VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Joseph Schulok

Conducted by Deb Barrett

December 3, 2014

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This interview is being conducted on Wednesday, December 3rd, 2014 with Mr. Joe Schulok at the Indian Prairie Library in Darien, IL. My Name is Deb Barrett. Mr. Schulok was born on July 21, 1922 in Mischendorf, Austria. He's a retired machinist and process engineer and learned of the Veteran's History Project through his great nephew, Joe Popowitch, who is a Librarian, here at Indian Prairie. Also with us today is Mr. Schulok's daughter, Joann Klima. Mr. Schulok has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Here is his story.

Joe, where were you living when you entered the service? What was your life like just before you wentin?

Well, we had just moved from Fuller Park neighborhood [Chicago] to 76th and Bishop [Chicago]. My folks bought a house, it was their first house. We lived in Fuller Park until I was, I don't know, 'til I was 20 years old. I started to work when I was in the old neighborhood at Goodman Manufacturing Company. And at the time that I went in there, they were doing government work for the war making[parts for] Howitzers. That's why I got hired. I had a pretty good job for a kid. One time I went to get my income taxes done and the guy looked at my pay check and looked like "you're making more money than me." You know, that's the impression I got.

What was your job? What were you doing?

I was working on a single spindle drill press. And we worked piece work. We made so many pieces a day or whatever. This was a good job. I was making like ninety dollars a week.

And how old were you?

I was 20 years old. It was pretty good, and one day my mother was looking through her magazines and this little card drops out and it was for the draft. I could have got an exemption because I was doing war work. When I brought it into work they said it's too late. I was already being processed for going.

It had gotten stuck between the pages of a magazine or something?

So that way I got drafted.

You were 20 years old? You were living at home with your parents?

Yes.

You were born in Austria?

Yes.

When had your parents immigrated?

My father came over; I think it was in '21. And then he sent for us, and I was one year old when my mother and I came to this country.

Why had your family decided to immigrate?

Well, he wanted… jobs! My Aunt, that's my father's sister, was the one, at that time you had to have a person to vouch for you, and you had to have a place to live. It's not like that now. So that's how all that happened. And we were living like at 45th and Wentworth[Chicago]. … When they came over, there was the Depression, and if you had money in the bank, you couldn't take it out but you could buy a house with that money, so that's what my Aunt did. So we lived about two, three, four blocks down, she bought a two-story home. So we lived upstairs and she lived downstairs. And it turned out pretty good. At that

time it was still the old fashioned thing, you had to go all the way downstairs – it was like an outhouse down there. So they had the place fixed up. They raised the house, made a basement, put bathrooms in both flats upstairs, put a back porch up and down, enclosed, you know. They fixed it up pretty nice,so we lived there until I was about 20 years old. Then my folks bought a house on 76th and Bishop[Chicago],so that's where everything started for me, from there.

Were you an only child?

No, no. I had two sisters.

Older or younger?

Younger.

They were younger than you.

I have a brother, but he was born in 1942, so he's 20 years younger than me…. So I hardly knew the guy. I got drafted the next year, and I was in for three years, so I didn't even see the guy.

So your family had moved from Europe, and there was a lot more activity in Europe as far as war thanthere was in the United States.

We used to write letters back and forth.

What was your parents' reaction when you got drafted?

Where were they?

No. What was their reaction? How did they feel when you got drafted? Did they say you should go orwere they nervous?

Well, my mother was. She was "why did I have to go?" and all this stuff. In the end, it turned out all right – so..

You were 20 years old, you were drafted. Where were you inducted?

I was inducted at Great Lakes.

Great Lakes, the naval training?

No, not Naval training but they had an Army … [Induction] Center or whatever you want to call it.

Oh, OK. So you were drafted into the Army?

Right and then from there I went to FortWarren in … Wyoming.

OK. What do you remember about your induction? Do you remember being sworn in?

Everything you had to go in line for. Get examined here; get examined there for different things. They had to take some tests.

Like written tests or physical tests?

Mostly physical, but there was a written test, too, yeah. Because from that was where they determined where you were going.

O.K.

So, I didn't know it until we went but when we got to Fort Warren, Wyoming, we were at quartermaster and then from there first we had a basic training, usually … {what} anybody does. Everybody gets the same kind of basic training.

How long were you at Great Lakes before they shipped you to Wyoming?

One or two days.

And how did you get to Wyoming?

Train.

Was it a troop train or was it a .. .

Troop train.

So there were just troops on it?

Right

How long did it take you to get there? Do you remember?

Oh, I don't know, I think it took us about two days.

What did you do on the train for that time?

Sit. That's all you could do.

Did you know anybody else there?

No, I didn't know anybody.

You probably got to know a couple of people on the train.

[Oh yeah.]But when we got to Wyoming that was a different story. That was the middle of winter, too, you know.It's January, so it's pretty cold up there.

How did they get you from the train to the …?

Truck.

By truck.

Benches on both sides.

Out in the fresh air.

Yeah. Out in the fresh air, right. Then you wentover there and you had to get in line to get your clothes and everything, get assigned to a barracks.

What were your barracks like? Was it built to be a barracks?

Oh, yeah, it was strictly. There were like two stories, two floors, one up and down. The floors were bare. There was nothing on them, not even varnish or nothing, just wood.

Were they bunk beds or did you have single beds.

Oh, I think we had single beds. I never had bunk beds.

How many men were in one area?

Gee, I don't even know. Let's see. We were a company and then they broke that down into platoons. So, I would say there was about a hundred or so of us just in this one platoon.

Was it one hundred men sleeping in that area?

Yeah, some of them were down and then some of them went up.

Then there was a huge bathroom with no…

No partitions?

All toilets all sinks and that stuff. It was kind of new, you know.

No. Privacy.

Yeah, right. And showers

So when you got your supplies and you were assigned a bunk, where did you store your clothes?

You had a foot locker: it had to go at the end of the bed. And in there you had to learn the tricks because the officers used to come around for inspection all the time. So somebody tipped us off: just take a bunch of socks, roll them up nicely, put them in there, your shirts, your underwear, whatever, and you keep them there, you never take them out because you have more than one set so that way when he came…

Everything looked order.

Right.

Where were the others that you were using every day?

Well we had them in duffle bags. Put it on the back of the bed over there. So when you changed clothes and every thing you sent the stuff to the laundry; they had an army base laundry there to wash your clothes. You had your name on it and they took care of all that stuff.

You had a sergeant who would come and inspect?

No, it was a lieutenant. And once in a while, maybe once a month or every 2 months, a Captain would come. And you had to make your bed ina certain way. And if he could lift that blanket up, you had to make it again

How would he let you know you had to make it again?

He told you right there. So it had to be nice and tight.

Bounce a quarter off of it?

Yeah right. So you get used to that kind of stuff. In the beginning it was kind of tough. We had a sergeant and a corporal and they had a special room in the corner and they slept in there. It was separate from us, but they took care of everything. They got us up in the morning.

How did they get you up in the morning?

Well, they'd go around hollering and shaking the bed and then you could hear the bugler outside, he's calling for morning.

Reveille?

Yeah, Reveille you'd get dressed,wash quick, get dressed, go out. They raised the flag and then a personal inspection outside.

How much time did you have from the time they "gently"woke you to get outside.

Not much, not much. Maybe a half hour and we all had to get out. And from there we had to go to the drill field.

And what did you do there?

There we had to do exercises, calisthenics. We had to follow whatever the sergeant did. Of course, later on, each guy got a turn to go up in the front and do whatever he wanted to do and the rest of the people had to follow. So that was the best part.

What did you do when it was your turn?

Well I liked to do; I don't know what you call it…

Jumping Jacks?

Jumping Jacks and then I'd go down and do push ups and everybody hated that. That was my favorite one.

So you did your calisthenics, and then you went to breakfast?

Well, first of all, [when]we left from our barracks, we had to run from there to the field and back again.

Everything was running?

Everything was running, double time. You know, I went in there, I was 150 pounds and when I left basic training, I was 180 pounds and I was in the best shape. I wish I could have stayed like that.

It was all muscle, right?

Oh, yeah, they really got you in shape. You know, you had the same meals all the time, breakfast, dinner, supper, certain time. You were on a schedule.

So when you finished your calisthenics?

Then we went back.

You went back to the barracks?

We went back to the barracks and then you got assigned. It was … {in a quartermaster}they gave us tests and everything and you had a job. You had to go to a certain school. I was going to gunnery school, first I went to machinist school, their school. And we went every day to see what we could do on different machines and all. And then they used to grade you on this and all that. The whole problem that I saw with that was, you're going to school for this, okay, and then you think you're going to get a job like that. You're wrong. Nothing like that. I never had any job in the Army that I was trained for.

So you had your machinist class. I'm assuming in basic you also had some other classes.

Well, I was in gunnery school. Then I had to go, a projector from the movies. I had to show movies for classes and that was about it.

Let's back up a little bit. When you had your basic training which was 10 weeks, 12 weeks? Your very first training.

12 weeks.

12 weeks. You did the calisthenics; they got you in shape. They gave you firearms?

No, I don't think so.

Not in basic?

I don't think so because we were quartermaster.

So from the beginning they had you separated as quartermaster? Everybody went through basic.

Everybody was quartermaster.

Everybody in your platoon was quartermaster?

They weren't all machinists. All of them were different. I don't even remember, some of them were office workers.

So you didn't have to worry about dealing with firearms?

[No] I take that back. We had to shoot at some targets. But you didn't have this rifle, it wasn't yours. It was from the First World War.That's how you were trained to shoot guns. You had to go and [try it and] see if you could hit the target. Then they had a moving target; you had to shoot that. They don't tell you this when you first go out there, get some cotton and put it in your ears. You know, the first time you shoot that thing, it was awe gee.

Was that the first time you'd ever handled a gun?

Yeah, I never shot a gun. I never saw a gun even. Boy, that really hurts right here. And this is the worse ear, too, now.

So you have loss of hearing on that side?

And being in the machinery business, too, that's a lot of noise. The fact that all these machines are running and even when you're making some cuts, these things squeal. You think nothing of this.

Until years later?

Right. Then all of a sudden you can't hear this, you can't hear that. I went to the doctor this one time and he was checking it and he … [had a thing with a light on it to look into your ear] and he had a clicker. He's clicking this thing and I ain't moving. And he says, "Don't you hear that?" And I said, "No, I don't hear that." "Well, you need a hearing aid."

So firing a gun was a new experience for you.

Right.

What other types of classes did you have in basic? What other things did they teach you in those 12 weeks of basic training? Just a lot of routine and getting in shape?

Yeah, that's all. There was marching, you know they had that. You had to learn how to do that.

You had all your exercises. You … [went to] all your meals together. How was the food?

Good. Well, I thought so anyhow. You always got some people complaining, but I enjoyed it. It wasn't bad.

Did you have as much as you wanted or did you all get the same thing?

You had as much as you wanted.

You worked it off.

Yeah.

While you were in basic did you get any free time?

Oh, yeah. After the night meal you were free to do anything you wanted.

What sort of things did you do for entertainment?

I don't even remember what I did there. Talked, played cards. You get used to a group, you know. We used to play pinochle. And some of these guys from New Jersey, there were a couple of guys there, used to come with this double pinochle. I never played these things before, you know, but you learn. But now I don't know one card from another anymore.

Were you able to communicate with your family back home?

Oh yeah. They'd write letters all the time. I had a girl friend. Well, we got engaged before I left. So she used to write pretty steady, every day, I think.

When you went into town, did you go in civilian clothes or did you … {go in} your uniform?

No, we didn't have civilian clothes.

Were those shipped back home?

Yeah. We had just army clothes, that's all.

How did the town's people react when they'd see you?

We used to go to movies, walk around, see what the … I'm … [getting] ahead of myself there. In Wyoming, no. I didn't do much there. It wasn't that close to town, really. So cold and everything, you didn't have much to do there.

Just tended to spend, it was winter, that's right. So you just tended to spend time indoors. So when you finished your 12 weeks, you graduated from basic training. Did they have any type of ceremony?

No.

Where were you posted after that?

From there I went to Camp Cooke California. So that took about three days, same thing a troop train.

Where was it in California?

Camp Cooke. It was near Santa Barbara.

So, far south?

Yes. [Lompoc] San Bernardino.

So from winter in Wyoming …

Los Angeles was maybe about a hundred miles.

So you went from winter in Wyoming…

That's what'll fool you, California. In the daytime you could wear sun … [tans]. [That's what the khaki-colored clothes were called.]

The mountains bring that cold air.

You had to have a heater in that barracks. We had kerosene heaters there.

So when you went to California, what type of training did you go for?

No training. What we got assigned to was a replacement depot. What a replacement depot does, we were assigned as cadre and I was made a sergeant.

You were made a sergeant right away?

No, first I was a corporal T2 that was because of technical stuff, machinist. And then from there I made a sergeant. So then what our job was people would come in and we would train them for replacements for somebody that got shot or wounded or whatever. Later on, it shifted the other way and we had to take these guys that were wounded and retrain them to go back to their outfit.

So you were made a sergeant. You moved from private to corporal to sergeant very quickly.

Right.

And that was because of the job.

Right.

So you were a sergeant and you were 21?

Right. We were there for about 9 months or so and they told us we ought to get a furlough to go home because when we … [come] back we were going overseas.

Did they tell you where you were going overseas?

No, no, no. They didn't tell you nothing. So I came home.

How did you get home?

I flew and I had a priority. They tried to kick me off a couple of times, but because I was going overseas and we were limited, I had to stay home twoweeks and I had to come back. So we were limited on time so they couldn't …

Couldn't kick you off the … [flight]. So you told your family you were going overseas?

Yeah. I got home, I got married.

Well, that was quick.

Well I told her. I wrote her a letter and told her I was coming home and we'd get married and she should have everything ready. When I go home she didn't have nothing ready. So that was kind of tight because we had two weeks.

Two weeks?

And you know you didn't get no food, a lot of stuff was rationed. So my wife worked for a small grocery store so he managed to get us chickens and stuff. We went to the church and got married and we had it in the basement and there was an accordion player there, relatives all around, it was a good time. That took about a week, then we had about a week by ourselves after that. From there then I went back to California. It was about a week [later] that we went to San Francisco. Then from San Francisco we went overseas. They don't tell you where you're going.

Did you go on a ship? Did you fly?

A ship. There was nothing but troops on there.

Was it all Army?

All army except for people that run the … [boat].

They were Navy?

Yeah, sailors. That was a different experience.

Do you remember the name of the ship?

No.

Do you know about how many men were on it?

I think about 5,000. So that was a lot of people on there.

How long did the trip take?

Three months.

Three months.

Because

You're zig zagging.

That's right. You can't go straight. And you don't know where you're going and we wound up at Goodenough Island. I never heard of it; nobody ever heard of it.

Goodenough Island?

Goodenough Island. That's between Australia and New Zealand.

You didn't stop in Hawaii?

No, no. We went away from Hawaii even the Philippines. We were closer to New Guinea. On this island we didn't do nothing. It was just like a staging area, that's all it was.

How long were you on that island?

About three months.

Where were you living while you were on that island? Did you have tents? Did you have buildings?

We had tents.

How many men in a tent?

Six, I think.

Six in a tent.

We had folding beds, canvas.

Cots?

Cots. We had one, two, three, four, five, sixlike that

Around.

In a circle. We weren't doing nothing there.

Did you have calisthenics?

Well naturally, they had to make you do something. Until they got the O.K. and we went over to New Guinea then. A ship came and picked us up and brought us to New Guinea and then we were supposed to do this work that we were assigned to do. It took awhile, you know.

So you were about three months on Goodenough Island basically passing time until they were ready to take you.

There was nobody else there.

Did you have any kind of [job] assignment while you were there?

No.

So another ship took you. How many men went on this other ship?

Well, it was just our Company. Well, it was more than one. Maybe about a couple of hundred. It wasn't a big boat. This was a nice trip. The water was calm. It looked like you were a tourist or something. Nice blue water and all that.

That was a little contrast to your trip over.

Oh yeah very.

Were people getting sick?

The first day out, it was terrible. You had bunks you were assigned to, six high. So I was on the bottom one. And the guy on the top got sick. Well the bathrooms on the ship, they call it the head. You go in there and oh, what a mess that was. Guys were heaving all over. I was lucky, I didn't get sick. But I was pretty close to it from watching these other guys.

That would do it!

So that lasted about two or three days … [and] they were all right after that.

So, it was just getting used to it.

Yeah.

When you were on that ship coming over, what did you do to pass the time?

Nothing. Just go up upstairs. Look at the outside on the deck, pass the time, see the fish flopping around, flying fish. There were flying fish, the first time I ever saw one. Around the boat the dolphins, you see them around there. They had some entertainment once in awhile. They had a chapel there. We went to church. We all went to a special area there, in the open. Say Mass. You wanted confession, absolution, the whole crew, one shot that was it.

You said people were getting sick and it settled down after that. You also said you were zig zagging. Did you ever see any enemy vessels? Did you ever encounter any problems?

No, but they had … [to] practice every so often.

So, you had drills?

No. I mean the people on the ship. They hadtopractice. They would throw up these balloons and they had to shoot at them. 50 millimeters and then they had 5-inch guns on there and they used to shoot at these things. I don't know, once a week or so … [we] had to do that.

So when you'recoming across and you're seeing these exercises with the guns and such, it must have made the situation you were going into seem a lot more real.

Oh, yeah. We weren't told where we were going, so we didn't know.

You still didn't know where you were going to go?

Oh, no. When we got there, they told us this is Goodenough Island. Then they didn't tell you no more after that until we were going over to New Guinea.

So when you were going to New Guinea, they said you're going to New Guinea and that's as far as they told you.

That's all, yeah.

So after Goodenough Island you went to New Guinea on the other boat, on the calm, the tourist cruise.

There was the same thing. We got there, they already had tents there. We didn't have to put any up. We were assigned to this special area, settled in and that was that.

And that's where you stayed?

Right. Stayed there for almost a year or more.

What was your job while you were on New Guinea?

Same thing. We'd get these wounded people that came from the hospital to our place and we were a holding area for them. These guys were veterans. We were nothing and they didn't want to do these exercises. It was hard!

So you were basically helping them with physical therapy.

Right. Then we had a headquarters and as soon as they found an opening for these guys, they would ship them back to their outfit.

These guys must have told you how unhappy they were at times.

Yeah. When these guys got out of the hospital, they didn't do nothing so when they came back we tried to get them in a little bit of shape. They didn't like it at all. It wasn't easy to deal with these people.

Did you find any tips or tricks that helped you deal with these guys?

Ah, you get used to it, you know. You tell them, "I know what your problem is." You just gotta be reasonable with them, that's all. I didn't want to force them or anything, you know.

Right. So you did that for a year while you were there. So while you were there, you did this 8 hours aday, 10 hours a day?

'Til [the] evening [meal]. After that we had things to do. Out in the woods someplace. You always had these guys who wanted to make money, would build a gambling rack there go out there and shoot craps. I was never a gambler so I didn't do that. That's how some of these guys made money. In fact, my buddy, he was from California. He was a little guy; he had a little crook in his wrist. I don't know what he … [did when he was a kid] …, maybe he had polio or something. But he could cut hair. And when you can cut hair in the Army, you were like a god, you know. He charged a quarter for a hair cut. So he lasted, oh, maybe about six months in our outfit, somebody higher up heard about this guy so…

They wanted him

They took him from our outfit and put him someplace there [where the officers could use him].

So he could cut their hair.

But he got a good deal out of it.

What did you do when you weren't working with the veterans?

We used to get so much rations like cigarettes, cigars, beer. You'd get so much a day or a week. I didn't smoke cigarettes. I got started over there with the cigars. That's how I got started. I didn't drink much beer; I'd trade my beer for cigars. 'Cause everybody got so many, built up, I got quite a few. Nobody had to send me cigars. I had enough over there.

Your family was able to contact you and send you some stuff.

Oh yeah. My wife used to send me salami and cookies and all kinds of stuff.

So, you didn't go hungry. Did you share it with the other guys?

Oh yeah, you couldn't eat all this yourself. She used to send a whole salami to me and we didn't have refrigeration.

So you shared and everybody got some.

Right, right.

Were there any limitations on your communications with people back home? Were your letters censored?

Oh, yeah, that's why you had to watch what you write.

Were they censored both ways or just?

I don't know. Yeah, when they came back, yeah, they opened them.

Was it just blacking it out or cutting it out.

No, they just blacked it out.

Did you ever get any letters from home that was blacked out?

No.

Did your family ever get anything?

No, I had nothing to tell them.

You said that you got cookies and things from home. What were your meals like while you were in New Guinea?

Same thing over there. It was just you had to stand in line outside, that's all. They had a big tent where everybody sat and ate. You had to get in line and when you went through, they threw so much at you. You didn't have to take [what] you didn't want. You could pass it up. You could take as much as you wanted. [Usually took everything they had.]

Did you get any fresh fruit or anything like that?

No, no, no. No fresh fruit. We didn't get much meat like steaks and stuff like that just because they didn't have any place to keep it. Eggs, eggs we never had eggs either. We used to get the powdered eggs, powdered milk.

Lots of powdered.

Everything was powdered and I was a milk drinker. I didn't get anymore milk 'til I got back to the States.

What was your favorite meal there?

I don't even remember what I ate. They used to called it…..

Chipped Beef?

[That's it!] I tell you one thing, I liked it, but that ain't what they called it.

I know that's not what they called it. And it was on a shingle, too!

While you were in New Guinea and working with the vets, did you ever leave the camp?

No, there was no place to go.

You were always in that same area for the year?

Yeah. It was kind of boring sometimes. Guys were getting out, transferred. The only trouble was, you were a sergeant, you'd have to back to Private.

So, you would have a reduction in rank to get out.

So, I did that, but I was sorry later.

Why were you sorry?

Because I had to get out of the outfit, and I had to go someplace else, I was just sitting around and then they didn't find a place for me. Then they, my company there, got shipped to the Philippines and two days later I got shipped to the Philippines. And guess where I wound up, in their outfit.

But now you were a Private.

Now, I was a Private and you know what, them guys went from sergeant to staff sergeant. So I lost out on that. I tried to get back in,but it was too late. I wound up in the infantry. I would… have preferred that. I had to have an M1; I never shot an M1.

So you just got a quick lesson, "Here's how you fire it?"

They didn't even do that. You just got it and went. The first time I was assigned to an outfit, these guys, you got so many points and you got out. These guys were all getting out, so that's where I came in to take their place. So they called us together and you go through the drill with your rifle and then your supposed to stick your finger in there and take that bullet that's in the chamber and put it back in the magazine.

Well, I thought I did and then you had to pull the trigger. Well, I had the gun like this, the thing went off, boom! The guy was a sergeant, first sergeant, and he … [went] through [the war]. He was shaking because I shot that thing. Boy did I get it for that. So a guy tipped me off. He was a corporal. There were a lot of volunteers for [mortar squad]. He said, "Take it, it's a good deal." So I said, "Okay, I'll take it." And it was. So I got rid of the M1 and I got a .45 pistol.

What was your job then?

I was ammunition carrier for a while and then later on, I got to where I was shooting the [mortar]. But anyhow when we got overseas from that outfit, we were assigned… They were cleaning up over there. The war was actually over.

In the Philippines?

Yeah, in the Philippines. They were dropping pamphlets and everything. Japs didn't pay attention. They didn't believe the war was over. So we were going through the woods and finding villages where the people were. You see how these Japs treated the women over there. Raping the women and tying them to trees stripping and tickling them. There was one old lady there, I could have cried when I saw her, what they did to that woman. But anyhow, that's what we were doing, going to these places and cleaning up.

At this point you were 22, 23?

22. As we're going along you could see where there were bodies lying all over. Stinks like heck when you … [walk] through there. The bodies were all bloated up, all brown. Then we went to one place where I guess they got notified that they think there's some Japs there. So they send a group of guys down there. Before they went in there, they set up the mortar and we got an idea of how far they were so we set the guns and blasted them a little bit so they don't get… These Japs go under cover so they don't shoot again. There was this one place, I don't know what he was, he was a pretty high ranking Jap and he was wounded. He was lying in his bed when they went in and he shot one of our officers. He … shot [him] in the hand. But they got him.

They shot him?

Yeah, they shot him. Then later on, there was another place where we went through rice paddies and some Jap was shooting at us. I didn't know where he was, in a tree some place, you couldn't tell. So they had to jump off of one, these rice paddies were like this, you know they're like steps. Had to jump off one into the mud. That night we had a camp. When you do that you had to dig a hole, a foxhole for yourself to be in. Then you had to dig trenches so you had some place to relieve yourself. So come night time you had to go into this, sit in your foxhole and it starts raining. All you had is a poncho, put it over your head, build up dirt around your foxhole, the water still comes in. You can't get out. 'Cause you don't know where the guy's at, he's shooting at us. So you're sitting in this foxhole, your butt is wet; your feet are wet and everything. The only trouble was in the morning then we got up and it stopped raining. I don't know, somebody must have spotted this guy and they went down and they got him. They brought him back up and then we always had them strip and he didn't want to take his pants off. No wonder why. When he took his pants off it was a mess. They don't dig foxholes, they dig trenches.… These Japaneseare small. These things ... [are like this]. So what they had, then they had a circle every so often where each Jap had a spot. But they had it so they could walk back and forth. All we did was dig a hole and in the morning, cover it up and we were on our way again. They were dug in; well they were there for so long. You got to give them credit for that. All they lived on was a handful of rice. That's all they ever had. But we had K rations, C rations. K rations were mostly dry stuff. C rations were little cans of different foods. Frankfurt … [and beans] and stuff like that. It wasn't bad. The only thing, we

didn't have much to drink. Mostly water. There, too, you went to a stream, you had your canteen, you fill it up and you … [got] some pills you had to put in there.

So it was safe to drink.

Right. You had to wait a half hour or so before it took effect.

When you were going around cleaning out these areas in the Philippines, getting the Japanese, did any of them willingly surrender?

Well, yeah, they did, they had to. They talked like they wanted to commit hari-kari. Whether it was true or not, I don't know, but that's they way they acted. Then they found out how good they're getting treated. We had a tent and we put like branches or bars on them, I don't know. We had somebody watching them all the time. And they saw how they were getting treated, nice clean clothes and we fed them all the time.

How many prisoners did you have?

I don't know, we didn't have many, maybe two or three at a time.

Where wouldthey go from where you had them?

Once they notified, I don't know who they notified, whoever they were. They had a camp someplace for them and a truck came with guards, pick them up and take them to where they were going.

Did you get to know any of these prisoners at all? Did any of them speak English?

No.

Not that you know of?

No. Each outfit had one Filipino who could talk Japanese and he would translate for the officers. We never had nothing to do with that.

You were doing this clean up in the Philippines for how long?

'Til I had enough points.

How many points did you have to have?

I forget what it was. You had to have 50 or something.

How did you get the different points? Part of it was time, right?

Right. How much time you had, how old you were, what kind of action you had. I got my points but I didn't go home.

Where did you go?

They shipped us to Korea. We did the same thing there but not as an outfit. We didn't know one another or anything. But they were taking all of the Japanese that were running Korea. We took them out of their homes, took everything away from them because we didn't know if it was theirs or if it was from the original Koreans, put them on a boat and sent them back to Japan. I was only there for three months and they found a spot for me on a boat and we went from there to Aleutian Islands.

To Alaska?

Yeah. So we went to the Aleutians and we got a small, I don't know what it was, a destroyer. Maybe it was even smaller, I don't even remember. There wasn't a lot of guys, maybe a couple of hundred guys,

that's all they could take and the [navy] crew. And from there, it wasn't like a ship, you know. I was on the ship, you know, a point like this. [And I was on a bump.]

You were at the point.

We went from there to Washington. When that thing came out of the water and the wave hit that thing, you thinkit's coming in. That's how hard it hit. Then when you had to go to eat, you had to go up on deck and the thing is rolling like this.

From side to side.

I had to cross there; I had to hold onto that rope to go to the mess hall to … eat.

To make sure you didn't go overboard.

Right. There they had tables like this, only thinner.

Like conference tables.

You had to … [stand] there and eat. You had to hold onto your tray. Every once in a while you'd take your hand off and zing, it goes sideways.

The trip to the Aleutian Islands, was that just a stopping point to get transferred?

Yes, from one boat to the other. The boat we were on from Korea to the Aleutians was a pretty big boat, but the other one was smaller. We went from there to Washington, Seattle. And Seattle, we were only there about three days. But when you got there, you were treated … like a king. You could eat anything you want. I had steak. I had a quart of milk and whatever else I wanted. But it was a sorry story because my system wasn't used to that. So, I'm drinking this milk.

You got sick.

Yeah, I got sick but from then on I wasn't good with milk no more. I had to get used to it.

Was this a military base that you were at?

Yeah.

Do you remember the name of the base? Is that where you were discharged?

No. From there I went to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. I got discharged there.

You were in Washington in the Seattle area for how long?

Just two days.

Just two days?

That's the separation.

When you got to the Aleutian Islands, that wasn't a state yet, Alaska. So when you came to Washington that was the first time you were seeing the U.S. again. What was that like when you were pulling in?

Well, it was different. Always drizzling over there so you had to get used to that, going from one place to the other. There we … [got] all new clothes and everything.

New uniforms?

Overcoat and everything because we didn't have that from over there. Then we got on a troop train just car seats, regular, didn't lean back or anything. Three days, three days and three nights.

Did you know any of the other guys on the train at that point?

No. All different guys.

But it was probably good.

Yeah, we stopped every so often and they would bring lunch, sandwiches and stuff. You could buy souvenirs, if you wanted to, if you had the money, until we got to Camp McCoy.

Did your family know that you were on your way home? When did they know that you were back?

I don't know if I even told them because everything was so secret all the time. They didn't tell you nothing. You just got on there and that was it. I told them I knew I was going to Camp McCoy but I sent them a letter but by the time they got it, I was there already. … [It was] on the same train as I was.

You got to Camp McCoy. How long were you there?

I was there, I think about two days.

That's all?

Well there you had to go and you had to sign all your papers. If you want to file any claims. You don't realize it at the time, but you figure, "I'm not finding nothing wrong, I want to get out of here." Then later on if you find something wrong, you couldn't do nothing about it anymore.

Because you said you were fine.

Right.

So the purpose of going there was really your discharge.

Right. That's all it was for Camp McCoy.

Did they try to talk you into reenlisting?

They did that in Korea already. If I reenlisted, I'd go to Europe. I was tempted but I was married. I didn't know if she would have wanted to go there because she wouldn't know nobody either. I just said … [No, I'm not gonna. I want to get out.]

You got to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin; went through all the paperwork, you signed everything you needed to sign. How did you get back to Chicago?

Train, also.

A regular civilian train?

Right. Went to Union Station and from there my brother-in-law, my sister and my wife picked me up. I had a '39 Chevy. When I was working I bought that car. When Ileft to the Army, I put it up on blocks. My brother-in-law used to use it sometimes when he would come home on furlough and then he'd put it up on blocks. So I had that car all the time.

So they knew you were coming.

Yeah, well I could call from Camp McCoy. I think I didn't write a letter, I called.

The family must have been so excited.

Yeah, it was different, you know. When I came home, I had a brother who was two years old, I never knew him.

When you left you were 20, when you came back you were 22.

22, yeah.

And there was a little brother to get to know. What was life like when you got back home? What did you have to get used to?

Well, you had to make a decision. I wanted to go to school because the GI Bill was going to pay for it. See, my wife's folks were the same way like my Dad came from Europe, almost the same time like mine did. Around the neighborhood they all knew I worked at Goodman. "Go back to Goodman sir, they'll give you vacation from when you left and all that stuff. So, like a dummy I went. They gave me my job back. I worked there for about maybe two years or so, could be longer. '46 'til '52. Then I left there and I went to Continental Can. It was a better job. I worked there for 23 years.

Did you ever go back to school?

No. I took a couple of courses at home.

Correspondence courses?

Yeah, correspondence, radio, television but I didn't stick with that either.

You settled in back home. You went to work again. Did you keep in touch with any of the guys you met in the service?

For a while we did. We wrote letters back and forth. From the original outfit, I didn't have their addresses no more. But one day [they] surprised me. There were about six or seven guys and I don't know how they found me, to tell you the truth, and they came to my house. I was in complete shock.

These were guys from your basic?

Yeah. So, I had a wife and two kids. That's how long it was before they decided to come. I didn't know what to do. Got a football, went out in the street and we're throwing it back and forth. Drinking some beer and that was about it. I never saw them [again] after that.

Did you join veterans groups at all?

No.

Participate in any reunions other than that informal one?

No.

You had your service and it was in the past and you just moved ahead with that?

Yes.

How did your military experience affect the way you think about war, maybe about how you think about what's happening in the world today?

Well it's different. War changes. Take the First World War. They just dug a big trench and the enemy dug a big trench and they were shooting at each other. And you thought you got the better of them you went and rushed and you got them. World War II [you] went foxholes. You went underground traveling. Next

war, over there where the Arabs are, that's [a] different story, too. They got all these bombs;you got these guys with their vests.

Suicide vests.

Yes, suicide vests. So war changes all the time. It's different. I wouldn't want to be there today, I'll tell you the truth. It's all together different. From what I've seen of the war myself, I'm … [thinking]. If we ever had an attack here, it would be a disaster because people here are too comfortable. They don't know what's going on, what war really is. When you see it, it's a different story. Like I was telling you, this old lady and all those young girls and the way they were treated. They took everything away from them. These people didn't have nothing. They used to wash our clothes. They used to take it down by the river. We had to furnish the soap. They made paddles and beat them on a rock. That's how they washed the clothes. That's how they made a living after that. I don't know what we paid them, maybe 25 cents, it was nothing for us but for them it was something. [They lived on it].

Your service and the experiences you had, how did it affect your own life?

I don't know. It didn't affect it much. I don't think so. Nobody asked me nothing and I didn't tell them nothing.

You put your time in and got out. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to bring up before we go off record?

I think that covers it.

In that case, thank you very much for sharing your story. Thank you for your service and we are going off record.