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# St. Johns High School

Home of the Redwings!

## Mr. LeBlonde

Interviewed by Jake Barber

Mr. LeBlonde was drafted December 4th, 1942 and was 23 years old when he entered the service. At a preliminary physical, he had a torn knee from a toboggan accident and this set back his entering the service for about a year. He was first stationed at Fort Custer then was transferred to Camp Cleburne in Louisiana, where he took basic training. After that he trained with basic maneuvers in Camp House, Texas. Mr. LeBlonde was married in 1943 before he went overseas. He served for 3 years and left the service on December 3rd, 1945, nearly 3 years to the day since he joined the service. He did not drink coke during or after the service. From the interview I learned that Mr. LeBlonde didn't enjoy army life very much. However from what he told me of the living conditions, who could blame him? Army life was very uncomfortable. In fact, at one time during the fighting he wasn't able to change clothes for several days.

In the service, a basic day started with spit and polish when they were stateside. During fighting, they would take care of vehicles and then were issued weapons. During the war Mr. LeBlonde was stationed in Europe after he came in at Marseilles, France. The most famous battle Mr. LeBlonde was in was the Battle of the Bulge. Another battle he took part in was The Crossing of the Rhine.

As far as other relatives in the war, Mr. LeBlonde also had an uncle that served in the army and his wife's cousin, Ralph, who served in the Air Force. Mr. LeBlonde was part of the 328th combat engineers. Their job was to "build and repair bridges, placing and picking up landmines, and [destroying] obstacles to make forward progress." Stateside, they rode motorcycles but then motorcycles were taken out of equipment lines when they went overseas. Then they were transferred to a GMC ragtop truck with a trailer behind that carried the engineer equipment for the squad. One time while driving a truck, Mr. LeBlonde accidentally ran over a landmine and blew out the back tire. This was one of his most memorable experiences from combat.

On the subject of how the war affected him, Mr. LeBlonde said that there were "good and bad experiences that come out of war" and that it "helps give understanding to the value of peace." He said that he wasn't really

affected mentally or physically. He also said that he was able to shut out most of the experience and feels fortunate he was able to do so. Mr. LeBlonde took the approach that when "[he] left the army, the army left [him]." As far as rank advancement, Mr. LeBlonde went in a private and came out a private first class. He said that he's not really in touch with many people from service, though he does have coffee with some other people that served. His final thoughts on life in the Army and life in general were that even though he believed that people should serve during wartime, "everybody has their own thinking, some people enjoy the army... I was of the thinking that you should find your own niche in life."