

Sgt Orin Leroy Engelson

Born: March 6,
1917 on Island

Died: Bradenton,
FL Sept 6, 1996

Service # 36469132

Period of Service: WW II
Sources: Monument,
cemetery 332 S, JG, B10 F2,
Am Leg Scrapbook – box 17
Svc Qstnaire, Willie Engelson

Enlisted July 7, 1944 in Detroit and discharged November 20, 1945 Ft Custer, MI. Prior service was with US Coast Guard, Feb 1938 – Feb 1941. Trained at Ft. Hood, Texas for the combat infantry. He was stationed at camps: Ft Hood, TX; Ft Meade, MD; Camp Pitsborg; Old Gard, France; Miles Standish, MA; Camp McCoy, WI; Ft Shelby, MS. Battles included Hultgen Forest, Colmar Aachen, Andenosh, Cologne. Served in the Rhineland campaign, and in Central Europe. Was a squad leader. Medals include Combat Infantry Badge, Good Conduct, Europe- Africa- Middle East theater ribbon with three battle stars.

Sailed from Boston on the *Aquitania*, arriving Glasgow on Jan 1, 1945, then to LeHavre on 1/4/1945. Later to Camp Furmy, Belgium. Sailed from LeHavre, France 7/26/1945, arriving Boston 8/3/1945.

Joined American Legion Post 402 from another post, and was commander of the American Legion 402 Post in 1950. Was in the American Legion 49 years.

His parents owned the Sunset Resort. They were William Soloman Engelson and Haldora Einerson. He married Janet Pfohl (born 10/21/1921) on April 21, 1940. Their children were William Lawrence (born 4/17/1941), James Paul (born 4/8/1943) and Marilee Ann (born 9/22/1947).

His parents ran the Island telephone operation, and Orin was the only person born in the telephone office, which now houses the *The Observer*, the Island newspaper. They bought a 20 acre property on the northwest corner of Main and Detroit Harbor roads for \$900 including a small building west of the Albatross. In the mid 1920's Will's father moved his commercial fishing from West Harbor to Kenosha where the water was more open in the winter. In Spring they moved back to the Island. Orin attended Island schools for a couple of years but graduated from high school in Kenosha in 1935. He worked at Snap-On Tools as an office boy after high school, and then enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1938 for three years. He served most of his hitch as a Surfman in Kenosha, with a couple of temporary duties in Chicago and Sturgeon Bay. He elected discharge in 1941 when his term was up.

He married Janet Pfohl in Kenosha on April 21, 1940 and they honeymooned at the Sunset Resort. They moved to Hillsdale, MI when she was pregnant with William where Orin's sister Maxine and her husband John (Whitey) Engstrom were living with their young son Lee. Orin got a job where Whitey was working, at Hillsdale Steel Products. A month after the Normandy invasion, both enlisted in the Navy though they were both exempt, being married with two children. When they reported to Detroit for induction, they were told they would be assigned to the Army because there were already 50,000 men in the Navy enlistment pool. Their serial numbers were one digit apart because both their names started with the same three letters—eng. They were both sent to Ft. Sheridan, IL where they got KP and guard duty together and even bunked together. They split up in France and sent to different divisions.

Orin served in the Rhineland and Central Europe with the 28th Infantry Division and given the Combat Infantryman Badge on 2/11/1945. In August, 1945 his division was sent back to the States for redeployment to the Pacific region. Orin was on leave in Kenosha when Japan surrendered, but did not have enough points for immediate discharge, that taking place on November 20, 1945 at Ft Shelby, MS.

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Orin moved to the Island where he became mail carrier for two years at \$1900 per year. They lived at a rented house (\$15 per year) at 284 Lobdell Point Road, without electricity, water or plumbing. When they got electricity the rent was reduced to \$10 per year but he had to pay his own electric bills. He then worked for Arni Richter's Ferry Line for two years until his father had a heart attack. Then he helped out at the Sunset Resort and worked out at various handyman jobs around the Island in painting and electrical work. He also played trumpet with an Island Quartet. In early 1951, he moved his family to Kenosha where he worked for the Eaton Corporation for 28 years, retiring in 1977. He then moved to Bradenton, Florida where he died in 1996 at the age of 79. He is buried on the Island.

