

# Stucki, Richard

**Infantry and Air Force: 1941-1944**

**This interview was held on Dec 29, 2005. The questions were asked by Bryce Goodwin and Shelly Goodwin.**

**Q: If you'll begin by stating and spelling your name.**

A: Richard Thorley Stucki. Richard; R-I-C-H-A-R-D, Stucki; S-T-U-C-K-I.

**Q: Do you want to read that paper that you brought with you?**

A: I'll just start on that if you'd like?

**Q: Yeah, that's fine.**

A: The last part of 1940, Captain Peterson tried to get us to come join the National Guard and I really didn't have any desire to join it, but they had a draft program and I was informed that I would be number two from Iron County to be drafted so I figured I'd rather be with people I knew than to be drafted, so on the ninth of January, 1941, I joined that National Guard. Then we left for San Louis Obispo, California and on March the third, we were sworn into the Federal Service. We were no longer the National Guard, but this was the old 222<sup>nd</sup> field Artillery and we were battery F that I had joined. We went out to San Louis Obispo and they sent me to the field artillery mechanics school in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I went down there and went through that school and they informed me that there'd only been one person get a higher mark than me and he was one mark ahead of me. And then I went back to San Louis Obispo with the unit and from then on I was the artillery mechanic, looked after the guns and all that we had and they decided to send the 222<sup>nd</sup>; all of them from Utah over to Manila (in Philippines). And they had the Regimental headquarters from Salt Lake and service battery from Spanish Fork and then the batteries from Richfield, Beaver, Cedar, and St. George. That was a lot of young men out of Utah that left with that 222<sup>nd</sup>. And they were getting us ready to then go to Manila and about 24 of us took our trucks and equipment up to Port Oakland and we went up in a convoy and the others went up with our equipment, they left most of the men back in San Louis Obispo. Then after we got there, they put us on Angel Island, it's quite a bit larger island than Alcatraz is and it's farther out in the bay and we lived there and went on a ferry back and forth to Oakland to help load our equipment on the ship. We loaded it on the ship Maui; M-A-U-I. And there on Angel Island, there were a lot of men that were being marched around, they had dark clothing on and we asked to find out what it was and they were the men from the German Battleship Graft Spay. And it was in the Pacific Ocean and the British Navy surrounded it and it went into a port, I don't remember the name of on the West side of South America and they scuttled the ship there in the port. So those men were all prisoners from that graft spay that were on Angel Island. And then we got loaded and the Quartermaster Core brought the rest of the troops all up from San Louis Obispo and there were three ships of us to go, they loaded the other two ships and they started sailing and we were just on the end of the game plan ready to load up on this ship and we waited, and we waited and finally they came on with word that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, so we didn't load on and they got the other two ships back and we went back over Port Oakland and unloaded. We unloaded in a few hours, which took us over a week to load; to put it on. And we crossed the bay bridge over to Presidio at about midnight on December the seventh. After we were unloaded there, I would like to say as I

was the Artillery Mechanic, in our battery we had four World War One 55 millimeter howitzers. And they had one of the... I guess you'd call them the units to fire the guns; they were just little ones that you screwed into the breech. We only had one of those; we didn't have a single rifle. I had loaded eight 45 caliber pistols and about 40 rounds of ammunition and that's about all we had. I don't know how the others were equipped, but I doubt if they were much better. Anyway, then we went kind of up and down the coals guarding different places. And we went down to a blockade plant in Burbank, California. And we were stationed right in their plant, they built P38 planes. And in there, they shipped us a shipment of rifles and they were packed in cosmoline and they were World War One N Field Rifles. I didn't know how to get that cosmoline out of them, but in this plant, they had two big vats that they claimed the guns before they put them in the P38's. And I asked them and they very willingly let us take these rifles, and they put them in the vats and they come out completely clean, but they still didn't give us any ammunition and I had had a private pilot's license before I ever went into the service and I decided that I'd a lot rather go in the Air Force if I could than remain in the artillery, so I got an application into the Air Force, and we were then stationed in Fort Lewis, but we were over in Yakamah to their firing range. And they loaded 35 of us up that had applied for the Air Force and we went back in to Fort Lewis and we were there for two days of exams, interviews, and physicals. And at that time, they required that you got a score of 90 or better to enter into the pilot program. And we loaded back onto the bus to go back over to Yakamah and there were two of us that made it in and the other 33 didn't make it at that time.

**Q: And you were one of the two?**

A: I was one of the two. And they lowered that exam to 80 to try and get more pilots in, and they still were way behind, so they went down to 70 and that still didn't supply them, so they started a cadet program and in many of the colleges, they had a cadet program.

We had one here at old BAC. And later on, I'll tell you; I was an instructor, but I had two students that had gone through the BAC program here. And they said they pulled in here about midnight and they threw their barracks bags out on the ground and there were a couple of street lights dimly going and they figured they'd been shipped to the very last outpost in the nation. But they said that they found out after they left that this was the best they'd been to. And then I went through the training program we had; Primary Flight Training down in Lice, California and up to basic training in Lamoure. And already being a pilot, I got along real good, I was the first sow or anything they had in the program and about halfway through basic, they asked me if I'd be an instructor and I told them I really didn't want to do that, I wanted to go ahead, so they didn't make me. And we went through and then our class in advance was down in Douglas, Arizona. And they assigned our complete class, each and every single one of us, to go to instructor's school and I went on down to San Antonio, Texas to Randolph Field. And went through there at their instructor school, then I taught pilots; actually for the rest of the time I was in the service and you always had 4 students at a time. And one class, they gave me four Chinese students and that was a real challenge to get them through, they're not very mechanically inclined, I can probably say that. So then I stayed in the Air Force and flew B17s. And we'd get four pilots and we'd train them for about ten weeks, and then they'd move on.

And as the war came kind of close to the end, the best friend I had in the Air Force and I went back to Kansas City, Missouri twice. The TWA Airlines had new full engine planes

and they didn't have a single 4 engine pilot and they really wanted us to come. They said they could even get us out of the service if we'd sign up with them. But I decided I would rather not. My friend, Erwin Ferris, he went on and flew for them. He flew for them for 32 years, but I came back to Cedar after discharge and we spent five years in there and that old original 222<sup>nd</sup>; all of us from Cedar made it back and then all of them from Cedar made it back from Korea and I hope these ones now do. And that was the end of my military service.

**Q: I'd like you to talk a little bit more about how it was with Pearl Harbor was that... were you guarding our Coast Line? Were you afraid of attacks there?**

A: No, we were on Angel Island; they just had us living there.

**Q: But after it happened, you said you went and guarded different places.**

A: Oh, just up and down the coast. We were clear down San Diego by The Elmont Oak Park and they had some reservoirs up above there.

**Q: So they were worried about an attack?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Was that scary being in the service then?**

A: No. Nobody ever attacked at all.

**Q: And you say you got a private flight license before you even joined the Army, and how did you get that?**

A: About a dozen of us wanted to fly and there wasn't any airplane to rent, or an instructor, or a hanger. And so we saved up our money until we got a hundred and fifty dollars a piece and I might mention that wages back then were 35 cents an hour, that's what I was making. We bought a new Tear Craft Plane, it cost us 1600 dollars, it was delivered out here to the air port and we tied it down in the brush and the tumbleweeds and then there was no such thing as an instructor so we saved up some more money and hired a man who came down from Salt Lake and you had to have eight hours of dual time before you could Solo. So he was about as patient as anyone could be and we'd fly mornings, and nights, and weekends until we all got our eight hours in and he soloed us, then he turned us loose.

**Q: So you just took lessons? You took lessons?**

A: No...did from him for eight hours. The plane we had didn't have lights, radio, or a starter, you always had to have somebody crank it with the propeller when you wanted to go, but that's... and then you had to have 35 hours to get a Private Pilot's License and I qualified for that.

**Q: When you were serving, do you remember any famous people that you came in contact with that we might recognize?**

A: When I was down in San Louis Obispo, Captain Peterson was moved to Regimental Headquarters and he took six of us with him and I lived in the same tent with Hack Miller and I knew him very well, he was a good friend.

**Q: Do you have any regrets about your service?**

A: No.

**Q: If you could give advice to the service men and women of today, what would it be?**

A: Just to do their duty and mind their business and keep straight on what they're to do and to get all the training they can.

**Q: Okay. I have just two or three more questions. What were things you**

**experienced about joy and happiness; things that you might want to tell your grandchildren maybe about, and things that you experienced about sadness; things that you might want to forget about? What were your experiences with those?**

A: Oh, I don't think so, told my grandkids a little bit about it, so I take care of it that way.

**Q: Is there anything that was kind of sad that you might want to forget during your service?**

A: I don't think so; it was all upbeat for me. I was proud to be with those fellows.

**Q: How do you feel about the current conflict in Iraq?**

A: That's kind of a tough one. Like I say, I sure hope that ours can come back. But from ones that I've talked to that has been there, they feel they've done a lot of good. The Newspapers and the News are quite negative, and that is not the way that it is. I think if they can get a stable government over there and then return home, it'd be a good move.

**Q: And you have those gloves that you'd like to donate to the library, why don't you tell us about those a little bit?**

A: I haven't any more of my uniforms left, I gave those all away to my grandsons, but I do have these old high altitude gloves we wore. They're goat skin with the hair lined on the inside; you had to wear heavy clothing. Most of it was wool lined and then big, heavy boots, and then these gloves. The B17 was not heated and when you'd fly up to altitude of about 25,000 feet, the temperature inside would always be 25 to 30 degrees below zero and you had to wear oxygen all the time, a mask all the time and something that is hard to believe. They had a radio room full of big radios and up at that altitude, you couldn't turn on those big radios because as cold as it was, they'd burn up. The molecules of air were so thin there that they would not cool those radios, so those big ones couldn't be used when you got up... they'd burn up even it was that cold.

**Q: Well, thanks for coming.**

A: Well, I appreciate it and you're very welcome to have those for display (meaning the gloves).

**Q: Thanks a lot. We'll take them.**