did it take for you to reach your theater of operations?

EM: Thirty-one days.

MG: And that was to New Guinea?

EM: Yes.

MG: Can you tell me what the trip was like for you and what was going on in your mind at that time?

EM: Well we just had an awful long trip. I mean we didn't see any land. There were no other ships running for those thirty-one days.

MG: Was your trip part of a convoy?

EM: No our regiment went alone on the trip. For some reason or another when the rest of division went, our ship wasn't ready to go. So we went alone at that time.

MG: Were you involved in any invasions?

EM: I made a beachhead landing in Luzon.

MG: Were these all jumps?

EM: No, I didn't make any combat jumps. We went in by landing on the beachhead in Luzon. And then we went into the interior where we saw our first combat.

MG: Were you ever taken under enemy fire?

EM: Oh yes. A lot.

MG: Can you please describe that, sir?

EM: I don't know how to describe it. I didn't myself have any actual fears or anything. It was very stressful. And you didn't know what would happen, especially when the people around you that would get wounded, and occasionally killed.

MG: Did you ever return fire?

EM: Yes. In fact, I was in a machine gun and mortar crew.

MG: Can you describe any further experiences in Leyte?

EM: In Leyte we were mainly up in the mountains and just occasionally came across patrols, and stuff like that. And when all of a sudden they would start shooting us, we'd see, and started figuring out how to get them out of the way. It was really muddy in Leyte and everything. I mean when I left Leyte, the fighting was over. We went back to the beach. I got foot fungus and everything. On a two-day march coming back from the mountains, I lost all the skin on my feet. I had to walk about, well, most of two days. I got back way after the rest of the unit. They would walk back with me. There was still a lot of occupied Japanese territory going through. Of course as long as it was a larger riverbed they wouldn't shoot at us, or anything.

MG: Can you describe your experience in Luzon?

EM: Luzon- When we went in, we were taking fire. When we went in it was against heavy fire, and most of the time we were in there with heavy artillery and mortar fire coming in. On Fort McHenry the Japanese had built-in places that were bomb proof. The bombs would just bounce off them wherever we pulled in any support. We had to carry everything across when they were firing twenty and

forty millimeter anti-aircraft guns. Of course that was where we had an awful lot of casualties in my unit.

MG: Were you ever captured? Or, did you ever capture anyone?

EM: No. In fact, as far as I know, there was no person from our division ever captured. When I was in Japan and interrogating people from Japan, they said no one from our division was ever captured. They had all kinds of myths from everything of our division. They were clearly mystified by it. It was in the Japanese records.

MG: What was the food like?

EM: Most of the time the food was very poor. When we were at Ford Ord, we had real good food. Times were pretty meager. In parts of Luzon we lived without food. They gave us less than half rations. The tin rations. They had the choice of giving ammunition to us, or food to us. We didn't have enough that we needed both of. So we went on half rations close to a month on Luzon.

MG: Do you remember what was normally in your rations?

EM: Well, I mean, we had potted beef and like a package of kool-aid, and a small candy bar of some type?

MG: Did they ever give you Spam?

EM: Oh yeah. I mean that's in those little- we had spam, probably a fourth of us, and we had dried eggs for breakfast.

MG: What did you think about your commanding officer?

EM: At one time I had one that was unreasonable. But the rest of the time in higher command we had very good officers. With one exception. We had a list of officers in the Army.

MG: Were there any that stood out?

EM: The commanding general of our division stopped and lined up our things, and told us right from his jeep to go ahead get us up in the front, and everything. Most of the officers were helpful as could be. Of course we were an unusual division. We didn't salute our officers after we got a new unit. A lot of times they acted on the best situation that was given to them, instead of looking at something and just telling them to go. Every one was taught to look for ways to do something with the least damage to us, and the best way to do it. We were never taught to go "bang bang," and go at them.

MG: What do you remember about the people you served with?

EM: Well they were all very dedicated. Everyone went and did their job, and carried their load, and everything. Nobody wanted someone else to go out of their way and do extras for them. Everyone was ready, and do their job right, as good as possible. It was a very close group.

MG: Were you wounded?

EM: Never did I shed any blood. I was hit by shrapnel several times. I had burns, for about ten years, across my chin, that you can see. I was cleaning a pile of mortar shells one time. It was forty millimeter that I was carrying and it came off, but I was never wounded and never had any blood. Bruises, really, are all I had.

MG: How did you feel about the Japanese soldiers you were fighting?

EM: We ran across all types and everything. I guess we had said that we had a job to be done. We had to do it. We ran across places where they put everyone in church, in a village, and turned the machine gun and shot them. We came across many where they had done that.

MG: Can you tell more about that sir?

EM: They would figure that maybe that someone from town would tell something about them. And they would take just everyone in a town and put them in a church, and turn the machine gun on them and shoot them down. When we got here we saw piles of shot up bodies in the churches. And I saw that four different times myself.

MG: How did that make you feel?

EM: Disgusted. It makes you feel that they weren't human really.

MG: What are some of your strongest memories of your experiences during the war?

EM: One of them, when we dropped a mortar shell into a powder magazine at Fort McHenry, and Fort McHenry blew up. We had Japanese- you could see them fly a quarter of a mile up when that thing blew up. One time we had a large number of isolated Japanese in a canyon. At first they said they would surrender. Then at the last minute they said, no they wouldn't. We had the Air Force come in with napalm bombs and plaster that whole canyon with napalm. When we went through that about two days later, everything was dead. Nothing was alive in the canyon. It took us two weeks to get through there. They were holding us up and everything too, then. I had a lot of outstanding memories.

**19:44-40:79**

## **End of War**

MG: Where were you on VE-Day?

EM: On VE-Day we were at Los Banos. We freed a prisoner camp that day.

MG: Can you tell me more about that?

EM: We came in on the Los Banos, and they had thirty five hundred prisoners the Japanese had here. We infiltrated the area along with the Filipino guerillas and they shot the guards when our jumpers came in, jumped on the place. One part of the division came in on land and the jumpers jumped, while the Japanese were out taking their cattle in the morning. The Filipinos guerrillas killed all the people that were on guard at that time. The ones who beat them back to the Japanese weapons, they wiped the rest of them up there. I was part of a group that kept the reinforcements from coming in, because there were several troops houses not too far from there. That was a group that I was in. Our group was the only ones that lost any one at all. They got everybody out of the camp, and all the people that went in on the camp itself. They got out with nobody getting killed or anything, got out all the prisoners out and all our men out with no problems.

MG: Do you remember what the conditions of the prisoners were?

EM: Those conditions of the prisoners were pretty poor. They had a lot of hurt and everything. Their clothes were plain. They had been able to keep their clothes, but the rice and food had been cut down, and that's why they were all skinny. Of course the clothes were or more less rags. All they had were the clothes. All the reports was that our men looked so ragged and dirty going in because we had been in combat constantly before that. All the dirty rags and clothes falling out, similar to the prisoners.

MG: All this occurred on VE-Day?

EM: We were sure that we were getting written up in the newspapers and everything, but nothing ever hit the newspapers. We didn't even get any news coverage at all. Everything that hit the newspapers was [about] VE-Day.

MG: Where were you on VJ-Day?

EM: I remember when they first announced it, there was the surrender. I don't know if you would call that VJ-Day?

MG: Yes sir, when the Japanese surrendered. Do you remember where you were?

EM: During the initial surrender we were already in Japan. Our division was there before the initial surrender happened. As soon as they announced they were going to surrender, the next morning the Air Force flew us to Okinawa. Before you knew it, we were flown to Japan. We were in Japan at the time the surrender was signed and everything. Of course the emperor had asked the people to cooperate with us in every way. I mean you know it was such a reversal from the Japanese people, in two ways, because they could not even look at us in Japan. The Japanese people knew it was over.

MG: What was your reaction to that?

EM: I mean, of course, we were all cheering and everything. We were bad about it. But we were supposed to be in Okinawa ahead of time. We were in one of the first planes that went out. We got to the air force base. The pilot said there was no way they could fly on, because they were too drunk from celebrating, and everything. They waited until the next day to go. Instead of being first to go in, our regiment was the last to go in.

Mg: Did you have daily interactions with the Japanese people?

EM: Quite a bit. And I did quite a bit of interrogating and everything. The Japanese people treated us really good. The people themselves, after we got in Japan, I don't know if they got so scared of us, but they cooperated any way they could.

MG: Can you tell me more about the interrogations?

EM: The high-ranking officers that were in Japan at the time, we asked them the questions, what did they think and what their perceptions was. They said our division it was in their records, as if we had some divine helpers. I think we probably did because we all had things that happened where we thought we were killed, and a bunch more. And our division was called the Angels or some thing or another. I always said the only angels we had were the guardian angels riding on our soldiers. Our division, in particular, they were scared of. Others they thought were poor soldiers.

MG: When did you return to the United States?

EM: I came in to the bridge on Christmas Eve of '45. I got back into San Francisco.

MG: What do you recall about the day you left service?

EM: As I was getting ready to leave, I was feeling good about it. I did, and went in, and at first they tried to hand me a furlough for ninety days and report to a hospital, because I came down with malaria in Japan. So I got in and got my discharge. The day when I came out, I was walking across, and had my uniform with jump wings, and uniform with the division patch and everything. I waved

the way the way we had to our own officers in the beginning. Then I saw this guy and he said, "Well he didn't serve then." He looked like he just got in the army. My major said, "Son everyone in this base should be saluted." The next time I got anything was in the World War II memorial dedication. By the time I got home the celebration and everything was over. Even the big billboard with all the names that was in the Chandler Park was gone by the time I got home.

MG: What medals or citations did you receive?

EM: The Bronze Star Medal, Good Conduct Presidential Unit Citation, American Campaign, Asiatic Pacific campaign, and World War II Victory Medal, Injured in Combat, Filipino Liberation, with the attachments and the Honor Roll Service and Parachute Badge.

MG: How long did you serve overseas?

EM: I guess about three years. It's hard for me to come up with the dates. During a lot of that time, time didn't mean anything to us.

MG: What did you do when you returned from the war?

EM: I ran a service station and I went to ASU for a little while.

MG: What did you major in?

EM: Economics

MG: And after ASU?

MG: I went back to the service station, because I was running the service station the whole time.

EM: How long did you run the service station?

MG: I don't know. About four years I guess.

MG: After that, what other careers did you have?

EM: I was mostly- I managed several of the largest service station there in Phoenix. And then I went to Texaco in the training center- training centers- and managed automotive shops.

MG: Were you married?

EM: Yes.

MG: How long were you married?

EM: About 1950.

MG: Did you have kids?

EM: Actually we had ten children. Two sons and eight daughters.

MG: Where did you live?

EM: Well in Phoenix- then we came to Texas, and then to Houston.

MG: Did you ever live in Chandler after the war?

EM: Well, yeah, but I ran a service station out there in Higley, which is at the crossroad, seven miles east of Chandler.

MG: How was Chandler impacted by World War II?

EM: Well, I mean, very heavy, because of Williams Air Force Base there. They had the large Air Force base.

MG: Did you know anyone in Chandler who lost his or her life during the war?

EM: Let's see. I was trying to think. I can't think of the names right now. I knew almost all of them, because most of them were around my age when they went into the service. Everyone about my age was in the service in the United States. There were over ten million of us in the service at that time.

**40:80-42.97**

### **Reflection Questions**

MG: Did your service in WWII affect the rest of your life? If so, how?

EM: I really don't know. It might have made me little more religious in a way. Because I knew I had to have had protection. Other than that I don't know.

MG: What lessons did you learn from this time in your life?

EM: You learned to get things done. You need to work as unit in whatever group you were in. That was the main one.

MG: Do you have any other thoughts that you would like to share? Anything I missed that you think might be important for future generations to know?

EM: Except that whatever they do they need to- from what I've known and everything,  
I know that future generations, their whole live depend on education now.

END OF INTERVIEW