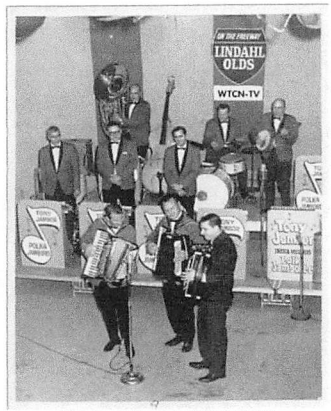
Edward William Lewandoski

Edward Lewandoski was born on June 6, 1896 in South St Paul, Minnesota to Michael Lewandoski (1872-1940) and Alice Sabloski Lewandoski (1873-1952). Both parents were born in Poland. Alice will be remembered in a city known for livestock processing, when she started a campaign to make the animals final hours more comfortable. Edward was the oldest of ten children. When he registered for the draft on June 5, 1917, he was working at the St. Paul Tannery where his father was an engineer. He was twenty-one. He enlisted in the National Guard on September 21, 1917 and began his military career at Camp Cody, New Mexico located about six miles in the desert from Deming, New Mexico.

Edward was part of the June Automatic Replacement Draft. He was assigned to Company 18 during training and wouldn't know his exact post until they arrived in France. He left from the New York harbor on the SS Hororata. When he arrived in France, he was assigned to the 307th Infantry and then transferred to the 154th Infantry Brigade of the 77th Division, Company L. His unit participated in the Oise-Aisne, Meuse-Argonne, Champagne and the Lorraine campaigns. He left France, to return home on May 18, 1919 as a Private First Class.



Myron Floren, Eddie Lewandowski, and Tony Jambor jamming out during WTCN's Polka Jamboree in the 1960s.

Edward returned to his childhood home and married Ruth Maria Gustafson, who was born in Norway. By this time his father Michael had opened a small grocery store located at 901 South Concord Street in South St Paul, near Inver Grove Heights. Edward and his brother would take over this business and for a time would both live, with their wives upstairs. His father moved almost next door and started a gas station. Edward and Ruth would have two children, both boys. The oldest, Edward would serve in WWII.

Edward was a member of Tony Jambor's Polka Band, called The Polka Jamboree. His nickname was "Smilin Eddie". The band was so successful that they had their own television show on WCCO, Channel 11 from 1964 until 1968. The show was so popular that only the show "Lassie" beat them in ratings in the Midwest. Tony Jambor would later buy the BelRay Ballroom and operate it for years.

Edward died, living in the same house that he grew up in on February 13, 1982. He is buried at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the VFW Section.