

Video Recording Log
Veteran Edward Layden

Name of Interviewer: David Noreen

Name of Veteran/Civilian: Edward Layden

Birth Date: 5/23/1919

Recording format

VIDEO type: Mini DVD

Estimated length of recording (in minutes): 44 minutes **Date of recording:** 11/08/2007

Location of recording: Hoopston Public Library, Hoopston, IL

Recording log:

00:00 Introduction
00:35 Childhood, country school—college at Notre Dame, University of Wisconsin—Farming
01:12 Drafted to Army in April, 1941
01:25 Injured shoulder—110th Regiment—sent home by Colonel November 1st for shoulder
02:13 War started
02:15 December 7th, went to draft board—Colonel had written a letter saying he was not allowed to rejoin military because of injuries
02:35 Classified 4F
02:42 Moved back to Hoopston, IL—farm
03:08 After war in Europe started, Prisoner of War camp moved to town in 1944
03:23 Hoopston—3,000 acres of asparagus fields—canning factories in Illinois
04:00 Prisoners of War lived in Hoopston at farm headquarters—lived in converted barns leftover from when mules were used for farm labor—worked during harvest season, April-September
05:28 Families would pick up prisoners—20 prisoners and one guard for each group—used grain trucks to transport
06:30 Work until noon—picking sweet corn
07:06 Women fixed lunch
07:37 First year had prisoners working 14 days—better physical condition than Americans— from army captured in Africa—description of jerking corn
08:57 Prisoners—factories—factories worked double-shifts all through the night
09:40 Whatever was harvested had to be canned that day or thrown away
10:15 Hired help to insure corn was on the way to the factory
10:55 20 prisoners, 5 tractors, 4 boys on wagon
11:20 Corn rows, work shifts
11:50 Labor was scarce—in 1943 almost did not get harvest in
12:15 Crop yield varied
12:45 Jerking not husking—field corn and sweet corn
13:00 Prisoners were good workers—liked being in the country

- 13:24 One worker had a young son he had never seen
- 14:45 Prisoners—English skills—describing
- 15:13 In 1945 the prisoners figured out the system—liked his farm because there was a birch tree and there was family—figured out how to always go to their farm
- 16:14 Could communicate more in second year
- 16:25 Describing communication, translation, language barrier
- 17:20 Cousin was a field man at the factory—logistics of deliveries to factory
- 18:00 Describing family
- 18:15 One guard for 20 prisoners—guard would be asleep under a tree
- 18:55 Only a few prisoners escaped—one guard took some prisoners to a dance in Watseka—everyone got in trouble
- 19:24 Guards and prisoners were acquainted
- 19:57 Teaching prisoners about American geography—against the rules—they were amazed at the size of America, Texas
- 20:58 In the second year there were some young boys who grew up on small farms in Germany—could not believe size of farms in America
- 21:50 Prisoners were inquisitive
- 22:00 Second year—birch tree—same group
- 22:40 Uniforms for Prisoners of War—easily recognizable
- 23:30 Most did not want to escape—they got 80 cents per day
- 24:12 Only worked harvesting corn and asparagus and at factories
- 24:50 Some stayed at Camp Grant and at a camp in Peoria, IL
- 25:05 Helped save the harvest in 1944 and 1945
- 25:20 Negotiating and arranging workers and pay with government
- 26:05 They always wanted to smoke
- 26:25 Brother quit smoking when he was 14
- 26:43 Father had a brother with a law degree—would come home in August and get gas rations
- 27:35 Government managed to give farmers enough gas rations to get everything done with a little bit extra
- 27:58 Father’s brother decided to stay to converse with Germans—would argue and debate—describing uncle’s relationship to prisoners—some animosity for Germans by Americans overseas
- 29:30 Cousin married a German girl—Germans and Irish did not mix well but went okay
- 30:35 Conversations between prisoners and uncle—well-read and informed—politics, philosophy, war
- 31:10 Asking the prisoners what they had done in German army—one boy said he was “secret weapons”
- 31:57 Uncle stayed 20 days
- 32:50 Prisoners correspondence
- 33:10 Group from 1945 surprised when they landed in New York—had been told it had been bombed to the ground by the German army—propaganda
- 34:00 War was over already as far as German prisoners were concerned—knew they would lose
- 34:40 Well-fed, taken care of
- 35:13 There were never any problems, they liked being paid, liked being in the country
- 35:50 German family in town—could speak German—would visit with prisoners

- 36:30 Boy in town would sneak in and play cards with German prisoners—learned German card games
- 37:35 One American soldier in town who was a prisoner of war for the Germans was not treated well—was angry at community for treating German prisoners so well when he was not getting food or water all day
- 38:35 German prisoners treated well—crop harvested—worked out well for everyone
- 38:50 Asparagus harvest—difficult—sand in the soil
- 39:58 Conclusion
- 40:03 Wishes he had kept in touch with German prisoners—some have come back looking for the field man who died long ago—one woman in Hoopston researched the whole situation—wonders why German prisoners did not look him or his brother up—other field man now in the nursing home
- 42:45 Field man died 20 years ago
- 42:52 Wrap-up