

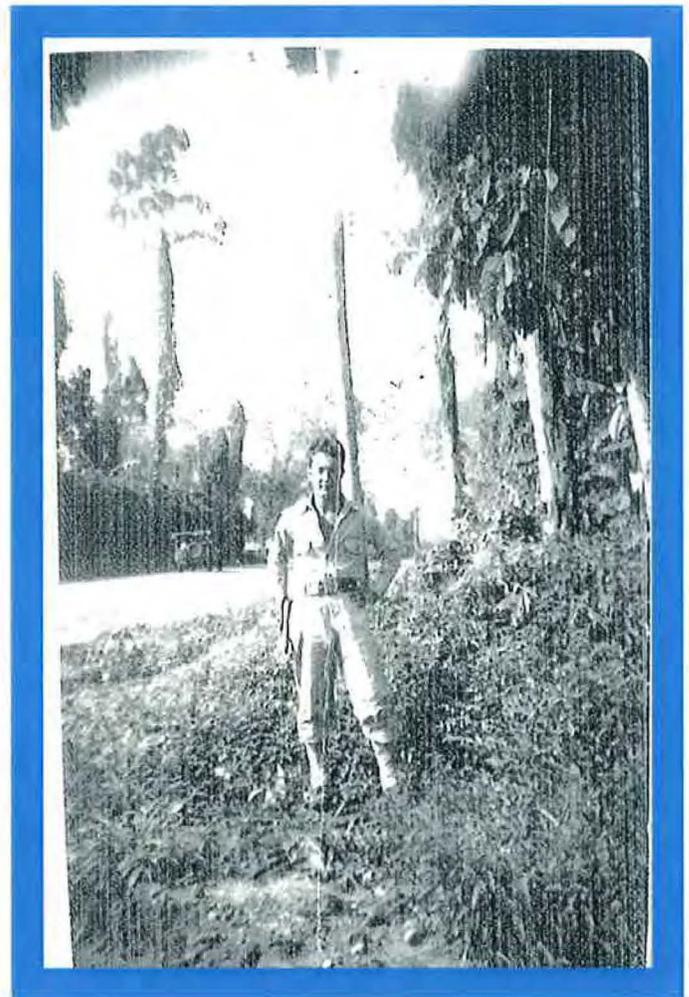


Norman Karel

U.S. Army
Company H, 148th
Infantry
37th Infantry Division
World War II

Niles Public Library Veterans History Project
Interview

10 November 2005 Niles, IL



Norman B Karel
Veterans History Project Interview Transcript
Niles Public Library, November 10, 2005
Interviewer Kate Wolicki

001: INTRODUCTION

This interview is being conducted on November 10th, 2005, at the Niles Public Library in Niles, Illinois. My name is Kate Wolicki. I'm speaking with Mr. Norman Karel. Mr. Karel was born on August 6th, 1922, and now lives in Glenview, Illinois. Where were you born?

In Chicago.

In Chicago, he was born. Mr. Karel learned of the Veterans History Project through the library poster.

Right.

007: DRAFTED, 1943

Through the Niles Library poster, aren't we great! He has kindly consented to be interviewed for the Project. Here is his story. So, we usually start at the beginning, unless you have something you'd like to talk about first. You don't care. Okay. When did you enter the Service?

I entered the Service, I believe, it was April the 5th, 1943.

Yeah. And what were you doing? Where were you living when you--

I was living at 6231 Stewart Avenue in Chicago, Illinois, at the time.

Were you living with your parents, or--

I was living with my parents.

Yeah. And what you were doing before you were drafted?

I was studying to be a linotype operator at that time. And I was working for Mercury Typesetting at the time.

Wow.

I had finished high school and I went to linotype school to learn linotype. And I was working at Mercury Typesetting as an apprentice at the time.

So, you must have been fairly young, about 20 or 21?

No, I was about, a little over 18 ½, 19.

Oh, my goodness. 18.

So young.

It was very young. So, did you choose the Army when you were drafted, or were you just drafted?

No, I was drafted, and I chose to go into the Army.

Why?

Why? I figured that my father was in the Army, and I figured, in World War I, so I figured I'll go into the Army, also.

To be like him?

To be like him.

To be like him. Where were you inducted? Do you remember?

I was inducted at Camp Grant, Illinois.

Okay. And what was it like, your first days?

It was amazing. So many other young men. We were all wondering what this was all about, where were we going. It was very unusual.

Did you meet people you think you wouldn't have otherwise met?

I met people that ordinarily I would not have met. From all over.

From all over the country, all over the state?

All over the country.

Wow.

And it was an experience.

028: BASIC TRAINING: CAMP WHEELER, INFANTRY REPLACEMENT TRAINEE

Yeah. So, do you remember anything in particular about starting out?

Well, I remember we spent a few days at Camp Grant, and they were interviewing us. And then we went on a train, and we went to Camp Wheeler, Georgia, where we took our basic training. And I was at Camp Wheeler, Georgia, for thirteen weeks as an infantry replacement trainee.

What does that mean?

In other words, we were replacements for the casualties. We had thirteen weeks of basic training. I got a ten day furlough, went back home, and then we were shipped overseas. So, I had a little over three months in the States, and then I went overseas.

And then they sent you away. So, do you remember, was it-- Had you ever been away from home for a long time before?

No. No. No....

So, was that strange for you?

It was an adventure, it was an adventure.

Yeah.

Were there-- They put in, I have in my list, where-- did you have drill instructors?

Oh, yes. We had drill instructors, and we learned how to shoot a rifle, and read maps, and, you know, hike long hikes, and field training. And it was an adventure.

So, did you have any use for your experience as a linotype operator, did you--

No, no, no.

They didn't have

No, no.

anything for linotype operators to do

No. No.

in the Service.

They needed us for, you know, replacements for casualty replacements.

Where did you sleep, do you remember?

In the barracks while we were in training.

Yeah, while you were in training?

Yeah, we had barracks at Camp Wheeler, Georgia.

Did you-- was it a lot of other--

Oh, yeah

people really close?

Oh, yeah, we were close.

Yeah. Okay, where did you go after that? You went overseas?

After that, I got the ten day furlough.

Right.

And I came back, and they shipped us right overseas.

So, where did you leave from?

We left from San Francisco. And our first stop was New Caledonia.

Ooh, wow.

That was where they tried to find out where you were going to go from there. You were what Army, you know, what division you would be sent to? And I was sent to the 37th Division. It was an Ohio National Guard Division. And we were sent to Guadalcanal. This was after the fighting was over at Guadalcanal, and we were to replace the casualties there. Now the 37th Division that I was sent to was pretty well beat up from the Battle of Guadalcanal, and they sent us up in the hills to give us further training. And we were in Guadalcanal for I would say six, seven, weeks. And from there we invaded Bougainville in the Solomon Islands. That was my first experience in combat, on Bougainville.

063: BOUGAINVILLE, HILL 700

What was that like?

It was scary. It was scary. And we invaded Bougainville, and, like I say, it was dramatic. It was dramatic. You see all the casualties, the bombings. And we were under fire, and we were in Bougainville for thirteen months fighting the Japanese. And that's where I got my bronze star medal, fighting on Hill 700. Our platoon was going up on Hill 700, trying to recapture the hill. We were crawling up the hill under enemy fire. We lost about four or five of my buddies going up that hill. I'll never forget it. I'll never forget it.

Our whole platoon received a bronze star medal for that battle. And, as I say, I lost some good friends of mine.

And, believe me, I was scared to death going up that hill!

I'm sure. I'm sure. You said four or five of your friends. Were they people you had--

Right

trained with?

Trained with, from basic training.

Wow.

And something you'll never forget. I'll never forget that.

Yeah. You know you can enter them into the Library of Congress' Veterans Memorial? They have a website that you can.

Oh, really?

Yeah, you can put in people's names. They put you in when you are interviewed.

Isn't that something?

Yeah. It's a huge database.

That's really something.

Yeah. Did you feel-- Did you feel lucky that you had not died, or did you feel--

I was lucky. I felt lucky. I felt lucky that I was able to get out of there alive.

Yeah.

But it hurt to see your buddies, you know, and, as I say, as Tom Brokaw wrote in his book, ours was the greatest generation, it really was.

Yeah.

And as I say, I'm short of stature, I'm only five feet three, but, believe me, I felt tall when I served my country. I stood tall.

So did you—so, you were in-- you did some more training in Guadalcanal?

Right.

And then you were in

And then we invaded Bougainville.

Then you invaded Bougainville.

And then, how, you said, that was thirteen months.

We were on Bougainville thirteen months.

Oh, my goodness.

Fighting the Japanese.

Did you have times when you were on the front lines and times when you were not?

Oh, yeah, we had many times in rest areas. Our main fighting on Bougainville was capturing Hill 700. That was our biggest engagement.

How long did it take?

It took a couple of days until we recaptured that hill.

Wow.

Other outfits, you know, went up too, and they recaptured it, and then they lost it again in the Japanese counterattack. But in our last battle, we did capture Hill 700. And it's something I'll never forget. I'll never forget.

Do you remember what it-- do you dream about it, or you think about it a lot?

At times, I do.

Do you remember what it smelled like or what it sounded like? Can you describe it?

The artillery shells, the stench of dead bodies, is something you never can forget. And when I think about what is going on in Iraq, it hurts the hell out of me to see our soldiers getting killed like that. But when you've been through it, you realize what it is. Pardon me, I can't help it.

That's okay. I'm a crier, myself.

I get a little emotional. But it's an experience I'll never forget, and I'll remember as long as I live.

Which is a pretty good long time so far.

Right.

And now the people at the Library of Congress will know too.

I'm sure they know about it. I'm sure they have.

121: "OUR NEXT OBJECTIVE WAS THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS": LUZON, LINGAYEN GULF, BATTLE OF MANILA, BAGUIO

There's a lot of stories.

Anyway, after thirteen months on Bougainville, our next objective was the Philippine Islands. And we invaded Luzon in the Philippines. That was the main island. We landed on Lingayen Gulf. We had no opposition when we reached the beach. We were expecting, you know, a lot of opposition, but there was no opposition when we hit the beach.

And we didn't hit into any opposition until we got near Manila. There's where our outfit caught hell, around Manila. We lost our first lieutenant of our platoon in the Battle of Manila.

And I was lucky, too. I escaped unharmed. But we had, you know, other casualties in our, you know, company. And after the Battle of Manila was over, we were sent to a rest area in a suburb of Manila. And we were there for, I'd say, four or five weeks, just resting.

And from there, they sent us to Baguio. That's the summer capital of the Philippines. It's in the mountains. And we fought the Japanese in Baguio.

And we went back to our rest area, and that's where I came down with malaria.

139: MALARIA

Didn't they give you-- didn't they give you Quinine

Oh, yeah.

so you wouldn't

We were taking-- it was called Atabrine at the time. And we were taking it every day, but you still came down with-- I guess it did help prevent it, you know, from being more serious. But that's where I came down with malaria. And, actually, it happened on August the 6th, the day they dropped the A-bomb, that I came down with malaria.

My goodness.

When they dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima.

So, were you sick for a long time?

I was in the hospital for several weeks. And then we came back to our outfit and then we were, you know, going to be sent back home after-- it must have been about 28, 29, months overseas.

Wow.

And then we were sent home to be discharged.

150: MAIL: TRICKING THE CENSORS, PACKAGES FROM HOME, BUDDIES

Were you excited?

Oh, I was thrilled to death. I was thrilled to death. I was thrilled to death.

And, during the time I was in service, everything was censored. And you couldn't say where you were or where you were going. But I wanted my folks and my future wife to know where I was, so what I did, I remembered, in Chicago, there was a superintendent, Dr. Johnson, but, before him, the superintendent of schools was named Dr. Bogan. I sent a letter to my sweet-- I said, Ann, find out who was the superintendent of schools before Dr. Johnson. His name was Dr. Bogan, so she knew right away I was on Bougainville. And then when we were going to the Philippines, it was also censored. You couldn't say where you were going. So, I had a cousin of mine, his name was Philip, so I wrote, find out—I'm going to see Molly's husband, his name was Philip, I'm going to see Molly's husband in a short time. His name was Philip, so they knew where I was going-- in the Philippines. So, we had our ways of getting around the censors. It was wrong, but we wanted to know where....

Did you write a lot of letters back and forth?

Everything was V-mail.

Oh, yeah.

Everything was V-mail, and that's how we would, you know, write our letters and--

Did it take a long time for letters to get to and from home?

It did. It took several weeks to get letters back and forth. And then I-- we would get packages from home every now and then.

So, what did you like to get best?

Salami, things like that, you know, that weren't perishable.

Right.

And we would share them with all our buddies. And when they got packages, we would share everything. You know, we were close, we were close. You know, we were together for like 28, 29, months, and we were close. And we would share everything.

180: EATING ON THE ISLANDS

So, what were you eating and where were you living when you were on the islands?

We ate a lot of C-rations, K-rations. And, once in a while, we were getting hot meals. But the thing that I missed most was ice cream. I'm an ice cream lover, and we couldn't get ice cream. Once in a great while, we would get some. But, when I was in the hospital and I had malaria, they were coming with ice cream. I was so thrilled!

It was worth getting malaria.

It was worth getting malaria just for the ice cream! But, like I say, it was an experience that you'll never forget it. You'll never forget it.

Now, when you were, now, you took a ship between islands?

Oh, yes.

And, when you were on the islands, how did you travel around, did you march or did you--

We marched. We were on jeeps, you know, going through, you know, other places on the island.

And was it-- had you ever been any place that wasn't the United States before?

No.

So, did you-- was it interesting to see the different--

Oh, absolutely.

Different plants and different people--

196: "I MET QUITE A FEW PEOPLE THAT I BECAME FRIENDLY WITH"

Absolutely. It was completely different. And when we went to the Philippines, you know, after the fighting was over in Manila, I met, you know, quite a few people that I became friendly with.

So, what was that like? Do you remember any of them?

Oh, yeah.

Tell me about them.

Well, when I went overseas, I wasn't married at the time. And I met a young lady there, and she was a mestiza. In other words, she was part Spanish and part Filipino. And she was a student at the University of the Philippines before the Japanese invaded the island. And we became very friendly.

And when I came back home, we corresponded for quite a while.

Wow.

I remember her name, Salud. We called her Sally. The Philippine was Salud, but we called her Sally.

How interesting.

And, like I say, we corresponded for quite a while. And then, well, then, I got married when I-- about six months after I was discharged, I got married.

Wow.

And I was married for thirty-six years. And then my wife developed cancer, and I lost her. But I found a wonderful person a year later, and I've been married now to my second wife for twenty-one years.

Oh, my goodness. That's two very long relationships.

Two long, two long, relationships.

215: PASSING TIME, MAKING FRIENDS

So how did you—let's see, how did you pass the time when you weren't fighting? What did you do?

We played cards mostly. We played cards on the islands.

Did you get good at it?

I got lucky sometimes. Sometimes, I lost everything. But what was there to do? There wasn't anything else to do. And we played, you know, baseball, things like volleyball, you know, when we were in the rest areas, when we weren't in combat, because there was a lot of times on the islands when you were just-- you weren't in combat. You were just sitting in your rest area, you know, doing things, playing cards, then we played baseball, volleyball, you know, anything just to keep active.

Did you ever run into anybody that you had known at home?

No, I never did.

Wow.

I never ran into anyone that I knew. See, because, when I was inducted, I was sent to Camp Wheeler, and there were people from over all the country, you know, from the South, from the West. And then we were sent overseas and then we became together, all of these people. But I never knew anyone from home that I served with.

So, did you meet people—now, Chicago is a pretty diverse community.

Yes.

Did you meet people from other ethnicities,

Oh, yes.

from other races?

Oh, yes.

And

Yes

was that different for you?

Very different. I met this-- a lot of people from, in our, that were from the South, and they were different. They were different. They believed in werewolves, things like that.

They believed in werewolves!

Right. Things like that.

That sounds like a story. There's a story. Who believed in werewolves?

This one kid, this A. C. Jenkins, he believed in werewolves and things like that.

Must have made him nervous in the jungle!

I think so. And I think he only went to about fifth or sixth grade at that time. And he wasn't very educated, never finished, you know, school. Well, actually, I got a high school education at the time, but you met so many different people, diverse people, and we became friendly, we became close.

You got to appreciate everybody.

247: IN A FOXHOLE ON BOUGAINVILLE

And there's one story I have to tell you. We were on Bougainville, and we were in a small perimeter. The Japanese were maybe, like, fifty yards away from us. At night, we were in our foxholes. You could not get out of your foxhole. You had to stay in your foxhole, because as soon as you were out, you were shot. You were considered an enemy. We had this one Southern fellow in our outfit, he hated the Japs. He hated them like crazy! And the Japs, you could hear them. They were yelling at us, "You die, Yankee. You die, Yankee! You dead!" This fellow couldn't stand it, so he comes out, and he yells, "Tojo, eat shit!" -believing this?- "Tojo, eat shit!" Two minutes later, the Jap he said, "[?] eat shit!"

I'll never forget it as long as I live. And believe me, it's the gospel truth.

That's terribly funny.

See, there were funny experiences, things that were-- I'll never forget these things as long as I live.

Yeah. So, did you—now, you were in the Pacific theater. Did you get news about the European theater, did you--

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We always got news. You know, we had radios. We were able to keep up with the news.

Did you get to hear news from home?

Yeah.

Did you worry about home while you were gone?

I did. I'm a worrier, I think. I'm a worrier. But at least, you know, I wasn't married at the time, I didn't have any children, but I worried about my parents and, you know, my sweetheart back home. I worried how they were doing. But they always wrote me. I got so many letters. They always wrote me. My parents and my sweetheart, they always wrote me.

So, did you keep the letters or did you

No.

Did you lose them along the way?

I couldn't keep them. There was no place to keep them.

Yeah.

But, as I say, it's an experience you'll never forget, you'll never forget.

290: "IT'S IN YOUR HEART, YOU JUST CAN'T GET AWAY FROM IT"

So, do you keep in touch with any of the people that you met?

I kept in touch with quite a few of my buddies for several years after we got discharged. But, gradually, you lose track, you lose track. But I'll say this, I'll always remember my fellow soldiers and buddies that I served with. I'll never forget them, and those that never came back.

It's in your heart. You just can't get away from it. But, like I say, it's an experience that I'll never forget.

Were you glad that you had been drafted, that you got to

Yes. Yes. If I would have been rejected, I don't think I could have lived through it. I wanted to serve my country, you know. I was a young kid at the time. I wanted to serve my country. And I did. I did.

So when they dropped the bombs and the war ended, how did you feel about that? Did you feel-- did you, I have interviewed one person who was actually in Japan a short time after they dropped the bomb, and his opinions on it are different from other people's. I always like to hear what people think.

The bomb saved our lives. Before they dropped the bomb, we were being told our next objective would be the Japanese home islands, and they could expect a million American casualties. You were not only going to fight the Japanese army, you were going to fight men, women, and children. They were fanatics. They were fanatics. In all the time I was overseas in combat, we never captured a Japanese soldier, never. They would commit hara-kari. They would not be captured. They were ingrained-- they were born like that. It was a sin to be captured. They would die, but they would not be captured. And they were so different from, you know, from our beliefs. But it's something I'll never forget. I'll never forget this.

340: RELIGION, REST, HOLIDAYS: LIFE OVERSEAS

So did you, I always ask this, did you have a chaplain in your unit?

Yes. Yes.

And did you-- did you ever talk to the chaplain or did you

Oh, yes. He would always come around. He would always come around. In fact, even in combat, he was with us, he was with us.

Wow.

He was with us.

Did you, now I don't know what religion you are

I'm Jewish. I'm Jewish.

So, did you find were there other Jewish people in your unit, or were you

We had a few Jewish in our company.

Was it different to be with, knowing Chicago, we tend to be sort of separated by religion a bit, was it--

No. No. No.

So, were you-- did you practice religion when you were at home or did you

I did. I was never, you know, really religious. I would go for the high holidays like Yom Kippur, that was it. My family was never, you know, really--

So did that change after the war or was that pretty much the same?

The same, the same. I still go to high holidays. But I'm not a religious fanatic. I believe in my religion, but that's as far as it goes.

Yeah. It's-- my mother is a chaplain, so I always ask. I always want to know. I'm nosy. And did you, oh, they put in here-- when you were off duty, were you ever on leave when you were in the Pacific? No.

They always thought that they were going to send us to New Zealand for a rest there. We never got there.

No.

We never got there. We were hoping that we would be sent, you know, to New Zealand or Australia, but our outfit never got there.

Too busy.

Too busy. We were too busy.

So, did you celebrate holidays when you were in the Service? Did you celebrate Thanksgiving and--

As best as we could. You know, Christmas or Thanksgiving, but mostly on the islands, you don't have the facilities for that. But we did celebrate as much as we could.

So what did you do as much as you could, do you remember?

Not really. It was just another day. It was another day.

So, what did you wear when you were overseas? Did you have more than one uniform? Did you

Most of the time when we weren't in combat, we wore shorts, because, in the Pacific, it was very hot out there. So, most of the time, we were just in shorts. But, in combat, we had our regular fatigues, but, the rest of the time, we were just in shorts like in the summer here.

Like in the movies.

Right.

Did you—oh, there was something I was going to ask, and it is gone from my head, that's unfortunate. Did your rank change over the course of the war?

No, I was a PFC all the time.

The whole time. And you won two bronze stars, is that what it said. One bronze star.

One bronze star. That was for Hill 700.

And you listed some other Service awards.

Yes.

What else did you get awards for?

Let's see. I believe there's a Philippine medal.

376: MEDALS DESTROYED & REPLACED

And do you want to tell me on the tape about how your medals were destroyed and they replaced them?

Yes. When I got home, we had just moved to a new place, and I gave my medals and decorations to one of my daughters to hold. They had a fire at my daughter's house, and they were all destroyed in the fire. And that's how we lost my medals and decorations. And my daughter lost practically everything in the fire. She was living at Round Lake Beach at the time, and all the medals were destroyed. So that's when, was it last year? I wrote to Congressman Mark Kirk that I would like to have the medals back. At that time, I wasn't feeling well. I didn't know how much longer I would be, and I wanted to have my granddaughters to have the medals when I

was gone. And, sure enough, he came through. And then, after I got the medals, I called his staff assistant, the one that was handling it. I said I wanted to thank, you know, Mark Kirk in person for getting the metals. And he said, "Wait a minute," he said, "We're having this veterans' [thing] on Memorial Day and I want you there to be on the podium to receive your medal, your bronze star." And that's how I got to meet Mark Kirk.

397: AFTER DISCHARGE, WORK

How neat. Did you-- so when you came home, what did you do in the time just after you were discharged and then when you got home?

I rested for about a month, just took it easy, and then I went back to where I was working before as a, see, I was an apprentice before I went in the Service and, naturally, I got my job back.

Had someone else been doing your job in between or had it just been empty, do you know?

Well, I suppose they did hire somebody at the time that I was gone, but when I came back in my job, actually it was like a six year apprenticeship that we had to serve in. Our-- I belong to Chicago Typographical Union, and there was a six year apprenticeship. Now before I went into the Service, the place where I worked was a nonunion shop. To get into the Chicago Typographical, it was like father to son, like the movie projectors' union, there was no way to get into it. But after I got out of service, I found out that the place that I was working, Mercury Typesetting, the owner got into the union because there was a strike in the north to hold some to the count he had to go into the union. So, I automatically was able to get into the typographical union that way.

That's nice.

And, as I said, there was a six year apprenticeship, but I had already served a couple of years, so they put me in as a fourth year apprentice. So, I served two more years as an apprentice and then I got my journeyman's card.

So did you do that your whole working career or did you change jobs at all?

Yes. After I got my journeyman's card, I went into Progress Printing Company. And I was there for about thirty-five years and I was superintendent of the shop for the last ten years. And this Progress Printing was on 33rd and Halstead. The owner was a personal friend of Mayor Dick Daley, the original mayor, and all the Democratic work had to come through our shop.

That's a pretty good deal. Did you go back to school at all, ever?

No, no.

So you didn't use the GI bill for school or

No, because, actually, when I came back out of service, I went back to my profession as a linotype, but I was an apprentice, but, through the GI bill, I was able to get, you know, the extra money for, you know, being an ex-serviceman, and that's how it worked out.

So did you, I was just reading, had been reading a book that talked about the growth in housing, were you able to buy a house with assistance from the GI bill or did you live in--

No, no, the assistance I got was from the, you know, they upped my salary while I was an apprentice.

That's nice.

But we bought a home after I got married.

Yeah.

When did you get married?

In 1946.

So very soon after.

Yeah, about a year after we got home, I got married, and I stayed married for 36 years. Then I lost my wife through cancer. And I remarried about two years later to my present wife. And now I've been married for 21 years.

And they didn't get sick of you yet!

Pardon?

And they didn't get sick of you yet, huh?

Not yet.

Not yet.

Did you join a veterans' organization at all?

I did. I joined the Jewish Veterans, and I was there for a few years, and then, gradually, you dropped out. A lot of the old veterans left. Some moved away. But I did, for a few years.

Yeah. Have you ever attended any reunions?

No, I never did.

Do you think they have them for your unit?

They did. See, our 37th Division was an Ohio National Guard. And I never did go back there.

So were a lot of the people from Ohio or, because there were so many replacements?

The original Division was from Ohio, but we were infantry replacements.

Right.

So when we went overseas, you know, we were scattered from all over the country. But I did keep in touch with, you know, a lot of my buddies, you know, for a number of years. And then, gradually, you know, you lose track.

Did you talk about your experiences with other veterans or with your family when you got home?

Somewhat. Somewhat. Sometimes, it's hard to talk about that. But they did want to know something. I talked a little, but I didn't want to talk too much. It hurts. It hurts when you talk about your buddies that didn't come back, that you were close to.

Yeah.

It hurts, but, like I say, it's an experience I'll never forget.

493: BROTHER, TRY TO GET INTO THE NAVY

Well, did you have any brothers and sisters?

Yes. I had one brother. And he got into the Navy. He was a younger brother. I wrote him a letter before he went into service. I said, Leo, don't go into the Army, because you're going to be put into the infantry. I said try to get into the Navy. And he wondered why. We slept in foxholes. I said, at least in the Navy, you're aboard ship. You have a place to sleep, to eat, hot meals. We didn't get that. We were living on C and K rations, and living in foxholes. So, he listened to me, and he got into the Navy.

So did he-- was he younger than you?

Yeah, he's four years younger than I.

So did he serve--

He served in the Navy. And he was in Okinawa, when the Japanese, the Kamikazes—but, knock on wood, he came out okay. He was on a minesweeper.

Wow.

But he came out okay.

That's pretty lucky.

Right. We were both lucky.

511: HOW SERVICE AFFECTS YOUR LIFE

So do you think your service and your experiences affected your life? How do you think it affected your life?

How did it affect-- it made me milder than I was. I used to have a little temper.

Why did it make you milder?

Because I had seen so much. Maybe that's not the word, milder. It's-- trying to think of a better word. Maybe less wilder then, more mature, maybe more mature.

More mature, sure.

Maybe that's the better word.

And did it affect your health at all? I mean, besides the malaria?

Yes. Yes. When I got out, when I got discharged, an aunt of mine was dying, and all of her nephews, we went to donate blood. They wouldn't take my blood. I said, "Why not?" Because I had malaria, they could not take my blood.

Huh.

They could not take my blood. So, once you have malaria, it's in your system. And they wouldn't take my blood when, you know, we wanted to donate it to my aunt. But, otherwise, I've been healthy. But the last ten years, I've had prostate cancer. In fact, I'm going this afternoon for another bone scan because my PSA level has jumped up again, and the urologist said he wants me to have another bone scan. But, otherwise, I've been pretty healthy.

541: THOUGHTS ABOUT WAR, NOW VS. THEN

And did your military experience influence the way you thought about war or about the military, did that--

Yes.

What changed or what do you--

This Iraq war, I can't see it. I can't see it. I can't see all these young men dying out there, dying out there. Every day, another two, three, American soldiers are getting killed. I don't think we

had any business going in there. And it hurts me to see these young men dying like that. It hurts me. It really hurts me to see that.

Did you feel that way during Vietnam too?

Yes. Yes. We didn't belong there. I felt the same way in Vietnam as I do for this Iraq war.

So do you ever protest or do you--

No, I never protested like some of these demonstrators. I never did, but, sometimes, I felt I should have.

Yeah?

But I never did.

It's a strong voice when you've been in the military.

Right. When you've been through-- when you've seen all this carnage, it hurts. It hurts when I see these young men every day, two or three, it's already past the 2000 mark.

Yeah.

So what can I say? What can I do? There's not much that I can do. But I would like to see them get out of there. But how? It's so hard, you know. We're in there now.

Yeah. What's the answer, you know.

What is the answer? God knows. God knows what the answer is.

We hope so, yeah.

I hope so.

Did you feel differently about the Second World War that it was, you know, like Studs Terkel's book? It was the good war, and you feel like--

Yes.

There was a purpose there.

When they bombed Pearl Harbor, they hit on us.

Yes.

We had to go in. I think we had to. We couldn't just sit idly by.

Right.

But it's different now. We weren't invaded now. The weapons of mass destruction, where were they?

Yeah.

That's why it's so different. But, anyway, as I say, it's something that I'll remember the rest of my life.

Yeah.

As long as I have left.

599: IN A FOXHOLE

Do you have any other stories you want to tell me? Anything we didn't talk about.

There's one. We were in our foxholes on Bougainville. Every night the Japanese plane zero came over, dropped a bomb, would take off. We were in our three-man foxholes every night. And, as I say, you couldn't get out of your foxhole. You had to do everything in your foxhole. Our helmets were used for urinating. This one fellow I was close -- his name was Meyer Marter. If anything happened, it had to happen to him. The Japanese zero comes over. The red alert comes sounding, he puts on his helmet, and gets a whole face of urine.

That's awful, and terribly funny.

But it's true. It's true. And the other two guys were, "Get out of here!" But we couldn't get him out.

629: SIDE CHANGE

629: ARMY LIFE

Did you—well, that reminds me. I had one person talk about washing his uniform in his helmet. How did you wash your clothes?

Like that. Like that.

In your helmet.

Right.

Or if we had-- if there was a little stream, we would take it down to wash. We had no laundry facilities on the island.

Right.

Or else we'd be in just dirty clothes for God knows how long until we could find a stream or somewhere where we could--

Do you have problems with your feet? If you were in foxholes a lot, did you have--

I still have that.

Yeah.

My toenails are terrible. I've got, what do you call it, the underneath-- there is like a fungus, but that's from being in the foxholes in the-- it happened...

You said your father was in the First World War?

Yeah. He was in the First World War.

And he was in the Army?

He was. He didn't serve overseas, though. He just served a short time, but he never served overseas.

Now, you know, we have a database where you can look for draft cards.

Oh, really?

You might be able to find a copy of his draft card.

How about that! That goes back a long, long time.

That's pretty neat.

Right.

So, do you read books about the war?

Oh, yeah.

Do you like to hear other people's stories?

Right. I love to read books about the war. This book that Tom Brokaw wrote, *The Greatest Generation*, I've read that. And I've read quite a few other books, you know, about the war. You know, you're interested in that, you know, when you've been through it. You want to see all you can gain information about that. But, like I say, it's an experience, that I lived through it. And, thank God, I did come out of it.

Well, we're glad

Thank you very much.

because we got to hear your story.

So, there's nothing else you want to tell me?

That's about it.

Well, thank you so much

Okay.

for consenting to be interviewed. It's wonderful.

And it's a pleasure meeting you.

653: END



Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

NORMAN B KAREL

PFC CO H 148TH INFANTRY

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 CENTER
CAMP GRANT ILLINOIS

Date

DECEMBER 1945

ARTHUR F LA ROUCHE
MAJOR A C

HONORABLE DISCHARGE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL KAREL NORMAN B		2. ARMY SERIAL NO.	3. GRADE PFC	4. ARM OR SERVICE INF	5. COMPONENT AUS
6. ORGANIZATION CO H 148TH INF		7. DATE OF SEPARATION DEC 45	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION CAMP GRANT ILL SEPARATION CENTER		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES S STEWART AVE CHICAGO ILLINOIS		10. DATE OF BIRTH 6 AUG 22	11. PLACE OF BIRTH CHICAGO ILL		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SEE #9		13. COLOR EYES BROWN	14. COLOR HAIR BROWN	15. HEIGHT 5 3	16. WEIGHT 131 LBS.
17. NO. DEPEND.		18. MARITAL STATUS SINGLE			
19. RACE WHITE		20. U.S. CITIZEN YES		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. LINOTYPE OPERATOR 4-44.110	

MILITARY HISTORY

22. DATE OF INDUCTION MAR 43		23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT		24. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE APR 43		25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE CAMP GRANT ILLINOIS	
26. REGISTERED YES		27. LOCAL S.S. BOARD NO. 28		28. COUNTY AND STATE COOK ILL		29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE SEE #9	
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. HEAVY WEAPONS CREWMAN 1607				31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i. e., Infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE EX: CARBINE			
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS NORTHERN SOLOMONS LUZON							
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS 4 OVERSEAS SERVICE BARS ASIATIC PACIFIC THEATER RIBBON W/2 BRONZE BATTLE STARS PHILIPPINE LIBERATION RIBBON W/1 BRONZE BATTLE STAR GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL BRONZE BROWHEAD MEDAL WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL							
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION NONE							
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES				36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN			
SMALLPOX VACD		TYPHOID SI		TETANUS ST		OTHER (specify)	
APR 43		AUG 45		AUG 45			
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE				38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD		DATE OF DEPARTURE	
CONTINENTAL SERVICE		FOREIGN SERVICE		PFC		7 SEP 43	
YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	DESTINATION	
0	5	10	2	3	10	USA	
39. PRIOR SERVICE NONE							
40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION CONV OF GOVT RRI-1 (DEMOBILIZATION) AR 615-365 DATED 15 DEC 1944							
41. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED NONE						42. EDUCATION (Years)	
						GRADE SCHOOL COLLEGE	
						8 4 0	

PAY DATA **VOU 18850**

43. LONGEVITY FOR PAY PURPOSES		44. MUSTERING OUT PAY		45. SOLDIER DEPOSIT		46. TRAVEL PAY		47. TOTAL AMOUNT, NAME OF DISBURSING OFFICER	
YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	TOTAL	THIS PAYMENT	100.00	4.40	\$323.16	G F DOLBEAR CAPT FD	
2	8	26	\$300	\$100					

INSURANCE NOTICE

IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

48. KIND OF INSURANCE		49. HOW PAID		50. Effective Date of Allotment Discontinuance		51. Date of Next Premium Due (One month after 50)		52. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH		53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO	
Nat'l Serv.	U.S. Govt.	None	Allotment	Direct to V.A.	31 DEC 45	31 JAN 46	6.50	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue <input type="checkbox"/> Continue Only <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>								

34.	35. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives)
RIGHT THUMB PRINT	<p>LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED ASR SCORE (2 SEPT 45) 63</p> <p>ERC TIME FROM 29 MAR 43 TO 4 APR 43</p>
36. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <i>Norman B. Karel</i>	37. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Name, grade and organization) <i>Isabel A Boone</i> ISABEL A BOONE 1ST LT WAC

Army of the United States



SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

This record of job assignments and special 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 statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL KAREL NORMAN B				MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS			
2. ARMY SERIAL No.		3. GRADE	4. SOCIAL SECURITY No.		10. MONTHS	11. GRADE	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY
		PFC			4 26	Pvt Pfc	Basic Heavy mortar crewman 1607
5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State) STEWART AVE CHICAGO ILL							
6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE		7. DATE OF SEPARATION		8. DATE OF BIRTH			
Apr '43		Dec '45		6 Aug '22			
9. PLACE OF SEPARATION Camp Grant, Ill							

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE—DESCRIPTION—RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION

HEAVY MORTAR CREWMAN: Served with Co.H, 148th Inf. Was a heavy mortar crewman on an 81mm mortar. Fired the weapon and also worked with other parts of the weapon. Supervised a no. 3 gunner and 2 ammunition bearers. Was responsible that the correct ammunition was fired from the weapon and on time. Worked also with a 520 radio in directing fire on the enemy. Served in the PTO under close combat conditions.

