Norman R. Berkman

*World War II
U.S. Army-970th CIC—Germany
Staff Sergeant

*Cold War
U.S. Army, 532nd MI—Germany
Master Sergeant

Norman R. Berkman

Veterans
History
Project
Transcript

Interview conducted
July 14, 2009

Niles Public Library
Niles Public Library District
Niles, Illinois
Niles Public Library District  
Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: Norman R. Berkman  
Rank: Master Sergeant

Branch of Service: U. S. Army  
Theater: World War II - Europe  
Cold War Occupation

Units: 970th Counter Intelligence Corps, Germany, June 10, 1945-Jan. 14, 1947  
532nd Military Intelligence Battalion, Germany, Aug. 14, 1950-Aug. 13, 1953

Interview Dates: July 14, 2009 2-3:30 p.m.  
Place: Group Study Room,  
Niles Public Library

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder  
Interviewer: Neil O’Shea

This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on a Tuesday, July the 14th,  
in the year 2009 here at the Niles Public Library in the group study room in the reference  
services department. My name is Neil O’Shea. I’m a librarian here at the Niles Library,  
and I’m speaking with Judith A. Carlson.

Judith is here on behalf of her father, Norman Berkman, who was born on the 20th of  
August 1917 and, sadly, passed away on March the 31st, 2008. His memoir of service is  
interesting and unique to our collection at this time. It is really unfortunate that we are  
not able to interview Mr. Berkman, but we heartily concur with his daughter that his  
story is well worth knowing about and remembering and learning from. Judith’s remarks  
here are based on her possession and command of extensive files and documentation  
which her father compiled over the years relating to his two tours of duty in Europe. She  
also benefited from a special experience with her dad when he told her all about his  
experiences in the war shortly before he died in March of 2008. Judith has prepared for  
this interview by developing a statement based on her dad’s recollections which I think is  
a great way to lay out the salient facts before we discuss them in greater detail. So, at this  
point, I’d like to ask Judith if she could read in her outline of her dad’s record of service.  
(Interviewer’s words in italics)

My father enlisted in the Army at the Army’s request in June of 1945. He said he was  
“drafted to enlist.” He told me that a friend of his, whose name he never told me, but I  
think was from his old neighborhood, was in the Counter Intelligence Corps, and they  
were apparently looking for people who could speak Russian and/or German. The friend  
named my father, who understood Russian well, spoke it a little, and spoke and  
understood Yiddish very well. (Veteran’s daughter’s words)

So when my father agreed to enlist, they sent him up to a farm in Northern Wisconsin to  
turn his Yiddish into German. After that, he was deployed to Germany and under the  
cover of being a musician as his German identity, -- one of his German identity cards  
names him, he became a spy.
The highlight of that tour of duty was his participation in the retrieving of some German crown jewels in 1946. I have the documentation and pictures of those crown jewels. Also, sometime during that tour of duty, he was issued a German identity card showing that he was placed in Dachau as a political prisoner. He never was in Dachau. Apparently, though, he was in a displaced persons' camp. I have a German identity card showing that his German identity was Normann Bergmann. They changed the “k” to a “g” and added an n to both first and last names. He didn’t say too much about this tour of duty except that part of his job in the Displaced Persons camp was to ferret out German spies who were, as he put it, and this is a direct quote from him, “on the wrong side of the divide,” and identify mid to high ranking officers as, again a quote from him, “hiding in the DP camp.”

He also often went undercover in the civilian sector. In this last, he said something about stopping sabotage, but I’m not at all clear about that. Also, during that particular time in the civilian sector, he met the woman, who ended up being my stepmother, when he needed cover of a wife. She was working for the United States Army, and she was his cover. And she did, in his second tour of duty, did, in fact, become his wife.

He also did finally admit that he was an interrogator, but would say nothing more about it. And it wasn’t until after his death that I believed this gentle man really was. The Army documentation was very clear about that. However, from what I’ve read regarding some of the interrogation techniques used by the Army during the Cold War and, you know, during World War II, I, I’m pretty sure why he wouldn’t say anything more. He didn’t want his oldest daughter to know what he might have done.

After he was discharged in 1947, he remained in the Army Reserves at 5th Army Headquarters in Chicago. During that time, from what I can glean from the papers I have, he might have worked as an instructor and lecturer. I do remember a couple of times going to headquarters with him because he said he had to give a talk. I never heard the talks, however, as I was put in an office with a coloring book, crayons, and books to keep me occupied until he was finished with whatever it was he was doing. I also have papers that show he was schooled in military law and in the Geneva Convention.

He then returned, at his request, probably to go back and get my stepmother, to active duty in August of 1950. I have Army correspondence indicating that, from about February to April of 1951, it was requested that he be returned to the Counter Intelligence Corps. I’m not positive I understand these papers very well. They’re written in Army abbreviations, but it seems that he was refused, and, in the end, was deployed to Germany again under the auspices of the Military Intelligence Service. All he would say about that tour of duty was that he gathered intelligence that was useful to the United States, alluding to the fact that he couldn’t say anything more as it was all still, quote, “top secret.”

He was then discharged finally in August of 1953 and that was the end of his Army tours of duty. I will say he was so proud of being a spy that, when he got on the Internet, sometime in the late 1990s, his screen name was exspion webtv.web.
Wow. Thank you.

You're welcome.

Now, when your dad entered the Service, was he living in Chicago?

Yes, he was. 817 West Cornelia.

That would be Lake View or--

He was still married to my mother. Yes, Lake View

Do you know where he went to high school or--

Actually, no, I do not, but I can find that if you want me to bring that.

No--

I'll just call my uncle.

Yes.

He knows the school. Actually, his discharge papers show he went to Marshall.

It is interesting to see the neighborhoods and where people came from. And do you know what he was doing at the time he was joined up?

Oh, yes. He was a musician and he was also teaching music at the Wurlitzer Piano Company downtown.

Yes. So, he was, having been born in 1917 and then entering the Army in 1945, he would have been, I think, almost 28. He was 27 years of age?

Yes.

Is that right?

Yes. He had a wife and a child, so he was too-- he was not eligible to be drafted. That's why he was drafted to enlist.

On the recommendation of this friend of his.

Of his friend. I do not know the friend's name.
Do you know if the friend was skilled in languages, also?

Yes. He said that that was why, because they used to speak a little Russian with each other and a lot of Yiddish. The friend was also Jewish.

Yes. So, in Germany at that time after the war, with the Russians and the allies sharing the occupation of Germany and Berlin, his language skills must have been very-- must have been needed?

They were very much needed.

So did your dad ever talk about boot camp, or anything like that, or training experiences, or adjusting to life in the Army?

Basically, he said his boot camp went by so quickly that he didn’t even notice it. Apparently, because he was basically going almost directly into CIC.

Yes. I mean, he got the training,

The training, and then when he comes out in 1947, he’s already - he comes out as a staff sergeant.

Correct.

Yes. So do you know where he went for his basic training or anything like that?

Both times, Fort Riley.

Fort Riley, Kansas.

From what I understand, yes.

In fact, I remember telling him, one of my grandsons lives in Kansas, and when I told my father, I says, “Hey, one of your great-grandsons lives in Kansas!” He says, “Oh, Kansas,” he says, “Fort Riley. Both times.” That’s all he said!

And then he’s posted to Germany?

Yes

I wonder if he went over on a ship or a plane?

He did go over on a ship. He said the ship came out of, I think he said Maryland or Maine, I’m not too positive of that. He took a train, I know, east, because he tried calling my mother from the train station when he was being deployed and she didn’t answer. And, of course, we now know why.
Yes. So he was posted to the-- or his unit was the 970th Counter Intelligence Corps.

Counter Intelligence Corps, that's their battalion badge.

And that was in, which we will add to this transcript, it looks like it's a sleeping lion or something like that.

To me, it looks like a lion.

Yes. Kind of--

In fact, his license plate in Florida, okay, was that. They only demand a rear license plate, so his front license plate was a copy of that. That's how proud he was.

I was going to say that indicates that it was something he was proud of, wasn't it? Yes.

Oh, very much so.

Yes, and not too many people could have done that job either, I suspect. So, then his initial mission in Germany, so he was posted to Berlin, I suppose?

Yes, started out there.

His initial mission was to kind of go undercover with these identification papers?

Yes.

And see if he can sniff out any German who--

Sniff out any Germans and sniff out any--

Nazis who are--

He did say traitor Russians, but Russians aren't traitors, so I don't know.

Oh, Russians who might have collaborated?

Well, remember-- right, collaborators.

Or, yes, yes.

But, of course, he would never believe there were any. I mean, you know, Russian background himself. At that time, according to him, Russians were wonderful and Germans were horrible across the board, but I can't blame him.
So when he's on duty then in his first tour, he's in civilian clothes, right?

Yes, he is, even up to and through the retrieval of the crown jewels.

Yes, so I wonder, does he, for example, have an apartment or does he--

He did have an apartment. He said it was in a half bombed out--

Probably a lot of those places--

Oh, yes. Three stories, no running water. And that was at the time Olga was covering as his wife. Okay, he was out in the nightclubs playing music. He played music on the street. My father played the accordion.

So he used his musicianship as part of his cover?

As part of his cover, very, very definitely.

So, Olga, did she have an interesting history in Germany? Had she lost her family during the war and needed to protect herself with the Americans or something?

No Her mother was alive. They were, oh, from what Olga told me at one time, but this was many years ago, her mother escaped. Her brother was SS. She did not like the fact that her brother was SS, and she went over to the American side. She did not like what the Nazis were doing. And, of course, this would bear fruit in the fact that she married an American Jewish GI.

Yes. So she was not from a Jewish background?

Oh, absolutely not.

Yes. And then did the brother survive the war, the SS man?

No, he did not. He did not survive the war.

The-- so, we mentioned it, the, your dad had described--

By the way, her mother survived the war, but the brother did not.

But she remained in Germany, did she?

She remained in Germany. She came for a visit. It was an interesting visit, I will say that.

You remember it?

Oh, yes.
What year would that have been?

Oh, I don’t know, but I do remember my grandmother, my father’s mother, being introduced to her. And she spoke enough English to get across, and they were talking about their sons, my father, and, of course, my stepmother’s brother who was SS, and the old lady was so proud, she showed a picture to my grandmother of her son in his SS uniform. I give my grandmother credit. My grandmother looked and said, “He’s a handsome boy,” went to the bathroom, and threw up.

Yes. Yes.

So I don’t think that my stepmother’s mother was an American collaborator. I think she just survived the war. Now, whether she survived the war because her daughter was an American collaborator, I have no idea.

Yes.

But I did meet the woman. She gave me the chills – that should be off the record.

Wow.

So the highlight, I think your dad used the expression or described it as such, and you did too, the highlight, probably, of this first tour of duty was this recovery of the crown jewels?

Yes.

How did that come about?

What happened was he was apparently stationed at the border, okay, as he called it, “the correct side of the divide.” And the, that account, kind of, okay, we’re not sure. Well, he’s sure. Correct.

So these were the crown jewels?

Those were the crown jewels of Duchess Theodora of Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach.

Wow.

Okay, apparently the duchess had hired a mercenary, a smuggler or whatever, to come and get her crown jewels. He got caught at the border.

Bringing them out to her?

Bringing them out to her.
She had fled the zone?

She had fled the zone. He got caught by the Americans and the Russians coming out. And he told them what was going on. And my father said that the Russian command right there and the American command said, you know, “She got out. She really didn’t do anything. Why don’t we get them to her?” That was done without, really, the permission of my father’s commanding officer, whose name I do not know. Apparently, someone said, “Okay, we’re going to do this,” and since the Russians said, “Naw, we don’t want to do it”, “Why don’t one of you Americans go?” So one of the Americans went back with the smuggler, because he already knew where everything was. And they got them all out. My father alluded to the fact that he was the one. A newspaper account doesn’t name who and a book in which there is a chapter regarding Weimar crown jewels also does not name the actual person. I don’t know. However, in my entire life, my dad died when I was 66, I’m now 68, I’ve never known him to tell a lie. So, I don’t know, but it is possible, because that was the type of adventurous thing my father would have done. “We’re going back. Let’s go get them,” Yes. (The exciting episode is described in Chapter 29 “Bribes and Crown Jewels” of the 1995 book, Dear God, I’m Only a Boy by Menno Duerkson.

He had the language skills to do it.

And he had the language skills to do it.

Yes.

You know, and, as you can see from the pictures on his German passport, or German identity papers, he also had, you know, he could look Russian, he could look German, he could look American.

Yes.

So they managed to get out. And they did get all the crown jewels. He said it took three trips, the original smuggler who was caught, and then two more trips with whomever went back with the smuggler to get them out. And they did get them all out, according to the duchess.

I wonder how far it was, whether it was an overnight kind of --

Yes, it was.

It was overnight.

Yes. He said it took them about six hours, seven hours, to get into the, whatever small town, I imagine - she was the crown duchess of, you know, Saxony-Weimar-Eisenach, so he did say Saxe. But I don’t know what that means, okay, I have no clue! I have no idea.
So your dad earns a World War II victory medal, victory ribbon, and then he is discharged in 1947?

Yes.

January of ’47, and he comes--

The Reserve.

back to Chicago and joins the Reserves.

Back to Chicago with my stepmother, joined the Reserves.

This is after the first tour of duty, is it?

Oh, no. I’m sorry, I’m confused.

Yes?

No, he came back and joined the Reserves, divorced my mother.

When he came back?

Right.

So there is always a question like when a veteran returns from a combat situation to civilian life, sometimes there is a difficulty adjusting, but--

Yes, he moved back with my grandparents for a little while.

He really changed his life then?

Oh, he totally changed his life. Before he enlisted on that first tour of duty, he owned a music shop. They sold music records, Victrolas, everything. And he left--

Is that on Cornelia, in the area of Cornelia?

Halsted and Cornelia, right on Halsted. In fact, I have pictures of that shop, which I didn’t-- I didn’t think that’s important. And he left my mother to take care of it. One of the things that caused the divorce, not only was that she cheated on him, but the fact that her father decided a woman should not be working, put up a horrid fuss about her trying to keep that little radio shop open. And ended up, it failed. So my father comes back from his first tour of duty, his business is kaput. It’s gone.

It’s gone.
And that did not help, you know, the divorce at all.

_No money, and then, yes, the Reserves might have helped a little bit, I suppose?_  

Yes. So when he came back, he moved, he and my mother, moved in with my maternal grandparents, along with me. And that did not last long. And I do remember my father leaving. I remember the day he left, and my mother was screaming and hollering, "What do you mean? You were unimportant! You didn't do anything in the Army!" And that was it. And he moved, and I think he moved up north to Elston Avenue. I'm not sure he, oh, no, I take it back. I am sure. He moved in with his middle brother, the one who is now still living, into Albany Park. And he stayed with him while he was in the Reserves. And then, from there, he enlisted into a second tour of duty. And then when he got out of the Army, he and my stepmother moved up to Elston Avenue near Elston and Lawrence.

_Yes, he had a pretty exciting life in the, an exciting life in the final days of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, and status, and then he comes back to Chicago And the business has failed._

And finds everything is gone.

_Everything is gone, so-- yes._

Yes. The man my mother was cheating with, his name was George. So, for years, any time something that we didn't, anyone in my father's family, you know, me, whatever, anytime there was something that we really didn't like, we said, "Well, by George, it happened again!"

_What a great sense of humor_  

Yes.

_So the second time he's not - he doesn't get into- he isn't accepted into Counter Intelligence. He winds up in Military Intelligence._

Correct.

_And that's when he completes all these special courses, these various courses?_  

Yes, basically, this, yes, (Judith refers to documents which are appended.) December 1950, April 1953. Let's see, when was this dated? August 4th, 1953, guest speaker to the Troop Information Program, pertaining to Europe. So his experiences, apparently, subject material, narrative, he was a pretty good talker. The Army General School, June 1951 to August 1951, as an interrogator. So when he went back and then, of course, we have that-

_So he was posted again to Germany, when he goes back?_
He was posted again to Germany.

*With his language skills, and he was interrogating?*

At his request. I think with his skills he didn’t really need to request it.

*Yes.*

But he did request it, because there was Olga sitting there, and he promised he would come back for her. And, of course, everybody says he’s never coming back to get her.

*Oh, so that’s-- do you think your, I mean, I--*

What?

*The question just suggests itself. I hope it’s not rude.*

Oh, not at all.

*Do you think your father returned to America after the first tour of duty and he really did think he was going to go back and get her?*

No.

*It was an option?*

No. I asked him that question.

*Oh, wow.*

I did ask him. I said, “Dad,” I said, “I know my mother was cheating on you,” I said, “but did you go back for your second tour of duty to get Olga, and were you planning on doing that?” And he said, “No, I wasn’t planning on doing it;” he said, “but when I came back, found the business gone.”

*Yes.*

“Found out I had to move in with my in-laws, things were not working out, it was confirmed that your mother was still cheating on me with George,” he said, “I was already in the Reserves,” he said, “and I decided to go back into active duty and go back and get Olga.” He says, “I was going to forget about her,” he told me, he said, “but the circumstances.”

*Yes. So, I wonder he would have been in, when he was, so he’s back in, back in Germany.*
Yes.

*In 19--?*

1950.

*And on this second tour of duty, he serves until 1953?*

Correct.

*And then, did he marry, he married when he was in Germany?*

He married on December 2nd, where is it here? I have it. I just had it in my hand. Yes, he married on December 4th, 1952, in Passau.

*So then they had to live together--*

Yes

*For another ten months?*

I have absolutely no idea of what all these abbreviations mean.

*Yes. But he was married--*

Okay. Moved dependent below from Paussau, Germany, to Dependents’ Assembly Area, etc., with a report date of December 4th, oh, 1942, no, he married her before that. I’ll have to get--

‘52, right?

I mean ‘52.

*Yes. Yes.*

Yes, yes, so I will have to--

*Did he ever--Did he say who he was interrogating there? Were they Germans or Russians?*

He said he was mostly interrogating Germans. It was mostly Germans, some German civilians, but, as I said, you know, in that one, he was-- he didn’t talk much.

*Yes. I suppose by that time--*

He gathered information.
The chill of the cold war was really setting in?

Yes. And I asked him, I said, at that point, I said, “What about communism? Did you-- Was communism any part of what you were taking place in?” And he said, “No, not really. Not really.” I said, “Well, I thought that, by then, as far as the SS or the Germans,” I says, “I thought that it was basically over.” And he said, “No, it wasn’t.” But he says, “But I can’t tell you much about that,” he said. Because I think it’s still top secret.

Yes.

So I have no idea.

Of course, there were still all kinds of German war criminals to hunt down in 1950.

And I think that was what he was probably doing.

Yes. Yes.

Because he said, “No, it had nothing to do with communists.”

So then your dad comes back, he comes back to the United States, back to Chicago with his new German bride, and then he adjusts to life.

Very well.

Yes.

Eventually moved out to Carpentersville, remained a musician for the rest of his life.

On the accordion. Accordion, yes.

He played anything that had a keyboard and put the addition of a harp, because all that is is a piano without the keyboard.

Yes.

Yes. And he taught piano. He, I have been told, don’t know, I would have to check with Harper College, that he helped institute the adult music classes at Harper College.

Yes.

At the college level.

Did he-- So he never had to consider using the GI bill or anything like that, did he?
No.

And did he meet like-- Did he have any wartime buddies or military service friends?

No.

That he stayed in touch with, or?

No I asked him about that. However, when he married my stepmother, she already did have a daughter. Ellen married, who is now, of course, my brother-in-law, Abe. And Abe was a survivor of the camps. So it was, you know, it was really strange, the only wartime friend he had was Abe, who was liberated, okay, and continued to work for, you know - and my mind is so messed up, this is my sister and brother-in-law, which I can't remember their last names!

Well--

This is weird!

It's okay for reasons of privacy.

My father, no, because I did ask him about that. I says, "What about the guys?," he says, "You know," he says, "I don't know if any of them survived."

So Abe was a survivor and he was in a camp? Was he Jewish?

He was in a camp. Oh, yes.

He was Jewish?

Yes. He was Jewish.

So, Olga who wasn't Jewish--

Who was not Jewish, her daughter married a Jewish gentleman. In fact, Ellen converted.

Yes, and then Olga marries a Jewish man, so it's--

Well, Olga married a Jewish man first.

Yes, so it's kind of fascinating.

Strange. Olga never converted.

Yes
Never converted. In fact, you know, I have a half brother, a half sister, and a step-sister. We don’t refer to each other that way.

Yes.

You know, we’re sisters and brother, and this is it.

So those are the, yes, those are the new social relationships as a result of World War II.

Right. It’s very interesting.

Yes.

But no--

So he wasn’t joining veterans’ organizations or--

No.

Yes.

And I did ask one thing of my father that I found very interesting, because I had heard that many, many, many World War II veterans refused to talk about it. And I asked, “You know, Dad,” I says, “Here I am. I am 66 years old. Why now? Why are you telling me now?” And he said, “Because I want it to not all die with me.” “Why didn’t you tell me before, Dad?” He said, “I don’t know. It brings back such terrible, terrible memories.” And when he was speaking to me about many of the things, the crown jewels, a little bit about the interrogation of civilians, he actually did have tears in his eyes.

Sure.

I know there is a lot he said that he really never wanted to talk about it.

Yes.

Can you, speaking for your father here, how do you think, well, his military service and experiences greatly affected his life?

Oh, very, very much so. Very much so. As I said, his email address was exspionwebtv.web. Very, very much affected his life.

He would not watch any movies or read any books, basically, having to do with the SS, Hitler, I remember that very, very distinctly, very distinctly.

Yes.
It affected him so badly. I’m not too sure if it affected him that badly because he was Jewish or because of his personal experiences.

_Maybe both, yes._

Probably both would be my guess.

_Did-- how do you think his military experiences influenced his thinking about war or about the military in general?_

He hated it.

_He hated--_

War altogether.

_Yes._

As far as he was concerned, every single country in the world should dissolve its military. He said war, he fully agreed with the - what was it, the hippie philosophy, you know, or who was it, Patton, or Sherman, who said “war is hell”?

You know, make love not war.

_Yes._

War is no good for any living being. If there are any living beings left afterwards. My father was totally against war. In fact, my father wouldn’t even have an argument with somebody that was heated.

_Yes. His parents would probably subscribe to that view also, right?_

Oh, absolutely. I have papers, if I can wrest them from my cousin. My grandmother wrote some stories about some pogroms when she was a child. Only two have been translated from the Russian.

_Yes._

My cousin has the rest, and they have not been translated.

_Because I think socialists of that--_

Oh, yes.

_generation or that time, they were very much internationalists._
Well, I remember two boxes in my grandmother's house, okay, one for the socialist charity and the other one for the Zionist charities. Okay, and when I was a child, they used to take me out to the Indiana Sand Dunes to - they had a permanent quote, unquote tent that was shared. Well, my mother's family found out that it was actually a socialist camp, and they wouldn't let me go anymore. But it was so much fun!

Yes.

Yes.

Is there-- thank you for being so generous with the details of your father's life.

Thank my father for finally being so generous.

Yes. Is there anything else you feel like we should add to the interview? I know you already typed everything out, and we've discussed some general questions that we ask the veterans.

Really not-- I mean, he told me a lot.

Yes.

I took notes. They didn't have to be copious notes, because he had a memory that was unbelievable. And so do I, right along with it.

It is evident. It is evident, yes.

Yes. And he had all this documentation that when I looked at it, I went, whoa, wow!

So if I can get these documents scanned and properly captioned, that, and your remarks here today, will give us some understanding--

Right.

and appreciation.

And these are the ones from the second tour of duty--

The second tour.

that need scanning. This does not.

Okay.

So we can do that.
Well, then, at this point, then, I thank you very much for coming in and giving us a very interesting interview--

Thank you for having me.

about a very interesting man who served his country twice.

An extremely interesting man. Served his country twice, although I really do think the second time he served his country was a little bit more towards my, the woman who was going to be my stepmother, but again he was going to be an honorable man until he came home, and, you know what hit the fan, and he wasn’t about to do that.

Well, I’ll hit the button now.

Yes.

Reader’s Note

The following 26 pages of scanned material in chronological order illustrate Mr. Berkman’s two tours of duty in Germany. Included are his undercover identity documents and 7 pictures of the crown jewels he rescued with his own annotations in bold type.
In reviewing this scanned material, Judith recalled asking her father, “Why didn’t you become an officer?” He explained that he had qualified for Officer Training School, but given his assignment to the Counter-Intelligence Corps with language skills, the Army said he was more useful as an enlisted man and would have more freedom of movement.
Mr. Bergmann’s “Special Identity” document, showing that he had been imprisoned in Dachau for 9 months for political reasons.
A German identity-card for the undercover Sgt. Berkman, a.k.a. the German civilian "Mr. Bergmann."
Staff Sergeant Berkman’s U.S. Army identification card during his first tour of duty in Germany.
Mr. Berkman’s Displaced Persons’ Card showing his undercover identity of “Normann Bergmann”

Mr. Bergman’s registration as a “civilian” with the military authorities in Germany in 1946.
Mr. Berkman, who entered the Russian Zone with the smuggler Heinrich Mueller to retrieve the rest of the Grand Duchess’s jewels in May, 1946, provided this reading note for the May, 1947 newspaper article below:

“Original newspaper disclosure by Menno Duerksen, was datelined May 29, 1947. The reporter was ordered by Intelligence (G-2) headquarters to hold up this report until things settled down after the zone borders were established. Then we could see how the Russians might react so we could edit the report to keep the peace for the time being.”

1947

**Million in German Gems Seized in Smuggling Plot**

By Menno Duerksen.

United Press Staff Correspondent.

ESCHWEGE, Germany, May 29.—The U.S. Army permitted the disclosure today that it was the reluctant custodian of a royal treasure valued at $1,000,000 to $6,000,000 which was seized as it was being smuggled out of the Russian zone and into the American occupation zone of Germany.

The glittering hoard of jewelry, silver and heirlooms belonged to the royal German family of Sachsen-Weimar Eisenach. It now is under American military guard.

The treasure was trucked over the U.S.-Soviet zonal border in August, 1946.

Value Set at a Million.

Appraisers for the U.S. Army said the gems and other articles there were worth a conservative $1,000,000. Unofficial sources said the value might be as high as $6,000,000. The Sachsen-Weimar Eisenach family called the latter figure exaggerated.

More than two years ago, in the Allied onrush that broke the back of Nazi resistance, the Russians approached the Sachsen-Weimar Eisenach estates at Heinrich, Silesia.

Duchess Hides Treasures.

The Grand Duchess Feodora—who celebrated her 57th birthday today—gathered up the treasure and fled to her estates at Zillbach in Thuringia. The U.S. Army moved in on Zillbach, but before it arrived the duchess had the valuables buried in cellars and sandpiles. When the occupation zones were finally fixed the duchess found her treasure was in the Russian area.

Then she herself moved to the family estate at Detmold, in what is now the British occupation zone. Last August she heard of a successful young smuggler who operated across the Soviet-American zonal border.

The duchess asked him to bring out her jewels. He was to get 2 per cent of their value in cash and another 5 per cent in jewels. Under bales of Communist propaganda one truckload came over the border unhindered.

The second truck was stopped by German border police. Suspicious of its literature, they dug into it, found the valuables, and called Army Intelligence agents.

Army Seizes Treasure.

A U.S. armored column with machine guns mounted came one October day to Eschwege, got the treasure and took it to Bad Nauheim. It was inventoried and transferred later to a depository for safekeeping.

Only when field agents forwarded the receipt for the treasure to intelligence headquarters did the word reach high level officers. They wrote a note to the grand duchess telling her what they knew of the case. She considered the note as official acknowledgment of her ownership. But she feared the Russians would demand the return of the treasure to its original estate, and took no action to reclaim it for the time being.
The next 9 pictures pertain to Mr. Berkman's role in the recovery of the Crown Jewels of the royal German Family of Sachsen-Weimar Eisenach for the Grand Duchess Fedora who had fled her estate in Silesia upon the Russian advance.

Mr. Berkman comments:

"A corner and part of a wall in the CIC office at Eschewegie where the treasure was displayed. Note that all the items were already tagged. Also note flatware chest on the floor. See item for details."
Menno Duerksen, the United Press Staff Correspondent, who penned the newspaper article, would later write the book *Dear God, I'm Only a Boy*, published by Castle Books in 1986 with a revised 1995 edition by Wordsworth.

Its Chapter 29- “Bribes and Crown Jewels” provides his account of the retrieval of the jewels and the delay in publishing his newspaper account due to the Postwar politics of the day and the need to “respect” the zones of the occupying Allies.

Mr. Berkman captioned “More of the treasure covering top of grand piano.”
“Additional pictures of the treasure displayed in another part of the office and resting on the grand piano on the right. The crown jewels can be seen.”

“the flatware service for 36 featured gold-plated silver with delicately hand-painted porcelain handles.”
Mr. Berkman wrote: "Closer look at crown jewels. Rear photo is the Grand Duchess of Sachsen (Saxony)-Eisenach-Weimar."

"From left, Senior agent, Eschwege CIC detachment. Mayor of Eschwege (a converted ex-communist. Very Useful!)"
“Real closeup of crown jewels.”

“Full Eschwege CIC detachment. From left, me in civilian clothes, senior agent, junior agent.”
Mr. Berkman's own description

"a bit of levity. Here I am again, standing between two guests from our sub-regional CIC office in Kasssel."
Certificate given to Sfc Berkman for 12 months on “vital border duty.”

317th MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE PLATOON

Know ye by these presents that:

Sfc Norman R. Berkman

WEIDEN

317th MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE PLATOON SERVED ON VITAL BORDER DUTY FOR 12 MONTHS IN AN OUTSTANDING MANNER. HIS UNTIRING EFFORTS WHILE PERFORMING THIS MISSION DID MUCH TO AID IN THE PRESERVATION OF DEMOCRACY.

Henry E. Zimmer
HENRY E. ZIMMER, MAJOR, INF
COMMANDING
Mr. Berkman's Army service patch as a member of the Military Intelligence unit. The sphinx is the symbol of the military intelligence branch of service device, suggesting wisdom and silence.

Receipt issued November 12, 1946 to Mr. Berkman, confirming that he turned in his credential and badge to his Counter Intelligence Headquarters in Germany.
Staff Sergeant Norman R. Berkman’s Honorable Discharge after 1st tour of duty in Germany.

Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

NORMAN R. BERKMAN, STAFF SERGEANT,
970TH COUNTER INTELLIGENCE CORPS DETACHMENT,
UNITED STATES FORCES EUROPEAN THEATER,
Army of the United States

is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the United States of America.

This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service to this country.

Given at SEPARATION POINT, FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND.

Date 14 JANUARY 1947.

HAVARD T. RAWLINSON
COLONEL A.G.D.
Mr. Berkman's "Enlisted Record and Report of Separation," dated January 14, 1947

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Berkman Norman R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serial No.</td>
<td>97090712</td>
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<tr>
<td>Component</td>
<td>CIC DET USEFT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Separation</td>
<td>14 Jan 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Separation</td>
<td>Fort George G. Meade, MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Blue, Black 5' 8/4&quot; 175 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>USA CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEE 9</td>
<td>SALESMAN 1-87.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Induction</td>
<td>12 Jul 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Enlistment</td>
<td>12 Jul 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of Entry into Service</td>
<td>Chicago, ILL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selective Service Data</td>
<td>X114</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military Occupational Specialty and No.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WORLD WAR II VICTORY RIBBON</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latest Immunization Dates</td>
<td>JAN 46, JUN 46, JAN 46, JUN 46, CHOL JUN 46, TYPH JUN 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country and State</td>
<td>COOK ILL</td>
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<tr>
<td>See 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>LONELINESS PAY FOR PURCHASES</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF PURCHASING OFFICER</td>
<td>MAJOR FD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Separation</td>
<td>28 Feb 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Arrival</td>
<td>1 Feb 46</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOR MILITARY TRAINING</td>
<td>RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER MILITARY TRAINING</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED</td>
<td>NO DAYS LOST UNDER AW 107</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASR SCORE 0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Berkman’s Separation Qualification Record with breakdown of his duties over his 13 months as an “Investigator”

### Army of the United States

**Separation Qualification Record**

*See this form. It will not be replaced if lost*

This record of job assignments and formal training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual’s own statement. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERKMAN, NORMAN R.</td>
<td></td>
<td>S SGT</td>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Permanent Mailing Address (Street, City, County, State)</td>
<td>CORNELIA AVE</td>
<td>CHICAGO, COOK CO., IL</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Date of Entry into Active Service</td>
<td>10 JUN 45</td>
<td>7. Date of Separation</td>
<td>19 DEC 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Place of Separation</td>
<td>SEPARATION POINT</td>
<td>FORT GEORGE G. MEADE MARYLAND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Date of Birth</td>
<td>20 AUG 17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Summary of Military Occupations**

INVESTIGATOR: Serve with the 970th CIC Detachment in the European theater of operations conducting investigations of crimes, accidents, sabotage, sedition, espionage, and subversive activities in which military and civilian personnel or property were involved.
**MILITARY EDUCATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIC SCHOOL</td>
<td>HOLABIRD SIGNAL DEPOT</td>
<td>BALTIMORE, MARYLAND</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<tr>
<td>INVESTIGATOR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EUROPEAN THEATER INTELLIGENCE SCHOOL</td>
<td>ORIENTATION</td>
<td>GERMANY</td>
<td>1946</td>
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**CIVILIAN EDUCATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>DIPLOMA/CERTIFICATE</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>CITY/STATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>4YRS</td>
<td>H S DIPLOMA</td>
<td>1935</td>
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**CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>EMPLOYER</th>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SALES CLERK</td>
<td>WALKER JIMIESON COMPANY</td>
<td>RADIO PARTS</td>
<td>WORKED FOR THE WALKER JIMIESON COMPANY IN RADIO PARTS. WANTED CUSTOMERS AND FILLED MAIL AND PHONE ORDERS. ARRANGED DISPLAYED AND STOCKED, HANDLED MONEY, WRAPPED PACKAGES AND MADE SUBSTITUTION ON OUT OF STOCK ITEMS.</td>
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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIGNATURE OF PERSON SEPARATED</th>
<th>SIGNATURE OF SEPARATION CLASSIFICATION OFFICER</th>
<th>NAME OF OFFICER (Typed or Stamped)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J W MARTZ</td>
<td>CWO USA</td>
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</table>
Mr. Berkman’s Enlisted Record and Report of Separation
Honorable Discharge after second tour of duty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTER OF SEPARATION</th>
<th>REPORT OF SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES</th>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>ARMY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HONORABLE</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE NAME</th>
<th>2. SERVICE NUMBER</th>
<th>3. GRADE - RANK AND DATE OF APPOINTMENT</th>
<th>4. COMPONENT AND BRANCH OF SERVICE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BERGMAN NORRIS RALPH</td>
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<th>6. EFFECTIVE DATE OF SEPARATION</th>
<th>7. TYPE OF SEPARATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>NOT APPLICABLE</td>
<td>13 AUG 53</td>
<td>DISCHARGE</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>8. EXPANSION OF SERVICE</th>
<th>9. PLACE OF SEPARATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEADQUARTERS COMPANY, FIFTH ARMY, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. DATE OF BIRTH</th>
<th>11. PLACE OF BIRTH (City and State)</th>
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<tr>
<td>20 AUG 17</td>
<td>CHICAGO, ILLINOIS</td>
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<tr>
<th>12. DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>13. SELECTIVE SERVICE LOCAL BOARD NUMBER (City, County, State)</th>
<th>14. COGNIZABLE DISTRICT OR AREA COMMAND</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>15. MEANS OF ENTRY OTHER THAN BY INDUCTION</th>
<th>16. GRADE OR RANK AT TIME OF ENTRY</th>
<th>17. GRADE OR RANK AT TIME OF SEPARATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X (Enlisted)</td>
<td>SERGEANT E-5</td>
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<tr>
<th>18. MEANS OF TRANSFERRED TO A RESERVE COMPONENT</th>
<th>19. GRADE OR RANK AT TIME OF SEPARATION</th>
<th>20. GRADE OR RANK AT TIME OF SEPARATION</th>
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<td>X (Transfered)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21. STATEMENT OF SERVICE FOR PAY PURPOSES</th>
<th>22. TOTAL NET SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>23. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMEMORATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARMY OCCUPATION MEDAL (GERMANY)</td>
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<tr>
<th>24. MOST SIGNIFICANT DUTY ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>25. WOUNDS RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF ACTION WITH ENEMY FORCES (Place and date, if known)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEADQUARTERS, 5TH ARMY, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26. SERVICE SCHOOLS OR COLLEGE, COLLEGE TRAINING COURSES AND/OR Post-Grad. Courses Successfully Completed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SCHOOL HEADQUARTERS, FORT RILEY, KANSAS</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>27. DATES (From-To)</th>
<th>28. MAJOR COURSES</th>
<th>29. SERVICE TRAINING COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JUN 51-AUG 51</td>
<td>MILITARY INT. INTERROGATOR</td>
<td></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>30. Governmental Insurance Information</th>
<th>31. MONTHLY ALLOWANCE PAID OR EXTENSION OF ENLISTMENT IF ANY</th>
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<table>
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<th>32. TOTAL NET SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES</th>
<th>33. TRAVEL OR RELOCATION ALLOWANCE INCLUDED IN TOTAL PAYMENT</th>
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<th>34. REMARKS (Continue on reverse)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NO DAYS LOST UNDER SECTION 6A, APPENDIX 2B, NCM 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLOOD GROUP &quot;O&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITEM - 3 - SERGEANT E-5 (P) 27 JUNE 1950</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>35. SIGNATURE OF PERSON AUTHORIZED TO SIGN</th>
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<tr>
<td>W. F. YERKS, CWO, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>PERSONNEL OFFICER</td>
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<table>
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<th>36. CLAIM NUMBER</th>
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<table>
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<th>37. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>38. DATES OF LAST CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT</th>
<th>39. MAJOR COURSE OR FIELD</th>
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<tr>
<td>FROM 1947 TO 1950</td>
<td>ACADEMIC</td>
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<th>40. MAIN CIVILIAN OCCUPATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>MUSICIAN, INSTRUMENTAL</td>
<td>ANDREE'S 213 CLUB, 213 EAST SUPERIOR STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>42. UNITED STATES CITIZEN</th>
<th>43. HIGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>44. MAJOR COURSE OR FIELD</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>ACADEMIC</td>
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<tr>
<th>45. MARITAL STATUS</th>
<th>46. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED</th>
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<tr>
<td>MARRIED</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>47. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER SEPARATION (City, County and State)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5113 SOUTH KENROCK AVENUE, (COOK COUNTY) CHICAGO, ILLINOIS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>48. INDIVIDUAL'S COPY (TO BE DELIVERED TO THE INDIVIDUAL BEING SEPARATED)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>49. INDIVIDUAL'S COPY (TO BE DELIVERED TO THE INDIVIDUAL BEING SEPARATED)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two Certificates of Training, received by Sergeant Berkman during his second tour of duty.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING

This is to certify that

SERGEANT NORMAN R. BERKMAN

has satisfactorily completed the course of

Military Law and Administration of Military Justice - Basic Course A

Given at

Fort George G. Meade

Maryland

December 6, 1960

Lt Colonel, JAGC

Instructor

CHARES A. EISENBERG

DA FORM 87 1 JAN 67 REPLACES NO FORM AT 1 JAN 44, WHICH IS OBSOLETE.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING

This is to certify that

NORMAN R. BERKMAN M/Sgt

has satisfactorily completed the course of

Military Justice Basic Course # "A"

Given at

Headquarters Fifth Army, Chicago 15, Illinois

13 April 1953

A.F. BEROL

Maj

Inf

Commanding

DA FORM 87 (Formerly DA A50) REPLACES NO FORM 87. 1 JUN 40, WHICH IS OBSOLETE.
Sergeant Berkman’s certificate for successful completion of the nine-week “Enlisted Intelligence Course” for **Interrogator** before his return to Germany.
SUBJECT: Letter of Commendation

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff
    G-2 Section
    Headquarters Fifth Army
    1650 E. Hyde Park Blvd
    Chicago 15, Illinois

1. This office wishes to express appreciation for the services of M/Sgt Norman R. Berkman, SR who made available to us through your cooperation, as a guest speaker for the Troop Information Program on subjects pertaining to Europe. The presence of a well informed, interesting speaker has added measurably to the success of the program.

2. M/Sgt Berkman is to be commended for his ability to deliver to an audience the full import of the subject material, and to hold the full interest of an audience with his casual, narrative method of discussion.

FOR THE COMMANDING OFFICER:

[Signature]

H. R. Hinderliter
M. R. HINDERLITER
2d Lt. QM
I & E Officer
532nd Military Intelligence Battalion

Sgt. Berkman's unit during his 2nd tour of duty.

US ARMY BORDER OPERATIONS IN GERMANY, 1945-1983,
by William E. Stacy

Units/Military%20Intelligence/USAREUR_532ndMIBn.htm#45th
A third Certificate of Training for Mr. Berkman upon his satisfactory completion of a course on the Geneva Convention.
Honorable Discharge

from the Armed Forces of the United States of America

This is to certify that

NORMAN RALPH BERKMAN, MASTER SERGEANT, UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE

was honorably discharged from the

Army of the United States

on the 13th day of August 1953. This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of honest and faithful service.

HENRY A. BROWN
Major, Inf
Commanding

Master Sergeant Norman R. Berkman's Honorable Discharge after his 2nd tour of duty in Germany.
This photograph of Mr. Berkman and his daughter, Judith Carlson, was taken in the last year of his life in Florida. Mrs. Carlson interviewed her father for this project in March, 2008, shortly before he passed away.