

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Dale Kellogg

Conducted by Deb Barrett

May 17, 2008

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This interview is being conducted on May 17, 2008 with Mr. Dale Kellogg at the Indian Prairie Library in Darien, Illinois. My name is Deb Barrett. Mr. Kellogg was born on September 13, 1923 in Alcatraz, Iowa, Clayton County. He is a retired bricklayer and learned of the Veterans History Project through an article on the project. Also with us today is Fran Prokop, another interviewer for this project. Mr. Kellogg has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Here is his story:

Dale, where were you living just before you went into the service? What was your life like at that point?

Well, I come from a big family and the whole thing is there, when you was like in a – when you was in a big family you worked any job you could get on the farm, and remember, I was in school till, uh, you know, I graduated in '42 and I went in in '43.

Okay.

See, so I was – I was – they drafted me in '43.

How old were you when you were drafted?

18.

You were 18 – so you were just out of high school?

Right.

Okay. And you were drafted into the Army.

Yeah, no, I was drafted into the Army, but at that time, uh, they go to work in uh – they threw you in where they needed you. Now, like, they threw people in, in – they threw people in – I don't know about the Navy, but the Army and the Marines -- see my buddy, he got a furlough in, or deferment, they call it – and he ended up in the Marines, see, and I ended up in the Air Force.

The Army Air Corps at that time, right?

Yeah. Well, I didn't end up there right away because we had to have classification and everything after we went in, you now, so, no, I wasn't in the Air Force until – oh, I took basic training in Miami and was classified in Lorry 1 or Lorry 2.

Well, let's go back and talk about what it was like when you were drafted.

Yeah, okay.

How did your family feel about it? Were they worried? Did they just say everybody has to go?

Oh, yeah, well, if you didn't get deferred for the farm, you had to go. 'Cuz I know – I come from a small class, you know, a graduating class. But there was only – I think only one guy and I went in the service; the rest of 'em got deferred for the farm.

How many were in your class? Do you remember?

Oh, 17, 18.

So very small.

Yeah.

Okay. So you were on the farm; you were drafted when you were 18 – did you go in right away?

Well, I went in – yeah, I went in right away, yeah. I went in in January – yeah, I went in January.

Where were you inducted?

Fort Dodge, Iowa.

What was it like when you first got there? How did you get there, first of all?

Train.

You took a train there?

Yeah.

Okay, had you been –

I'd never been outa home.

Never been away from home – so this was your first experience away from home.

Yeah.

What was it like going there?

You had to go.

But was it – were you excited, were you nervous?

No, no, no; everybody had to go so –

It was just something you had to do.

You know, 'cuz I – the guy I worked for tried to get me one deferment 'cuz I was near – made powdered eggs –

Okay.

And he couldn't do it. So, no, it – you couldn't get a deferment unless you was on the farm.

Right. So when you got to Fort Dodge, what was it like? What do you remember of that?

Two days you was on the train to Florida.

Florida – or when you got to Fort Dodge? Fort Dodge was in –

Iowa.

Iowa. So you were inducted in Iowa –

That's right.

What did they do? Did they issue your gear there?

Well, yeah, I think they issued our gear –

Did you get shots and inoculations there?

Well, probably got some shots there; very few, 'cuz they sent us to, uh, they sent us to Florida on the train within probably two days.

So you were there a very short time?

Oh, yeah. I hit 13 bases in a year and a half.

Wow! They couldn't keep you in one base, huh? So, when they swore you in, maybe had some of your shots, issues you some gear?

Uh, they must have issued some gear; they must have give us something, but I don't know why would they give you gear there in the northern hemisphere when you're going to Florida. I don't know.

So when they sent you down to Florida, where did they send you?

Miami Beach.

What was the name of the installation where they sent you? Do you remember?

I think it was Miami Beach, they called it; I don't know. The Army leased all these motel rooms; they were expensive motel rooms, you know; four of us was in a room, you know, and I was there for about ten days.

When you went down to Florida did you go on a train again?

Yeah.

Were you traveling in uniform or in your civilian clothes?

Oh, you've got me.

You don't remember, okay. That's fine.

No, I think – we might have been in civilian clothes yet till we got to Florida. I wouldn't be too surprised.

How many guys went with you down to Florida?

Oh, Jesus, a train load of 'em

Really? Like 50, 100?

Probably 100, 150; all of them was from Iowa, you know. But then when you got on that train, that conductor was the boss.

So this was a troop train.

Oh, no, it wasn't really a troop train, but they had a lease from the government probably. But that was the only way to travel then.

Right.

You didn't have a plane or a, you know, like for instance to me, and I get 20 – I would say at least 90% of those had never been out of Iowa.

Um-hmm, including you?

Including me.

So what was the mood like on the train when you were going down? What did you do to pass the time?

I don't know –

Did you talk? Did you play cards?

Oh, yeah, we played cards, look around because you hadn't – 90% of the guys –

Hadn't seen this part of the country before.

No.

How long did the trip take you?

I don't know if it was two days or it might have been three days. I don't know.

So what did you do for food?

Oh, we went – they had food on the train.

They just provided you like a regular meal?

Yeah, yeah –

Or just a bag – sack-like type of food?

Oh, no, we had – see the train – everything was taken over by the government, see, pretty well, so, uh, the food was probably what they served on the train otherwise, you know – made 'em business then, you know. They had a booming business.

Right.

No, we ate on the train and when I think about it we was in – we were in civilian clothes, I know we were, until we got to Florida. Then they issued us summer uniforms.

So tell us what it was like when you got down to Florida? You were met at the train?

You wasn't met at the train.

They just told you where to –

You got off the train; that's what they said, you know.

Right. Did they have buses waiting to take you where you were going?

No, I don't think so. I think for no further than we had to go we walked, you know.

Okay.

I'm positive of that, see.

Okay. So you went to the hotel where you were going to be stationed?

Right.

And what were your first days like there? What happened? They issued you your uniforms?

Yeah, they issued us uniforms and then now one of the things – we're in this – probably four of us I think was in this room. Well, okay, they had a fire drill and we never heard it.

You never heard the fire drill?

Nope; we were that tired. No, no, like for instance they worked us –

So tell us what a day was like for you there. What was it like? What did you do during the day?

Oh, just learn to march and now and then you'd have to check on the bulletin board of your, uh, all the schedules, like to get your shots, and do this – what you have to do. Two or three guys they put on KP, you know, in the mess hall and so, it was all the same. We only stayed there, you know, we didn't stay there very long.

Beside marching and physical exercise, did you have any classroom type of classes?

No, no.

It was all physical training basically?

Yeah, physical training, yeah.

Okay.

Because we didn't get that classification till we went back up to, uh, Colorado.

What really stands out in your mind about your time in Miami Beach? Any instructors that you had there, sergeants or anything?

No, no, it was just a – I mean

Just a quick stop?

Yeah, I mean, you don't remember; that's like they had me rehab over here. Well, I don't pay no attention to the girls and stuff there, you know, different one each day. I mean, if you come and interviewed me tomorrow, you know, I probably wouldn't remember, you know, too much about it.

How long were you in Miami Beach?

Ten days.

Ten days; that was it. Wow!

Well, that wasn't basic training

No, that wasn't. More like indoctrination –

Well, nobody had basic training very long then. Nobody.

Where did you go after Miami Beach?

Went to Colorado, let's see – Colorado one or two, I don't know which it is. There was two of 'em, about three miles apart.

So you went out by train again?

Right.

And what did you do at Colorado?

Well, the first thing we did – you want me to tell you?

Yeah.

I carried coal.

You carried coal, okay.

'cuz we had three barracks – and they had three pot bellied stoves; that's what I call them. They fed 'em all with coal and so that was my job. You know a lot of 'em was a heavy job, you know, and some of 'em was over – read on the bulletin board so you wouldn't miss any of your shots and classifications and stuff, see. But it was – I think it was about – I would say two, three mile apart. They had a shuttle, but you know, it wasn't – they didn't – it wasn't closed in; it was open.

Right. So you went from Miami Beach from what had been a nice hotel, to a barracks. Tell us about this barracks. What was it like?

How many men were there? Was it open, closed –

No, it was, like I say, it had – it was -- I know it was three stories. And now the other one was administration and we would – it was just a sleeping place is what it was, and we had to – now I don't know if we carried buckets of coal; they had the coal out here and they would – that was

our eight-hour job, to carry coal. To me – remember you got a five-minute break every hour in the service, yeah, to smoke or anything.

What luxury – yeah! Ha, ha. So how many men were on a floor in the barracks?

I would say 30 at least.

And it was all open, right?

Open space, yeah.

Okay. Were they bunks or were they single beds

No, singles, singles.

What sort of rules did you have in the barracks?

There was no rules in the barracks because you knew you had to keep them god dang pot bellied stoves going.

Keep bringing the coal in?

Yeah.

Was this in between doing your basic training?

Oh, no, no, no, this was a regular job.

Where did you get your basic training?

Basic training we had in Miami, ten days.

That was it?

That was it.

Well how long were you in Colorado carrying coal back and forth?

I would say a couple three weeks; and they classified us, we went over got our shots; got our uniforms and then they put you in – that's where I was put in the Air Force.

How did they decide that you were going to go –

Well, I think – when they took you over to Lorry 2 or whatever, they gave you tests. Well, see, guys like myself was just out of school, was fairly fresh, you know, probably get a fairly good

grade. You know, I was better than somebody who was 24.5, you know and so, no, you got a certain grade and then they put you – that’s when they put me in the Air Force.

What kind of test was it? Was it an aptitude test or was it like math skills?

Everything, and a lot of ‘em was uh, you know, they had a lot of telegraph stuff then.

Okay. So they said you were going to go into the Air Force or the Air Corps, at that time.

Right, right.

Army Air Corps. Did they tell you what your job was going to be there?

Nope. Well, no, when they –when we left there, after we got done with classification and all that, they sent us to Houston, Texas and there they assigned you to different crews. That’s where you got your classification to different planes.

What was the name of the base in Houston?

Harlington, Texas

Arlington, Texas?

Harlington, Texas. There may be a picture of that – no, I don’t think so – the main gate. It was right across from Matamoros. They give us a one-day pass to go over there.

And you went to Mexico on a one-day pass just to check it out?

Ha, ha, yeah.

From a farm boy in Iowa who’s never been away, you went to Mexico.

No, I took advantage, like when I was someplace else. I’d look around; I mean to me,

Get a chance to see things you wouldn’t see.

Yeah.

So tell us when you were in Texas – you went there by train again, right?

Right. Everything was by train.

When you got there you were in barracks again, right?

Right.

Was it the same kind of barracks you'd been in?

No, I think they were one story.

What was your day like in Texas?

Mostly training, and then like they put us on – they had little planes and the pilot would set in the front, we'd set in the back here, and then they would have you shoot at targets that the plane pulled or hauled. You had different color bullets so they knew your score.

So you were going to be a gunner?

Yeah, well, that's a – that's what they would put me in as.

So you had target practice.

Right, target practice.

You had classroom time also?

Uh, not too much; mostly target practice, yes.

So it was mostly the physical skills that you were brought into?

Right.

What did they tell you about the war or what you might encounter? Did they tell you anything?

They don't tell you nothin'. I was – I was a little (inaudible); pilots and stuff has got all the information. I mean the –

So all they said was there's a target; shoot at it.

Yeah, yeah, right.

So tell us what a typical day was like. What time did you get up in the morning

Five o'clock.

How did they wake you up? Did you have that nice friendly sergeant come in –

No, no, no, no; all he did was whistle or something, I imagine; I don't know, you know – to me that's about what it was.

So you got up – did you do calisthenics or something?

Yeah, well you always did that practically every place you was at but not very extended; you're more interested in shooting that target.

So you had your calisthenics or whatever, you went to breakfast – what kind of food did you have at the base? Was the food good?

Well –

Did you have some of those powdered eggs?

Yeah, Army always had powdered eggs. But now see I'm a real particular eater and I had to adjust to the Army life. If you ask somebody, the cook, what it was, he'd just throw more on your plate. Ha, ha.

**So you learned not to ask too many questions. Ha, ha.
Could you figure out what most of it was?**

No. Usually had powdered eggs and like for instance, uh, what was it – like spam was great and stew was good, but you learned to like it.

Because that's what you had.

Yeah.

Did you go with your whole barracks to breakfast?

No, you got in line; you got in line for chow.

But you didn't all march to the –

Oh, no, no, no

This was just you go yourself –

Well, if you got up – if you got out of bed real early, you know – you'd be further up in the line. That's all, you know. Some people come the last minute, you know how people is today; the same thing; people didn't change.

**So after breakfast what would you do?
Target practice or –**

Well, they had the schedule so you know, to different – different things that you had to do. You know you're gonna get your teeth examined; you're gonna go to the doctor's appointment; you're gonna go to work in different things you had to do, you know, in the Army you know what you have to do. And that was it.

So tell us about your target practice. You were shooting at targets pulled by planes?

Yeah.

Were you a good shot?

Well, I don't know. I don't know what you call a good shot but you get them medals – I mean half of them medals don't mean nothin' to me. You know.

What kind of gun did you use?

It was a 50 caliber, or wait a minute; might have been a 30. I think it was a 50 'cuz all the planes had 50 calibers on 'em.

A machinegun?

It's on a tripod. But then when you go up you know, and fly and then when you come back in, well the first one to get in would get to land first and you'd get off. We had a lot of bushes on our landing gears; they didn't get very high. They didn't get very high 'cuz the quicker, you know, they got you down, see. And then you had kids, you now, what age were they? That's like you give a kid a car out here and when he leaves, you don't know what's gonna happen. And there was no radio communication, see –

Right. So you were shooting at targets pulled by planes –

Yeah, it's a long sleeve –

Right. But then you also went up in planes.

Well, yeah, I mean – well this was later on – I was assigned to a regular crew.

Was that still in Texas that you were assigned to a crew?

No, that was – I was down in Texas, then I had to go through uh, Casper, Wyoming.

How long were you in Texas all together?

Probably at the most two weeks.

Oh, wow. Okay; they just kept moving you every couple of weeks.

Well, see, at that time, they needed soldiers.

Right. It was just an abbreviated form; just get you the basic skills you needed.

You had to – they rushed you through. I mean, to me –

So you went to Casper, Wyoming – do you remember what base you were at?

No. They had – the Army had – they had bases all over. And then I was – a little bit of our squadron was – now I don't know how – probably two-thirds of it was – we was transferred to Scotts Bluff, Nebraska.

How long were you in Wyoming?

Not too long – till I was in that plane wreck.

You were in a plane wreck in Wyoming?

Yeah.

Okay. Tell us about that.

I'll tell you how much training they had. We went up and we had two gas tanks on this plane and one was full and they didn't know how to turn it off.

So what happened? The rest went into the other tank?

No, that's the reason we set down in the field. So that's how much training we had.

All these places you went to for two-week intervals you were doing more and more training?

Right.

So what was the training in Wyoming? Why were you sent there?

Well, assign me on a crew; I was assigned to a 24 – a 17 or 24, I don't remember. The 17s went over to England, so they didn't know where they were gonna send me at that time so – well, this was all the same – a 50 caliber gun is a 50-caliber gun, you know; it's no difference. But then –

So you were assigned to a crew

Right.

And in Wyoming is where you went up

Yeah, and I was on a – they put me – see I was a smaller guy so they put me – there's a gun turret in the bottom and that's where I was assigned. And then when we set down in Nebraska, well they – I shouldn't say they shouldn't have opened the bomb bay doors, but the bomb bay doors in between these – and they opened the bomb bay doors – well this other guy and I were settin' back here, so that dirt come in shoved us back. So I was – I was uh, --

You were packed in there.

Well, I was, uh, permanently grounded. I haven't been in a plane since.

Really?

Nope. You couldn't get me in a plane. You could not get me in a plane.

So that ended your flying career right there.

Yeah, I was afraid. You know, it – uh –

I don't understand; what happened?

Well the dirt comes in; we were settin' here at the back; it kinda matted things. And the dirt come in and shoved us back.

It buried him – so it like buried you in there.

Right, well, just shoved us back. I mean nobody got killed, so I'm saying he did the right thing, but I don't think he should have – in my mind.

Right.

'Cuz he was lookin after Joe Boy up in the front; he wasn't lookin' for us two dough boys back there.

Right, right.

As far as I'm concerned.

So when did they realize what had happened?

Well, they realized right away.

They stopped and dug you out?

Yeah, no, I was in the hospital for awhile, but –

But I mean when they got out of the plane, they dug you out of there –

Well, no, they didn't – I mean there didn't that much dirt go in for a practical – you know, probably –

Did you have broken bones or anything?

I still got a bad back till this day.

So you had a service-related injury.

Well, I wouldn't call it that. I mean to me –

Well, it happened there –

Well, it was one of those things that happened – and nobody got killed so –

Well, you're left with injuries –

Well, I mean, how you gonna prove it?

By that accident. You were a young man; you had no problem before that time with your back, did you?

Well, no – but no, like for instance to me, uh, fighting the government is a hard thing – 'cuz a doctor is gonna say, you know, well, I was in a hospital for awhile, and you know, they didn't – and the other guy, he in fact, he went to work in the commissary, you know, the PX, but he was hurt a little bit – like the same as I was, you know, but then they pulled me off the crew. See that was the last I ever flew.

So they took you to the hospital on base?

Oh, yeah; oh yeah, there's always a hospital.

Did they have surgery or –

I goofed around, I don't know, two or three weeks and then they railroaded me to – well, it's Edward Air Base down in – it was called Miroc Air Base when I was there. It's in the desert in California. And so no, I was – they sent me out there –

They sent you by train out to there.

Oh, yeah

And when you got there what did you do –

Keep this train – yeah.

Well, some vets said they were sent by bus.

I'm sorry.

I know you didn't fly down there.

What was your job in California.

My job in California was, uh, I put these guns in the planes for them to do practice. See they had, uh, I think they had 20 – 24s in there, and like our job was put ‘em in the planes and they’d practice and then they would go to work in – we had to take ‘em out and clean ‘em, and the next day it’s a routine, routine, routine.

Okay. How heavy were these guns? You had a bad back.

No, you take the guns out. And like another thing, see now they had us practice dumping. I bet you to this day I could almost take one of them guns, 50-caliber, apart blindfolded; you had to do it blindfolded.

Right.

So I mean to me, you know – but no I spent quite a bit of time in California. I was there quite awhile.

How long were you there, in California?

Oh, I think over a year.

Doing that same job the whole time.

It was a daily thing.

Did you get any furloughs while you were there?

Oh, yeah; we got passes.

What did you do for relaxation – for entertainment?

Well, I, uh, I went to, uh, let’s see San Fernando Valley, which is south of Los Angeles, and I dated a girl quite a while there, see, and when I went over – but then most of the girls had, you know, had pockets – two pockets – they’d drop an address. If I’m out with ‘em they drop an address for the next guy to pick ‘em up. Ha, ha

Interesting social life, ha, ha.

Didn’t they say a Sailor’s got a girl in every port. We were the same way – no it was – I was in – it was a nice place to be, you know, but now I never went down to Los Angeles hardly at all. You know, I’d go to San Fernando Valley and Hollywood and stuff like that.

Did you go to any of the USO clubs?

Oh, yeah; you stopped at them quite a bit. They were nice.

Tell us about the USO club – what was it like to go there.

Well, uh, usually the USO – the ladies that volunteered – you know they had sweet rolls and stuff there – they were – usually worked in the back and their younger daughters worked in front – ha, ha – to get dates. No, I had a good time.

How did you get into town – did you hitchhike?

Yeah, most of the time. Yeah, you could hitchhike – everybody picked you up.

You'd be in uniform?

Yeah; everybody would pick you up. You didn't have no hard time getting into town.

So your thumb was your primary means of transportation.

Yeah, yeah, no, it was – in fact, now and then, the one guy had a – he was from California and he had a big Packard. We had to get gas for him so he'd take us to town. But he was – as a rule – they'd pick you up right away.

So people were very friendly to you any time you were in uniform.

Oh, yeah; they're all together now. Of course you couldn't hitchhike now. No way. Well, I never – I never went to – inaudible – I think maybe once or twice I got a ride from them, you know, into town, you know and that's what I could never figure out about a base the size of ours, you know today they cry, cry, cry and they have a bus service. We never had a bus service, you know.

**You just hitchhiked. So you were in California for a year?
Cleaning the guns –**

I would imagine it's over a year. Yeah.

And what after that?

Then they sent me to, uh, -- well, that's when they sent me to Guam.

They sent you to Guam.

Yeah. But now like when I was on the water, uh, is when they dropped an atomic – well, the dates, you know, some of these dates –

You're a little – not sure of, right.

Right, like for instance, to me now, when I got over there, I was assigned – because the guy into photography. I was his gofer – whatever he wanted me to do, go do it.

So this was an Army Air Corps photographer; he was in the service.

Yeah. That's right.

And you were his assistant.

I was his assistant.

You were his gofer, okay. Ha, ha

But no, like for instance to me, and how do you think I got a lot of these pictures, you know, like that picture of that crew; that's what I got. You know, but see, they would come in there, a lot of them with five or six dozen of these pictures – well, he would make 'em so that they – in six or eight months they would be just blank; there'd be nothing on 'em.

Must have used invisible ink.

But no, he'd give me – he'd give me a lot of these – I mean, he was uh, I did him favors too.

How did you get to Guam, by ship?

Boat, yeah.

Do you remember what ship that was?

No, I don't.

Was it a troop ship?

Yeah, it was a troop ship but I don't remember the troop ship. We stopped in one little island to get more fuel and I don't know what that was, you know, in fact I don't even know what base I hit when I come back to the States.

What base did you hit when you were going there? Where did you land eventually?

Well, I landed in Guam; went right to Guam, yeah.

How many men were on this ship, approximately?

I don't know.

Do you remember how long it took you to get to Guam?

Uh, no, I don't. Uh, I would say – you gotta talk over a week.

Now this was your first time on a large ship.

Oh yeah, yeah.

How was it? What did you think – was it comfortable?

Well, you know, it's just another thing you had to do. Like for instance to me, well it was pinochle game constantly, like for instance to me there was different things – everybody was in the same boat –

Literally, ha, ha.

You're going over –

But I mean was it a smooth crossing, was it a rough crossing?

Some days was rough, some days was smooth.

Were you in a convoy? Were you being escorted or part of an escort?

Well, I, uh, I don't know but I always said that usually when they send them out, they send three ships together; that was my thinking. But now I heard from somebody who was in the Navy and he said no. But I look at it this way, if this ship was sunk, they want to have some place for these guys to at least get on to, and I may be wrong but I still think this to my dying day, that they send three together.

Okay, and did you do the little zig zag pattern going over there?

I don't think we did no zig zag pattern. It wasn't necessary; you had escorts; 'cuz you had planes over the top to see if somebody comes along. Well, look at Pearl Harbor, you know - I mean to me, they had to go to war like that- they wouldn't send one ship alone – so that's my thinking.

Right. Yeah.

Of course, you know, a lot of that stuff I don't know. They ain't gonna come down and tell me those things, you know. All I was – I was on the boat and when it's time to eat, it's time to eat. You don't do nothin' for all that time.

What were your sleeping accommodations like – were they the hammocks that were hung?

No, I think we had double bunks. Double bunks, I believe.

And when you got to Guam, what was your base like there – were you in tents? Were you in buildings?

No, see Guam had – they had like half this room, you’d say and they had things that would open up; all these things would open up so it would be cooler – see ‘cuz that was a hot base.

Right, right; so it was screens with some sort of canvas over?

No, no screens; just open ‘em up.

Open-sided tents?

Yeah – well we had the same thing in California when we were there because you know ‘ cuz it was so goddang hot; it was hot.

So you had these open-sided tents, you slept on cots.

Yeah, I think most of the places we slept in cots, you know. The only good thing about us, see with– in the Air Force it was 24 hours and so now like if we wanted to – if you got tired, you could lay down, well the officer come in there and see you but in the Air Force they didn’t bother us much because they maybe thought we was working night shift, see, so you know –

So they didn’t worry about it too much.

Yeah, no, like they were pretty good that way, you know, see, so, as far as I’m concerned, you know; there was some good and some bad, you know.

So what was a typical day for you in Guam?

I helped the gofer quite a bit and then later on he – when he went back to the States – see you got out by points.

Right; you had to earn so many points.

Okay, so naturally he was over there for awhile; in fact he was – after the war they sent us a couple – you know, they said to get more pictures, you know, ‘cuz afterwards – then when he went back to the States, I was kinda alone. I didn’t – nobody knew where I was at –

And you didn’t tell them, ha, ha.

No, so ,my points started to get coming home.

**So you were in Guam; you were working as a gofer for this photographer.
How did you eat out there –**

Oh, they had their mess halls; well, there’s some pictures of the mess halls I think in these – I believe there is, yeah. I know there is –theaters, you know and a lot of that stuff. I mean

remember, I wasn't the first one in the Army; there was a lot of guys ahead of me. It started in 1941.

So you would help this photographer do whatever he needed you to do

Yeah, yeah, yeah – and then we would put these cameras in the planes because if they wanted to get pictures later on – 'cuz they sent planes over there later – after the war, you know, to see the damage.

Did you mount cameras in the planes?

We mounted them on the gun scope, you know, the turret.

Right, right.

Whenever they'd shoot it.

So they could get pictures of what was happening and take those back too.

Right, right.

How long were you in Guam?

I think I was in Guam about six months; there's one of those pictures that tells how long I was there. I wasn't there too long, you know.

You were in California longer than you were in Guam.

Oh, yeah, California was my longest stay.

(turn the tape here – lost some words)

We had guys from England with us.

You're talking probably the end of 1944 –

Right. Some of these figures, you know, I don't know exactly – but I know I didn't do nothin' for a long time 'cuz I kept hidden.

You just kept going for the guy –

Well, no, he was gone; he was gone.

So when he was gone, what did you do?

Nothing, ha. ha.

You were in hiding. Did your assignment change?

No.

They just forgot about you.

Well, I mean let's be honest. You got out of what you could, you know.

So you just managed to make yourself scarce and keep looking busy –

Yeah, but then when your number's starting to come up, you know, it's about time for you to get discharged –

You want to make sure they don't forget you.

I wanted them to know.

How did you get points – just because of the time you served?

Yeah, what the story is of these points is, uh, now let me give you a for instance – I had a kid that graduated with me; he went in a prisoner of war and you got more points for a prisoner of war, more points for overseas, and – uh

Basically the more dangerous the assignment, the more points –

Yeah, uh; I think it worked that way because I know he got out before I was even – while I was still over in Guam, you know, 'cuz he got a lot of points for being a prisoner of war. But no, it went to work on the – it was the point system.

Do you know how many points you needed to get out?

I think it was 132; something like that.

Do you remember how many points you'd get for every month or whatever that you were there?

I think you got two points for where I was on Guam and if, of course now if you're on flying status you get 50%. So you can't – you don't know some of that stuff. But now like uh, I don't know how many points it was, but it was a point system.

So as your points accumulated you were getting ready to go home – you made sure they knew you were there.

No, they didn't know I was there.

What happened as you got close to your discharge date

I think I went over to the – and told them I was working for him and he's gone and I want to be on the list. I was no angel, ha, ha

**And they said where have you been all this time?
Where were you when the war ended – on Guam?**

No, I was on the water. When the war ended I was on the water.

On the way back?

No, going over; going over. I didn't see no action. Yeah, I was on the water going to Guam when the war ended. So I must have been on Guam about '45 because now I remember the one guy that was putting people on KP and stuff; now he usually you'd get the lower ranked officers and put them on KP – so anyone – and now MacArthur's driver, they put him on KP and he says, "I ain't going on KP." They picked the highest ranked guys. Well some of them probably hadn't had KP – they probably had over 20 years in the service. They ain't gonna pull KP in 20 years. You know, so no, the mess sergeant said you gotta change; you can't put the high ranking ones on – they'd call in sick. But he was a nuthead anyway.

The war ended while you were on the ship going to Guam –

Right.

How did you hear the news? What was the reaction of people on the ship?

It was probably announced on the news –

And what was the reaction on the ship?

Well, they're happier than heck but like the one guy, now he was – he was – I'll give you a for instance – he was 38 and they didn't – we was on the water and they said anybody 38 or older don't have to go. How's he gonna get back?

Well, when he got to Guam, fly him back.

No, no --

Well, what's he supposed to do – jump overboard and swim back?

No, he – when you're once there, you know –

When the ship pulls out –

That's where you're going.

So this guy was 38; on the water and it was too late for him; he was going.

And like a lot of them with three kids, they didn't take them.

If the war is over and you're in Guam, why are you installing all these cameras in planes for shooting – I don't understand that.

Well, he wants certain pictures that they want.

The war in the Pacific was still going on till '45.

Yeah, but I mean to me, what they – when they signed the treaty, I mean – he wasn't gonna send too many planes over but he's gonna send some over there with cameras.

So when you were on the water going over to Guam the treaty had been signed.

Right.

That had to be September '45.

Yeah, it was signed before I hit --- 'cuz I tell everybody, I didn't see no action.

So you were in Guam probably six months –

I would think roughly, you know, we could find it on the discharge – probably find out by looking because the date, I don't know, I would say probably six months. Wait a minute, no, I think I got one stupid stripe for -- on Guam – I mean I was over there over six months, I believe. I don't know; I think so.

So when you left Guam what was your rank?

I was a Corporal. See, I was a Sergeant when I was on that plane crash but when they changed my MO number, they reduced me and I had to work back up.

So you worked your way up and then you had to start all over again after that.

Yeah, right. Right. And it was a lot easier, you know, if – where I was at it was hard to work up, you know, anything.

So you were on a ship back to California when you left Guam?

Right.

Another troop ship I'm assuming.

Right.

Where were you discharged?

Oh, boy, someplace in California, near the – I don't know – but it wasn't the same base it was before.

It was a different base.

Right.

Southern California, Central, Northern?

Yeah, I think southern California.

And at the time your rank was Corporal?

Right.

How did you feel getting out of the service? How did you feel on your discharge? You were happy to get out or –

Well, all I was interested in getting out.

So you were discharged in California, --

Right.

Took a train back home—

They sent me a train back home but then from wherever I was, I imagine DesMoines Anyway I was on the train and there was an hour and a half layover, I remember, and so my home was here (indicating) and the train was gonna be here (indicating) so I told the guy on the train, I said hour and a half, hell, I could be to my home in an hour and a half, and I had to sign to get his permission to get off.

So you got off the train at something other than a stop.

Right and I hitch hiked home.

Now did your family, your parents know you were coming home

I don't know. They had other things to worry about, you know –

So you just showed up at their door –

No, no, the whole thing is in the Army you never know what's going on. And I know one time before I went overseas, I wanted to get some money; I got it from the Red Cross, you know, and

when I got back to the base they were ready for the – they wanted the money right away. Well, I mean to me, I never liked the Red Cross.

I've heard that from a number of veterans, yeah.

They used to charge for cigarettes – the USO was good; the USO was good.

So you got off the train ahead of time, rather than waiting, you hitch hiked home, you were still in uniform --

Right.

When you got home was anybody there?

It was time to go to work.

Was anybody home the day you got home?

I don't know if they were home.

Did they have a party for you? Did they –

Party? They didn't have a party when I left.

They just said welcome home; get to work?

I don't know – you people today think too much of parties.

Did you return back to the job that you had before you left?

No, no, he was out of business, so I worked in construction from when I got discharged till I went in the bricklayer's school.

So tell me, what was the first thing you did when you got home?

Looked for a job.

Did you get any money from the government – like that 52/20 -- \$20 a week for 52 weeks?

No, no, no.

Lots of WWII veterans got that. That was if you weren't able to find a job – they gave you – you never heard about that program?

No. But that's like my daughter tell about a lot of these girls went on the farm – well, I didn't know that. A lot of farm girls, like my wife, she drove a tractor on the farm, but, you know, I

never knew – how much would a farm girl know about going on a farm – I don't know. 'cuz I've been away from the farm and I go back there once in awhile; I don't know nothing about the farm. I don't know one crop from another.

But didn't they give you any information about programs that you could have applied for when you got out of the service?

No; nothing; you're on your own.

I've talked to other people who knew about these programs –

Well, maybe I was just –

You know what – they lived in the city though; maybe that's why.

See now I wanted to stay in the Reserves. I didn't think the war was over. And there was no place close enough. I would have had top – I couldn't – I didn't – you don't know wheels when you get out – and like I say when you get out all you're doing is you gotta get a roof over your head and you gotta – if you want a date and I mean to me, the money only goes so far. And you couldn't get a car.

Now you said you didn't think the war was over.

No, I didn't.

Why didn't you think it was over.

I don't know. I didn't think it was over.

Did you think it would start up again in the Pacific?

I had no idea; I just had an inkling; it was no – I was wanting to stay in the Reserves but I couldn't 'cuz I was too far.

There was no way for you to get to the – you had to go on a weekly training in the Reserves.

No, no, no; there was no way for me to get --

They couldn't help you with that either?

No, no. When I got out, you put your name on to get a car. Well, okay; now the one guy that I know when I went in the service – they were on a farm and he went to work; he was supposed – he got this truck from the dealer. He didn't get a title for it. He got it on the farm and he couldn't get it licensed; he couldn't leave that truck. He couldn't go to town with that truck. So there was a lot -- I mean, uh, he was not supposed to sell it – the dealer. See, so no, I hear them things all the time, you know, and I wouldn't have – in fact I didn't get a car till I got to Chicago.

So you went back to school, bricklayer's school –

Right.

And that was – you showed us a photo of that – we have it with this record.

Right.

How long was your bricklayer school and did they help you get a job?

No, no. They didn't help you get a job. They did a – it was a very – see, he was union – well, at that time union was strong. The union was – when I came here the union was 52% of the work force. Now it's down to 12; and what's happening there – I had this experience – I tried to get a bricklayer's card and I come out – we'll see ya – that is just like – I use it as a fireman. Let's use it – go back. The whole thing is you gotta know somebody to get that, and the guy says well, if your father isn't a bricklayer, you can't be a bricklayer.

When did you come to Chicago after the war?

I came in the Fall

Of the same year that you got discharged?

Right.

So you went to bricklayer school – was that on the GI Bill?

Right.

Then you came to Chicago and got work here in the Chicago area.

Well, see what happened is when I – when the bricklayer's school – there was one guy that called from Gary, so we went down there – three of us came up here from Bloomington – and we went to work – worked two days for him and he's not paying us. He used us for dummies, you know, so I said oh, this is it. I'm pulling out. So then there was a guy in Berwyn – so I – two of us went up there and I worked a couple days – now he wasn't union – he was union at one time, because during the war he caulked windows at Reynolds Metals – you know where that is? He caulked all the time – inside and outside – but he said he was union, now I don't know if he was or not, but I worked for him for awhile – the three of us and about 3:00 o'clock he come over and says – he told me, "I want to take you over here." So him and I went over and he wanted to get me away from the other guys, see. And he says something about, well, he saw how I worked and he says that – he offered me a dime more than at home – back home the union guy, and they travel a long ways, he was Catholic and he's not gonna help me if his son is my age – he's gonna help his son. So I thought I've got to root for myself. So finally I, uh, hired out to him and he was good to me; he was very good to me – and then finally he was gonna trade his truck in – he

had “clout” and he had this – he was gonna trade it in, it’s an International and I says – so I bought it from him. So anyway he brought it out, took the license plates off it – I said wait a minute, what the –

See back home you buy – back in Iowa you buy a truck, the plates go with the truck – and here – I learned these things, ha, ha But anyway, so he sold it and then my wife didn’t want to come up here. She wanted to go back on the farm. I says, “Hell, we can’t make a living on the farm.

When did you get married? After the service?

Oh, yeah.

Did you meet your wife in the Chicago area?

Bloomington. She worked for State Farm, the insurance company. That was the only job there. So no, I says well, but she didn’t want to come here. Boy I had to pull her teeth to get her up here. So after she got here, hell, you couldn’t get her away from here. Like for instance to me, you know, I have a lot of troubles with a lot of, like here, all the kids, see I got a rental house so my own daughter that’s here, she wants me to get rid of it, you know, it’s paid for. So I got two Polish people living in it, so the other day I had a lady rent it from me, so anyway she charges me \$1,200 for renting it. See so the other day she says no, just have ‘em sign; well they won’t sign – I said I don’t care. So the other day I lowered the rent a hundred bucks for ‘em, ‘cuz I want them to stay. I mean I’m no dummy, I’d rather have \$1,100 a month for that and my wife taught me a lot of this stuff. I think she was smarter than the kids and they’re all -- a CPA.

Did you make any friends in the Army that you still have today – lasting friends?

No, I met one guy in there; he worked for Sears when he got out and I used to brick up windows for him for a long time. And the one guy was a prisoner of war, he got a job in Wisconsin and I, all these years, then he had to go to Florida in the wintertime for his health, and of all the times I’d go to Iowa, I didn’t spend the time to go by and see him. Kick me twice -- I shoulda done it.

Do you belong to any veteran’s organizations or have you gone to any reunions of any sort?

No, all I belong to is the Bricklayer’s Union and we go – all we get is once a year. Like I don’t need them; I get a little pension. Like for instance to me – I make out fairly good I guess.

How did your experience with the military affect the way you think about wars or about the military in general.

I don’t think at all about it. Because like for instance now to me, I think right now I think that guys are goofy if they think this country isn’t in a bad way. Very goofy; there’s no way they’re gonna iron it out. And that’s like here in the paper right now about the houses – was good last month – where they at? Where are these people at? They’re not – them houses are not good. And that’s like I say if they didn’t build another house or another car for five years, we wouldn’t be hurting. And I bet you I’m not wrong.

How did your experiences in the service affect your life – did it have a positive affect on your life –

Well, the only thing is see I couldn't fly; that was the only thing. And my wife used to die of flying.

You still haven't flown to this day?

I never flew.

Not since then – that really left a mark on you.

Now you could take me right now – you could take me – oh and my other daughter took me out to the College of DuPage and she wanted – she wanted – they got a 24 and a 17 out there – and she wanted me to pay for a ride couldn't do it.

That experience just was too hard for you.

No, I wouldn't. I wouldn't even, uh, I would take friends to the airport or something – I wouldn't even – I couldn't get near – you know –

You can't go to the airport even?

Well, oh, yeah, I could go to the airport, you know, see people off, but no I wouldn't –

You can't do it yourself.

It didn't bother you when you were in the service – putting these guns in there.

Those guns ain't that heavy.

But I mean the thought of being in the plane didn't bother you.

As long as you weren't going up in the plane it was all right.

Yeah, yeah. No, but that's like right now – okay, I fell in the house and they hurt – I slipped and fell (inaudible) – so they put me in Downers Hospital. Well, they put you in the hospital right away they want to give you a new heart – truthful – and the whole thing is that I get this rehab, see. And they says well, uh, your good knee – from kneeling on my knees I don't have a good knee. I mean I tell 'em; I don't have a good knee. You know, like for instance to me, you know, it, it –

You certainly were scarred by that for the rest of your life.

Yeah, now like for instance our construction was the hardest work there is and it didn't bother me, but –

It was just that mental block of being on a plane.

I don't know what it is; it's goofy.

Is there anything we haven't covered in the interview that you'd like to add before we go off?

Not really.

Any life lessons that you could say you learned from military service?

No, let the other guy go. No, like for instance to me, you're glad you did it because a lot of people, you know, of course, now like I – I go on a job well, you know, the one guy – I said to him – I blew the job, he says to me, was you in the service? I said Yeah. I said I was the toughest son of a bitch there was. He was in the Marines. So after I get done I said yeah, I was in the Air Force. I think he was ready to (inaudible) it's all the same; you had to do your job. But I've been trying to, you know like some of this Army stuff, like that coat now; they all the time tell me that that's a flight – the first one, they tell me that is a field jacket. Well, that is not a field jacket. It was – 'cuz that guy out there told me and see I was gonna donate all this to Hines and he says don't do it. He says they'll throw it away in a minute. That's what he says.

This should go to some museum – World War II museum.

Well, no see – yeah, that's like I've been keeping them war bonds and I give each one of the grandkids one and you know –and then the other daughter – one daughter's got my dog tags and the other one's got – she's flying out of Purdue, and she's got my Eisenhower flight jacket.

Do you have a display case with your medals in it?

No; the medals don't – this friend of mine – the medals don't mean – the red one that I got the medal, they tell me you could get that – we got it in one year. Well, somebody says you gotta be three years in the Marines. I don't know if it's true. His wife tried to get the medals, and I don't know what good they are. I mean the ribbons are what you wore on your uniform at shows, so I mean to me, why do you need the medals? If you got the Purple Heart or something like that, I can see well, fine you're – it's a – and now I don't know, one neighbor of mine that I know, he's got something better than a Purple Heart –

Congressional Medal of Honor – that's the highest. Purple Heart is second and the Bronze Star with clusters –

Well, like now what he's got – I never asked him because I thought well, I guess he thought maybe I should know but I don't know what it is. It's a pretty high medal he's got, but I don't know.

Anything else you'd like to add before we go off?

No.

Well, in that case, thank you very much for sharing your story – and we're going off record.