

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

GEORGE FUCIK

Forestry Engineer, U.S. Army, World War II

2013

OH
1916

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1916

Fucik, George., (1918-2015). Oral History Interview, 2013.

Approximate length: 1 hour 29 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

George Fucik discusses his service in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific during World War II with the Engineer Forestry Battalion, 16-11 Engineer Forestry Company, as well as his life after the war. He describes how he enlisted in the Army through ROTC at Michigan Tech and then went active duty in 1943. He outlines his service in New Guinea and the Philippines, including at Lingayen Gulf Naval Base. Fucik remembers hearing about Pearl Harbor before he deployed as well as V-J Day while he was in the Philippines. He mentions the Bataan Death March. Fucik explains how he was discharged in 1946 and transitioned to inactive duty. Lastly he describes the places he and his family have lived since his discharge and the jobs he has held.

Biographical Sketch:

George Fucik (1918-2015) joined the army through ROTC, and entered active duty in 1943. He served overseas during World War II in the South Pacific from 1944 until 1946 as a forestry engineer with the Engineer Forestry Battalion, 16-11 Engineer Forestry Company. He was discharged in September of 1946, remaining in inactive duty.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2013.

Transcribed by Brianna Weinberger, 2015.

Reviewed by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Abstract written by Claire Steffen, 2015.

Interview Transcript:

Brooks: Today is May 30th, 2013. This is an interview with George Fucik--.

Fucik: Yes.

Brooks: --who served with the Army during World War II. The interview is being conducted at King Veteran's Home in Wisconsin and the interviewer is Ellen Brooks. Okay, so I will try again. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Fucik: What about World War I?

Brooks: When and where were you born?

Fucik: Waukegan, Illinois

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: Yes.

Brooks: And when?

Fucik: June 26th, 1918.

Brooks: Okay. So can you tell me about growing up in Waukegan?

Fucik: What about Waukegan?

Brooks: Tell me about growing up there.

Fucik: That was where I went through high school. I lived in Waukegan 'til 1939. I graduated from high school in 1936, then I worked a couple years at the wire mill, American Steel and Wire Company. Then I decided that I would go to college and I applied at several places and I was advised when I finally decided that I would like to go to Michigan Tech and they recommended that I take a year of school, another year of school. I'll admit that I was in so many other things. I played football, basketball, baseball in high school and was in several things and I'll admit I didn't have the best of grades. I got A's [laughs] in physical education and never went to class [both laugh] because in Waukegan if you are in sports you automatically didn't go. And so I went to Elgin Academy which is in Illinois, in 1939. And I took physics, chemistry, trigonometry, college algebra, solid and plain geometry and got straight A's.

Brooks: Oh wow.

Fucik: But I was just in school. You had-- after supper you did your homework and there was no other satisfaction and that got me started. Then in 1939 I started at Michigan Tech and the rest was history. [Both laugh]

Brooks: So when you--

Fucik: It wasn't bad after that.

Brooks: At Michigan Tech did you have a major? Was there a field of study that you were interested in?

Fucik: How many years did I live in Waukegan?

Brooks: How many-- yeah. How many years did you live at Michigan State?

Fucik: I still don't get it.

Brooks: When you were at Michigan State, did you have a major or a field of study? Was there a particular thing that you studied at Michigan State? What classes did you take at Michigan State?

Fucik: Oh, forestry. Oh, at Michigan Tech? Forestry engineering.

Brooks: Okay, so engineering.

Fucik: Yes.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: That's uh, I guess that's how I ended up as when I was in the service. I was in for the most part overseas, I was the company commander of a engineer forestry company and I guess probably that is due to my background at Michigan Tech.

Brooks: Okay. So how did you end up--did you enlist in the Army or were you drafted?

Fucik: Well, no as I said I was in ROTC. I don't know what you call that. I wasn't drafted because I was already in 1941 even before Pearl Harbor. If you were in the last two years of ROTC, you were automatically what they called in active service--

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: I don't know what you call that. I guess it would be closer to volunteer rather than drafted because I chose to take ROTC.

Brooks: So why did you choose ROTC?

Fucik: What's that?

Brooks: Why did you choose ROTC? What made you decide to do ROTC?

Fucik: Well, [clears throat] I guess it could--it started in high school in Waukegan High School when I started in, uh, 1932. Every junior or sophomore and junior male student was required to take ROTC, uh, the only exception if you had something physically wrong with you. And there was no exceptions. And I guess--the last year, senior year, was volunteer. You know, you became a cadet officer, they'd call it and you drilled the rest of 'em and I kind of liked that.

Brooks: Okay. [Laughs]

Fucik: So when i went to school I found out that they had ROT, I just signed up for ROTC 'cuz I knew that--enough about it that I continue that, that's--I guess that's why I chose it.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: At Tech, because I had some experience in high school--.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Fucik: Okay.

Brooks: Mm-hm, yeah. So then do you remember where you were when you learned about Pearl Harbor?

Fucik: Where what?

Brooks: Where you were when you learned about Pearl Harbor? When you first heard about Pearl Harbor?

Fucik: Did I sign up?

Brooks: Do you remember when you first heard about Pearl Harbor?

Fucik: Oh yes! Uh, [clears throat] that was a Sunday and uh, let's see, I think, it was right around noon-time that we were having lunch or Sunday meal in the house, a fraternity house. And all of a sudden, it came on the radio that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, you know, earlier in the day. And that's the first time we heard of it and most of us that were in ROTC--we realized [chuckles] that we were probably going to be 'part of that. And they told us, I don't know whether this was true or not, or whether the, uh, instructors in ROTC told us that they were short of

engineer students. And now I don't know whether that was true or that they wanted us to continue, you know, and do a good job of the last two years of our school, and uh, to stay in school and graduate but, that's what they told us. [Both laugh]

Brooks: So did you stay in school? Did you stay in school?

Fucik: Oh yes--.

Brooks: You stayed?

Fucik: Yes, I graduated in June 1943--.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: And of course then I went in active service--.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: And that the class of 1943 was the first class that ROT graduates of any place in the country that also took 120 days of OCS [Officer Candidate School]. The ones that graduated before that were automatically in.

Brooks: Okay, and that's Officer Candidate School? OCS? What's OCS?

Fucik: What, what?

Brooks: What is OCS?

Fucik: What?

Brooks: OCS?

Fucik: Oh, officer candidate school--.

Brooks: Okay, that's what I thought.

Fucik: Yeah, Officer Candidate School. That was at Fort Belvoir, Virginia--.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: That's the engineer school.

Brooks: Okay, so that's where you were?

Fucik: Yes.

Brooks: Okay, can you tell me a little bit about that?

Fucik: Yeah, I was there from September 1943 to end of January 1944. And then of course then after that I was there at Fort Belvoir for about, um, let's see, about three, four months and I got orders to report to the Pentagon and that's when I was assigned to the forestry company in the South Pacific.

Brooks: So when you got orders to go to the Pentagon, what was your reaction?

Fucik: What was my reaction? Well, I guess I was--I think I was kind of glad to get away from routine and I knew that, uh, I--at least I thought that I knew enough about forestry engineering that I would have a job [laughs] to do, and to try to do my best at it rather than just routine work. I guess you could say I was happy to be assigned to something that I knew something about, or at least I thought I knew something about. [Laughs]

Brooks: So as an engineer, did you have to do all the same physical training as other soldiers?

Fucik: Physical training?

Brooks: Mm-hm. Did you have to do a lot of it?

Fucik: Well we had--yes--I guess you'd call it physical training. We had--you know--drills, and, uh, [clears throat] we had exercises, yes. You know to keep your body in shape and I'm quite certain that this is at Fort Belvoir, and I am quite certain that we had the right kind of meals, you know, and, uh, that would be healthy meals, I guess you'd call it.

Brooks: So when did you get your assignment? What year was that? The forestry engineering assignment, what year was that?

Fucik: That I got assigned? That would have been in, I'm trying to think of the month, I think it was February. Either in the end of February or the beginning of March 1944.

Brooks: Okay, so I don't know anything about forestry engineering. Can you tell me a little bit about it? What is forestry engineering?

Fucik: Well, that's running a saw mill, uh, and the associated with-- logging, you know, sawing down trees, making lumber, um, we--and when we were in the South Pacific, the main things we did was saw 2x4s, 2x6s, 2x8s, mostly rough, for frame building, because you know in at least in New Guinea there was hardly any buildings, you know, the natives didn't have buildings. The Japanese didn't, uh, most of them were living in tents and so forth. But just on the coast. And the natives all went up into the hills and stayed there and the Japanese just occupied

the coastal. There was no base headquarters or base hospitals or anything and really rough framework. And then they would put heavy mosquito netting on the sides and on the roof, corrugated metal, you know, tin roofs, very basic but not too difficult to construct--.

Brooks: Mm-hm, yeah. Got the job done.

Fucik: And of course when we got up into the Philippines, particularly when we were on Bataan, the Japanese didn't leave a whole lot of buildings standing and of course there was a lot of rebuilding and I think we shipped, I lost track on them but for the naval base at Lingayen Gulf, we saw lots of lumber for rebuild at naval base at, uh, Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines.

Brooks: Okay, so how did you get to the South Pacific?

Fucik: What?

Brooks: How did you get to the South Pacific?

Fucik: How did I get there--.

Brooks: Mm-hm--.

Fucik: Oh, we were on the ship, Liberty ship. Yeah, the whole company was on Liberty Ship. And I think along with that was LCMs with our equipment, tractors, sawmill, and so forth, trucks, two-and-a-half tons, I had a Jeep, we had a weapons carrier, three-quarter ton truck, two-and-a-half ton, one, two, three, probably at that time was, I'm just guessing, two-and-a-half million dollars' worth of equipment--.

Brooks: Wow.

Fucik: Which was part of my responsibility.

Brooks: So how many people in the company?

Fucik: 165 enlisted men. Five officers.

Brooks: Mm-hm, okay.

Fucik: Which I was one of--.

Brooks: You were an officer.

Fucik: Yeah.

Brooks: And where was the first place you landed?

Fucik: Finschhafen--.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: Finschhafen, well we went to the very tip of New Guinea, Milne Bay. But, I was the only one that went to shore and received the orders and we were just there a day and a half and then the whole company went to Finschhafen. That's where we first started.

Brooks: Okay. And your tasks there were just to build, uh, shelters and things? What was your assignment there?

Fucik: Well, we at Finschhafen we just sawed Douglas Firs that was shipped over from the West Coast, then they decided that they needed more transportation for troops and that's when we moved up to Hollandia. That's when we actually didn't cut down our own trees, if you want to call it that. Logging and from there on when we went to Leyte we did our own logging and on Bataan, we did our own logging, too.

Brooks: So did you just go wherever you were most needed or did you follow a certain company or anything like that? Did you go-- your assignment? Did you go wherever they need you the most?

Fucik: Did I what?

Brooks: Did your company go wherever you were most needed? Is that how they decided your assignments?

Fucik: Something about assignments?

Brooks: Yeah, how did they decide where your assignments would be?

Fucik: Oh, the battalion headquarters would tell us. We were part a battalion which was, there were three other companies. There was four companies in the battalion in different places and we received orders from there. And they made arrangements for the shipping and the dates that we would leave and arrive and so forth.

Brooks: What battalion? Which battalion was it?

Fucik: What battalion? It was just engineer forestry battalion. I don't think it had a number. But each company had a--we were sixteen and eleven engineer forestry company and then there was sixteen-twelve, sixteen-thirteen, sixteen-fourteen.

Brooks: So--.

Fucik: I don't think it had a number, at least I don't remember. No, I don't think there was a number--.

Brooks: Okay--.

Fucik: It was the only one in the South Pacific--.

Brooks: Okay. So what was a typical day like for you?

Fucik: What?

Brooks: What was a typical day like?

Fucik: Was it difficult? Difficult what?

Brooks: Was your job, your work, difficult?

Fucik: Well, I wouldn't say it was difficult. Before when I found out that I was going to be the company commander at Fort Belvoir-- I knew enough about saw mills, but I found out that we were going to have three, what they called DC7 tractors, with a eight-foot blade on it. Because in New Guinea at least, we had to make our own roads, you know, away from the coast. And I didn't know a great deal about the operating of that but I found out that they had a couple tractors at Fort Belvoir and I spent two weeks before I had to leave, uh, operating one of those. I wanted to know myself what could be done and what couldn't be done. And I guess it probably paid off because you get 165 men together and there's always a few that are going to try to test you to see if you know what you are supposed to be doing. [Both laugh] Or you can do it. Once they found out that they couldn't, what should I say, bullshit me, [both laugh] pardon me--.

Brooks: No, that's okay--.

Fucik: Then everything went fine. We got along pretty well because there was a couple times that I actually crawled up in there in the cab and showed the operator that I knew what I was doing [laughs] and he couldn't bluff me. So, I guess that was part of it that I think we all got along pretty well together.

Brooks: Did you get any down time?

Fucik: What about down--.

Brooks: Did you get any down time, like relaxing? Did you get to relax at all? I'm curious about what you did when you weren't working? If you had time off?

Fucik: Oh no, we worked all the time. There was no time off. Well, uh, when we got up to on Bataan, before that in Hollandia and Leyte. Once we got set up in Leyte we

went into Leyte on D + 4 we were assigned to a island and they hadn't secured that so we were just on the coast. And 'til we got there, when we first operated, we worked seven days a week, and two shifts. Worked 'til 10 o'clock at night. And when we got on Bataan, we had Sunday's off. I made arrangements for a chaplain to come out on Sundays from Manila and we held services and we were just, I'd say two-and-a-half blocks from Mariveles. That's where the Death March started, I don't know if you're familiar with that or not--.

Brooks: A little bit.

Fucik: They came across from Corregidor and marched from Mariveles to Manila. And of course that was a little village there and we had lots of the little girls, uh, would do our washing. You know, clothing washing. Before that we did our own with big washing machines and we'd rotate the crews. Most of them, they'd rather be working [laughs] than washing clothes so that's why we rotated one week each time. But then when we got on Bataan, of course the little girls from the village did the wash and we were kind of instructed through battalion that we were to be--what should I say-- hospit-- or, uh, be, I can't think of the word, be hospitable to the natives. You know, and socialize with them. We even put a big screen up when we would have movies--this was on Bataan--all the troops would be on one side and the natives were on the other side looking at it backwards [both laugh] but that didn't bother them. They'd come up for when they found out we were going to have a movie at night and most of it was on Sundays. You know Sunday evening, after we'd had the day off. So that's, I don't know what else you need?

Brooks: Were you ever close to combat? Were you ever close to combat?

Fucik: Close to where?

Brooks: Combat?

Fucik: Combat? No, not really. There was only one time. And this was on Bataan that the Japanese troops moved way up in the hills of the mountains. And they had American force. They didn't attack it, but they just kept them there. And I don't know how it was but one night I heard a shot [laughs] one of the girls had shot a Japanese soldier. I don't know how he got down there, but he had a fork and a knife and a tray. I think he was hungry he was supposed to hold it up but the poor fellow didn't realize that he was hungry I guess. Nothing turned out on it. That's the closest we got [laughs] one person. And I think that was more or less an odd happening because nobody knows how he got by the line of--that were supposed to keep him up in the hills. But he was definitely a Japanese soldier. He didn't have many clothes on [laughs].

Brooks: Yeah. So traveling from place to place, was there any danger of torpedoes or Kamikaze pilots? When you were traveling from place to place, was there danger when you were on the ship?

Fucik: What was about it on the ship?

Brooks: When you were traveling from place to place, was there ever any danger like torpedoes? Any torpedoes or Kamikaze pilots?

Fucik: I'm not sure.

Brooks: When you were traveling on the ship, was there ever any danger from torpedoes? Torpedoes?

Fucik: Oh, was there good meals?

Brooks: No, were there any torpedoes? Torpedoes that would hit the ship?

Fucik: Yeah, on the ship?

Brooks: Were there every any torpedoes?

Fucik: I still don't--.

Brooks: I'll write it down for you.

Fucik: You have to talk kind of slow. Oh, torpedoes. No, no. Oh, you mean were there torpedoes on the ship?

Brooks: No, just that you encountered--.

Fucik: No, we never saw any. I don't think we even spotted a, that I know of anyhow, a submarine. At least I was never told and nobody ever heard about it. Actually, when we went over we took a kind of a roundabout route. We went from San Francisco and we went sort of along the South American coast and then straight across towards Australia, or the southern tip of New Guinea so-- We were quite a distance from I guess where the Japanese were more active. You know with submarines by that time anyhow. Of course earlier they-- I read, you know, where they were almost right up to the West Coast. But, not in 1944 when we went over. We left; I think it was May 9th, 1944, was when we left San Francisco.

Brooks: Okay. Did you have any siblings?

Fucik: Children?

Brooks: Brothers and sisters? Did you have brothers or sisters?

Fucik: Oh yes. I have--.

Brooks: I see this picture--.

Fucik: Three brothers.

Brooks: And which one are you?

Fucik: That's me.

Brooks: Okay so were you the oldest?

Fucik: That was taken in 1931.

Brooks: Okay, so were you the oldest?

Fucik: That's--my youngest brother sent me that a couple months ago [going through papers]. He had that-- that's my youngest brother [closes drawer].

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: He wrote this article for--these people, our ancestors on my mother's side, that came over on the Mayflower.

Brooks: Oh wow. So were you the oldest brother? You're the oldest?

Fucik: I'm the oldest. Yes.

Brooks: Did any of your brothers serve in the war?

Fucik: Yes. He was here. My grandfather, that's my mother's father, was here in 1937 and '39. He was a Civil War veteran.

Brooks: Did your brothers serve in World War II?

Fucik: Oh yes. They were all--well no-- he was a-- my next brother was a company commander of a ambulance company. He was over in England, France. He followed General Patton's army across France and into Germany. And he was a-- my next brother down was a pilot in the Air Force.

Brooks: And the youngest--.

Fucik: He wasn't in service then, but when he graduated from Illinois, he spent time in the Army of Occupation in Germany for a couple of years before he returned and--he kept in the service and he is now a, just this year, is in a place like this in San

Antonio, Texas, which is for retired Army officers. Before that, he was a professor at Texas A&I and he has a Ph. D in horticulture.

Brooks: That's neat. So how did your parents feel about having three sons in the service at the same time? How did your parents feel about having you all in the service at the same time?

Fucik: Well, I think they rather expected it because my father was in World War I. He wasn't overseas but he was at Great Lakes Naval Training Station when I was actually born of course in 1918. You know World War I was still going on until the next year in November and he was in World War I. And I think once they realized that we were--I think--all going to be, uh, what should I say? More than just regular soldiers. Become officers. I think they were satisfied that we were doing our job for the country, you know. And of course with a background of my father had been in World War I and they--how should I say--I think they probably took it for granted [laughs]. That's where we were going to end up. Once they declared--you know--Roosevelt declared war on Japanese of course bombed Pearl Harbor.

Brooks: So no sisters?

Fucik: No sisters. No. This is rather odd, I have three children, two sons and a daughter and my next brother never married. But he [points to brother in picture] had two sons and a daughter--daughter was the middle one. And he [points to other brother] has two sons and a daughter and the daughter was the oldest.

Brooks: Mm-hm. Wow--.

Fucik: So we each had three children and all the same, you know two boys and a girl.

Brooks: Huh, that is neat--.

Fucik: Yeah.

Brooks: That's very neat. So were you able to communicate with your brothers while they were all in service? Could you write to them or get messages to them?

Fucik: Something about service?

Brooks: Yeah. How did you communicate with other people?

Fucik: What about other people?

Brooks: How did you communicate?

Fucik: Come to be here?

Brooks: No, how did you communicate with other people?

Fucik: Oh, communicate with other people? What other people?

Brooks: Like with your brothers while you were in service?

Fucik: Oh, yeah. I think maybe, probably, I won't say very often. Probably once a year around Christmas. I think we used to exchange birthday cards, too, while we were in service. You know, but not on a regular basis like once a month or once every other month. If it was special occasion. Christmas--I think it was Christmas and birthdays we'd send each other cards.

Brooks: And did you get things from your parents? Did you receive mail from your parents?

Fucik: Parents? Oh, uh, yes. Yeah, we were probably much on the same occasion. I probably received those a little, uh, what did they call them? Those little messages from my wife probably once a week at that time. Because we were married before I went overseas.

Brooks: When did you get married?

Fucik: Um, April 16th, 1944.

Brooks: So right before you went overseas.

Fucik: Yeah were married--let's see--we shipped May 9th so it was about three weeks [laughs]. And then we were separated for twenty-eight months--

Brooks: Wow.

Fucik: That's the amount of time I spent overseas.

Brooks: And how did you meet your wife?

Fucik: At school. Yeah. This is rather odd--I met her in a bowling alley [laughs] if you can imagine that. One of the fellas in the house, he was a year older and we both played ball together, he was going with a girl that--Liberty Loan Insurance Company--and he set it up with, got four other guys in the house and we had sort of a fun bowling alley. And of course my wife was one of the five. And that kind of started it. Of course we went out afterwards at a little band and dance place. And we got to talking and I asked her if she was going to the Sig Formal. [A knock on the door]

Brooks: Oh, one second.

Fucik: And, well the rest is history--.

Brooks: Yeah--

Fucik: [Laughs] That kind of started it--.

Brooks: Yeah--

Fucik: But some people get a kick out of having met in the bowling alley.

Brooks: Yeah, that's funny.

Fucik: But that's the first time I saw her. And I don't know why--I guess we just kind of hit it off after that.

Brooks: So did you get married because you knew you were going overseas?

Fucik: Did what?

Brooks: Did you get married because you knew you were going overseas?

Fucik: Oh no, before I went over. Yeah.

Brooks: Mm-hm

Fucik: Oh, you mean did I get married when I went over?

Brooks: No because, did you get married because you knew you were going?

Fucik: I'm not sure I still--.

Brooks: Did you get married because you knew you were leaving?

Fucik: Uh.

Brooks: Did you want to make sure to get married before?

Fucik: No, I got married, or, we got married because before I went overseas, I had two weeks' time off. And of course I went home to Waukegan and stayed a couple of days with my folks. And then I went up to Hancock--that's where she lived--and I think it just took us a couple of days and we decided, well if I'm going overseas, let's get married. And part of it was that you know if you were married, you got a little more compensation. And when I received--this is probably something--I became twenty-six years old on June 26th, of 1944, I guess they call that your lucky birthday. And it turned out that it was because that was the same day I received my captain's rating. And of course once I received a captain's rating--I was sending home over 500 dollars a month because a captain's rating was 310

dollars a month and then you add compensation for if you were married, it was 170 dollars. And then by that time, I'd had three years in service because they counted the two years that I was in active service at Michigan Tech. I didn't even know that. And then you've got another five percent for overseas pay. And over there, there was nothing to spend money on. You know--at least I have--through Battalion I got free cigarettes. About a carton every other month and actually I didn't smoke much, I gave most of them away. And that started our--what do you want to call it-- nest egg. Because she was working as a teller in the Superior National Bank in Hancock, so she just put it in the bank. And then of course, when I came back we had something to start with. You know?

Brooks: Yeah, that's great. So do you remember where you were when you heard about V-J Day? Do you remember V-J Day?

Fucik: Did I what?

Brooks: Did you remember V-J Day? I'll write it down for you. Sorry I'm trying to talk slow but—V-J Day?

Fucik: V-J Day, oh yeah--.

Brooks: Do you remember it--.

Fucik: Oh yeah! That was-- we were on Bataan, yeah. And we received the VJ Day--and this is kind of-- and they also called it, I can't think of it but, the natives all came 'round camp and they had little cups of water and they were throwing it on everybody [both laugh]. Celebrating, I guess that's the way they celebrated. You know like a Baptism or something but--you got a little wet but fifteen minutes and you are all dry.

Brooks: What was your reaction?

Fucik: Well, I thought--I really can't remember because I knew we were gonna still be, you know, that wasn't the end of work. And I knew my job was to keep, you know, people active. And so I spent most of my time making sure that everybody was doing things and work rather than too much celebrating [laughs]. Which could have been a disaster because if the--once in a while on--like I said we were off on Sundays and some of the men would make trips down to the little village, and they all came back, but some of them had a little help getting back. I didn't want that to get too far carried away so I made sure that--they were supposed to get passes and I talked to all of them that were gone and I said, "Now make sure you get back here because we're not finished. You know just because the war is over we don't quit working." [Laughs] You know.

Brooks: So what was your last assignment?

Fucik: Well after we deactivated about, let's see that was, actually the signing on the Missouri was September 5th, wasn't it?

Brooks: I think so, yeah.

Fucik: I think, in Tokyo Bay. After that, I think it was about eight weeks, September, October, yeah, just before Thanksgiving our company was turned over to Philippine army and they took over then. Most of the troops, I'd say about eighty-five percent were older than I was. All of the officers were older than I was. And most of them were put in camp of deactivation, you know ready to go back home. And I went to Battalion Headquarters and I had an assignment to inspect the four--the equipment that the four companies had turned over to the Philippines. And I went from place to place to make sure that they were using it properly and not abusing it, but using it for what it was supposed to be used for. And a little bit of training with some of the staff officers to make sure that they understood what they were supposed to be doing. You know. And I did that for maybe a half a year and I came back to the States--I arrived in San Francisco on September 5th. Just a year after--.

Brooks: Oh wow--.

Fucik: The Japanese surrendered. September 5th, 1946. And of course then I went to--I was assigned to a troop chain commander back to Fort Sheridan. That was nearest because my home address was still Waukegan, Illinois. You know, even though Gene was up in Hancock. Mine still was at Waukegan, Illinois, was my home address, and that's where I was discharged in Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

Brooks: Is Hancock--is that in Wisconsin? Where is Hancock?

Fucik: Hancock's in upper Michigan--.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: In, uh, "U-P" up in Houghton and Hancock. You know, way up. They call it the "Copper Country". Yeah, you know. It's way up in the tip. Almost to the top. 'Course the very top of the upper peninsula is Copper Harbor, that's only, uh, that's about forty miles from Isle Royale. You familiar with Isle Royale?

Brooks: Uh-uh.

Fucik: That's a big island up there. And just inside the, uh, Canadian border.

Brooks: Ok. So you got discharged at Fort Sheridan?

Fucik: Yes, I was discharged at Fort Sheridan. That's right.

Brooks: But you remained in the Army. Correct?

Fucik: When?

Brooks: You stayed in the Army, right?

Fucik: Well, I remained in inactive service. You know. They didn't call it active service. Well, I explained that some engineers had specialty ratings. Which I was one of them because I was a forestry engineering background. And I could have been called up if they--in the Korean War, and probably the beginning of the Vietnam War, if they needed somebody in that capacity. Actually, when I was in inactive service, I was discharged as a Major. But I never served in active times and ever so--If I was called back, I would be assigned to a capacity of no less than a Captain. And evidently they--there wasn't a need for a, uh, forestry engineering officer. So I never served any active duty after that. After, well let's see. I arrived at Fort Sheridan on September 5th, and of course I went to Waukegan. And, uh, my brother, this one was [points to picture]--.

Brooks: The third one.

Fucik: Was there at home and he just had gotten out of the service. And he had his own plane. And, uh, I called--of course I called up Gene as soon as I got in to Waukegan. And I told her that I'd see her in a couple hours. She said, "A couple hours? How are you going--the train doesn't come in 'til--" you know the train went from Milwaukee to, uh, Hancock. And you left Milwaukee at 8:00 o'clock at night and got in to Houghton at, uh, about 7:00 o'clock in the morning. I said, "Well, my brother's going to fly me up." [Laughs] So that was rather--and he had an open plane, you know. And I about froze in the back [laughs] because my blood was so thin from being in the South Pacific. But anyhow, we arrived there and spent a couple of days. Then she had our car and we drove back and I was discharged in--fully discharged from Fort Sheridan on, uh, I think it was the fourteenth of September. Of course I went in inactive service from then 'til I became forty-five years old.

Brooks: What was the discharge process like?

Fucik: Well, it didn't take too long once you know--I think once you arrived there, then they were, you know, they had four or five days to prepare your papers and everything. And once you came back, they read your papers and discharge and told me I would be on inactive service and you sign your release. And that was

about it. You know, you didn't spend a lot of time there. They did the preparing while you were gone those week or so.

Brooks: So you didn't have a choice to be on inactive service?

Fucik: What about--.

Brooks: You had no choice? You didn't have a choice? Did they give you a choice?

Fucik: Did what?

Brooks: Did they give you a choice? Did you get to decide?

Fucik: Did I decide? No, it was automatic. You mean--no that was automatic as I explained because of the background and specialty rating. No, that was automatic.

Brooks: Okay, and how did you feel about that?

Fucik: Well I thought that was alright. At least I knew that if I ever got called back, I'd probably be in something familiar with, you know. That I wouldn't have to go through with a whole new learning process.

Brooks: So what did you do in your civilian life? What kind of work?

Fucik: After that?

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Fucik: Well, the--I had four months after I was discharged, four months of what they called leave, accumulated, because I didn't have any leave all the time I was in the South Pacific. So I had four months to kind of decide. And we spent some time with our folks and then we went around--she had a sister in Detroit we spent a few days there. We went up to Hancock and spent a few days with her mother and father. And she had a brother and a sister-in-law that lived up there. And we just kind of traveled around and I stopped at school and asked if the professor, forestry professor, if there was--he had any job offerings. He said, "Yes, I do!" He said they're looking for somebody to take charge of the, uh, pulp, uh no, Eau Claire [??] Pulp and Paper Company operation up in the Porcupine Mountains. Which is you know the Upper Peninsula, right near Ontonagon. And so I said, "When?" and he said, "Well, whenever you're ready." I said, "Well, give me about two weeks." 'Cause I wanted to go home and get my civilian clothing [laughs] you know, and work clothes and I knew that I had winter clothes that I'd have to, you know, get together and so forth if I was gonna be outside there. So, we started that and I spent--I started to work with them just before Christmas, I think the

fifteenth or sixteenth of December. Actually, the, how should I--about that time, they said Ontonagon was about the end of the earth [laughs]. All of the crafts people, the skill people, and so forth, during the war they either moved down to Detroit, or Milwaukee, or Chicago. And there wasn't much there. If you wanted to build your own house, of course we had some money saved up, we could have built but there wasn't anybody to build it. You know, all of the crafts people left. And we ended up living in up above a restaurant, and we had two rooms, we had a community bathroom with three other couples. And you had to kind of figure out what time people were gonna use it [laughs]. We thought, "Oh jeez." When they had up there, in upper Michigan, when the snow melts, you know there is quite a bit of snow, around the first of April or middle of April, it gets pretty slushy. And they actually close down the forestry operation for about three weeks until it kind of dries up. And we just decided that we weren't going to come back, and I told them that I wasn't going to come back. Her brother-in-law--my brother-in-law was a Atlas Powder salesman in Wisconsin. He said, "You know if you're looking for a new home, they're building a lot of new brick homes in Neenah and Menasha." And I knew enough about Neenah and Menasha that was a lot of paper industry, pulp, which is probably the next thing to forestry. So, uh, I don't know how many people do this but, we found a house that we liked. A new house that it was just being built. It wasn't even finished yet. And it was near schools, it was near the paper mills, we bought a house, put a down payment, and then I applied for a job at American Can [laughs] and well the rest is history. We stayed there from, that was, we put the down payment May 9th, 1947. We'd been in Menasha since 1947. 'Course, now the house is sold, but I have one son that lives in Neenah, a daughter that lives in Menasha, and the other son and his wife live in Appleton and also Iola. Are you familiar with Iola?

Brooks: I don't think so.

Fucik: No.

Brook: No.

Fucik: He owns that museum or restaurant in Iola.

Brooks: Where is it?

Fucik: The--oh no, I can't think of the name [long pause] Crestwood?

Brooks: It's okay.

Fucik: In Iola anyhow. It was a farmer museum. Well it started out as a, uh, Millcrest! That's what it's called. Millcrest. Yeah, it started out as a logging mill and then it

became a grain mill. You know, they made grain and then flour. And the people that owned it were getting up in years. It was up for sale and somehow or another, he and his wife found out about it and they took a look at it and decided that they liked it. And of course it had another building on it with a couple of apartments. And it has a generator down in the basement that generates electricity from a waterfall. There's a lake right by it. And he gets all his own electricity to run that building and the apartment building. Plus he sells between seven and eighteen hundred dollars' worth of electricity to Wisconsin Michigan Power. And the best part is they have to take it because it's environmental, free. You know, no coal or gas. It's just from electricity from the waterfall.

Brooks: Yeah, that's great.

Fucik: Yeah.

Brooks: That's really neat. Did you join any Veteran's organizations?

Fucik: Did I join what?

Brooks: Veteran's organizations?

Fucik: No, I didn't. When I was--started to work at American Can, I became familiar with a gentleman that worked there and that was a scout master in the Congregational Church. And he kind of talked me into being a--helping him. And I spent, well I think it is, forty years. [Walks over to something for reference] I don't know what this is. [Referring to item]

Brooks: Scout leader. It doesn't have a date on it.

Fucik: Yeah. Does that say forty years? [Referring to item]

Brooks: It doesn't have any numbers on it.

Fucik: Yeah, I spent forty years in scouting and that's where I spent most of my time. I became a scout master and of course our boys went through it. I even--my wife was a Girl Scout leader, and I was her assistant, in charge of outdoor activities. [Laughs] I guess I spent most of my time in scouting. Plus, we enjoyed playing golf. We had a family membership at Ridgeway Country Club in Neenah for fifty-one years. So, all of our family when they were growing up played golf and I guess between scouting and golfing that took up most of our time. Plus church work, too. We were active in the church with the deacons and deaconesses, church council and so forth.

Brooks: Did you use any veteran's benefits?

Fucik: Did benefit?

Brooks: The veteran's benefits? Did you use any?

Fucik: No, I don't have any veteran's benefits. Well, I guess when you come here there's a Wisconsin--I think--veterans benefits. Um, I'm not too familiar with that because my son, uh, when we came here in--let's see here--it was just after my ninetieth birthday so it was 1908, August, 1908--.

Brooks: 2008?

Fucik: Before that, my son is the executor of the estate. So he takes care of all of the finances. And I think, I'm told between social security and my retirement from American Can and the benefits--Wisconsin benefits--just about takes care of our stay here. Or my stay here. I should say in the beginning it was--my wife was here until about, let's see, she passed away in March of 1910. She was a little bit, what would you call it, advanced stages I guess when we came here of Alzheimer's Disease. But it kept getting worse. When we were here, you know how that is--I had to keep track of her pretty close because she'd forget where her room was and she couldn't remember what she had for breakfast and so forth. But, then she passed away and of course we were in a double room up the other hall. I think in number 377, but now I've been down here since then and--.

Brooks: So here at King, do you talk to the other veterans about your experience in the Army?

Fucik: What about the Army?

Brooks: Do you talk to the other veterans here about your experiences?

Fucik: We talk every once and a while but it's just like you and I. I don't do a lot of discussion and so forth unless it's some place where we are almost by ourselves 'cuz it's too much background. You know I have trouble, you can understand that here. [Both laugh]

Brooks: Yeah. [Laughs]

Fucik: But, I don't have any trouble with mobility or anything like that. Like, on weather like this I like to go out on that putting green. I spend a couple of hours out there when it is nice like this.

Brooks: Mm-hm, it's beautiful outside.

Fucik: Yes.

Brooks: Yeah. So how do you think the Army changed your life?

Fucik: How did the Army change my life?

Brooks: Mm-hm, or did it?

Fucik: I--Well, I guess I was explaining that before. I don't think it changed my life a great deal. Except that when we first started out, like I was telling you up in--the living conditions that we had up there, I think that kind of changed me that I'm not going to put up with this, you know. That I didn't spend twenty-eight months overseas or separated to live like a group of people that--we wanted our own place. You know, and so that we could raise our own children and you know have our own yard, have our own garden. 'Cuz we both liked to garden. My job was generally always to spade it up, rake it, then we'd plant together. So, I guess that's the only change that once I decided that we're going to find a place that we can call our own. Do our own thing. And I wasn't--I knew that after the war that there was going to be a big change in manufacturing. Like automobiles and cars and trucks that were sort of put on the side for military vehicles, you know. That there should be plenty of opportunities for job offers. I guess I was fortunate that I didn't receive something that--I was in I guess you'd call it, industrial engineering, you know. And that's what it ended up which was close to engineering but I didn't have [clears throat] quite the amount of outdoor, you know, activities. But it was something that I'd like. It was a challenge. And I like a challenge. You know, to do things better, more convenient, more economical, you know, 'cuz that was part of my job. Placing machinery and placing crews, you know, and the number of crews, and those type of things. So, I guess you could call that, I don't know if that's a change or not, maybe a little bit of a change--.

Brooks: Mm-hm--.

Fucik: --you know from what I started out with, but otherwise I didn't follow Army-like instructions, giving orders, you know and [inaudible]. I always got along with the people I worked with. I didn't have conflicts or anything. And we'd have discussions and so forth but it was always on friendly terms. Constructive terms.

Brooks: So when you were on inactive duty, did you have to check in at all? Those years that you were inactive, did you have to go and check in?

Fucik: What with active what?

Brooks: When you were inactive--.

Fucik: Oh, inactive--

Brooks: Did you have to go and check in sometimes?

Fucik: No--.

Brooks: They just--.

Fucik: No--.

Brooks: They said they'd call you if they need you?

Fucik: I never even received a, you know a notice, or anything. Just inactive. As I said before, evidently there wasn't a need for a--what I was--my specialty was of course forestry engineering. And evidently in Korean War and Vietnam War, there wasn't a call for that type of thing. I'm not familiar with that. I don't know-- I don't think there was, from what I read, there was that many forests, you know. And it wasn't, what's the word, so naïve, or you know, so backward, you know. Nothing there to begin with.

Brooks: Do you have any other stories or anything else to say?

Fucik: Do I have any other stories? No, I don't think so.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: No, I can't think of anything. I'll tell you something that--Just the other day, about a week ago, we were playing Penny Annie; you know what PennyAnnie is? You gather up here with the activity crews and everybody gets pennies and then the girl activities picks out a card and asks you different things. And she asks you if somebody is wearing red socks, you get a penny or different things. And long about the middle, she asks me if I was ever in Drama, or plays. I thought, well, I was sort of in a play in Waukegan. But I didn't want to take a penny if it was--So I explained it. When I was a senior in high school, they always had a senior play. Just for seniors. And it was always about a week or so before Thanksgiving, before or after football season, before basketball season started, before the Christmas holidays. And, they--several of them said, "Come on George, you got to be in the senior class play, you're in everything else." I said, "Oh jeez, I'm not an actor." But anyhow I got talked into it. So, the play was sort of a who-dun-it show. And they always had it on Friday night, was for the student body, and part of the faculty as chaperones. Or you know a guide. And then Saturday night was for the parents and the rest of the school staff and the school board, and some people from the community. And my job was to--all I had to do was run out on the stage and say, "Hark, I hear a pistol shot." So the night came, Friday night, I ran out on the stage, I made the mistake of looking up out at the audience, and the very front row is the whole football team. I swear they had a big grin on their

face and I just kinda lost it. I'm not sure what I said, but I said something like, "Hark, I hear a shistol pot! Hark, I hear a pistol pot!" Then I ran off the stage. Football team said that was the best part of the whole show. [Laughs] But the definitely teacher didn't think so because the next night, somebody else was taking my--that was my solo of drama. [Laughs]

Brooks: [Laughs] that was your one chance.

Fucik: That's as far as I got in acting. [Both laugh]

Brooks: Great. Anything else about your military experience?

Fucik: No, I don't think so. I just happened to think of that 'cuz we were doing that the other night.

Brooks: Yeah. Yeah. But anything else about being in the Army or anything? Any other thoughts about being in the Army?

Fucik: No.

Brooks: More thoughts about being in the Army?

Fucik: What about the Army?

Brooks: Any other thoughts? Any more thoughts, anything else to say?

Fucik: Oh, no. I don't think so. Uh, I think we've covered about everything.

Brooks: Okay.

Fucik: Probably too much. [Laughs]

Brooks: No, no such thing. No such thing. [Both laugh]

Fucik: Yeah. [Laugh]

Brooks: Okay, I'm going to turn the recorder off now. Thank you.

[end of interview]