

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**ROBERT L. GRANGER**  
Chemical Weapons Specialist, Army, Korean War Era  
1996

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**Granger, Robert L.**, (b.1932). Oral History Interview, 1996.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 45 min.), analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### **Abstract**

Robert Granger, a Darien, Wisconsin native, discusses his service in the Second Chemical Weapons Battalion as a Korean War-era enlistee. He speaks about the mentality that he and other young men of the post World War II generation had towards the Korean War and military service. After most of his friends had already left for the service, Granger “volunteered for the draft” just after Christmas of 1952. After reporting for duty in the Wisconsin National Guard on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1953, Granger talks about the physical that the men received at the induction center in Milwaukee. After passing his physical, Robert verbalizes how he was selected for the Chemical Corps at Fort Sheridan (Illinois). From Fort Sheridan, he moved onto Fort McClellan in Alabama. He discusses his experiences with the classroom training there and the limited weapons training they received. Granger did not feel the least bit prepared for combat. In fact he felt like the officers were just making sure that the military hierarchy was “impressed upon them.” Granger addresses how he adapted to the military lifestyle well, the education levels of his fellow troops, and his limited interaction with blacks in the military. He spent the last 20 months of his enlistment in Utah working with the Second Chemical Weapons Battalion, where he talks about an experiment in attempting to introduce poison gas to a smoke cloud. He speaks about the living conditions of the men and what they did in their leisure time. He also explains the atmosphere of Salt Lake City (Utah) and how he came to meet his first wife. After returning to Wisconsin, Granger tells how he used his GI benefits and characterizes his relationship with the American Legion. Finally, he summarizes how he feels about his military service and shares a few of his opinions on the all volunteer service and how the young people of today relate to it.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Granger (b.1932) served with the Second Chemical Weapons Battalion during the Korean War era. He was involved in trying to introduce poison gas into smoke clouds in Utah.

Interviewed by Mark Van Ells, 1996

Transcribed by Rose Polachek, 2004.

Transcription edited by Damon R. Bach, 2005.

## Interview Transcript

- MARK: Okay, today's date is May 28, 1996. This is Mark Van Ells, Archivist with the Wisconsin Veteran's Museum doing an oral history interview this morning with Mr. Robert Granger, originally of Darien, Wisconsin. That's in Walworth County right?
- ROBERT: Yes.
- MARK: Veteran of the Korean War period. Good morning and thanks for coming in.
- ROBERT: Good morning Mark.
- MARK: I appreciate it, on this dreary day. I suppose we should start at the top as they say. Why don't you tell me a little about where you were born and raised and what you were doing prior to the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950?
- ROBERT: I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Christmas day of '32 and I grew up in the Delavan, Darien, Elkhorn & Sharon area. I had just graduated at the end of May, 1950, and was employed at Admiral TV factory, and when the Korean War began in June of '50.
- MARK: Must have been a pretty new occupation.
- ROBERT: Yes, yeah. They were pretty crude when we started out and even after I served in the army, I went back to Admiral for a while. I'd worked myself up to a good job and but that's all gone overseas now.
- MARK: So when the war broke up you were all of 18, perhaps?
- ROBERT: Seventeen.
- MARK: When you first heard the news, do you recall that war had broken out, cause it was—
- ROBERT: Well, yes, working there in the TV factory, we heard the news all the time and well, it just seemed so far away and then at first it was referred to as a police action. And then it seemed, well we've figured the good guys are always gonna win and then by November of '51, it appeared that we weren't winning, when the Chinese, especially when the Chinese entered. But I was oh, about nine months behind all the others guys in my age group that I hung out with. I probably started school too young, so I wasn't 18 until Christmas of '50, and then in '50 and '51 I saw my peer group go in, gradually and everything and then.
- MARK: Drafted you mean?

ROBERT: Drafted, yes, mostly drafted. But the times were different than and nobody, very few considered ways not going. A few got farm jobs. I know one that was offered a farm job by a member of the county board and he said "I'll keep you out" and my friend said no I'll just take my chances and go when it comes. But even then finally my closest friends went so just after Christmas of '52, I went to the draft board and volunteered for the draft.

MARK: I've always found that interesting when you compare the Korean/Viet Nam experiences because they are similar conflicts in so many ways and yet public reaction and especially among young men was so different on the surface at least.

ROBERT: Right.

MARK: Perhaps you could talk a little bit more from the perspective of a 17 or 18 year olds as to why you didn't, why there wasn't more resistance to going in. I mean, after all, it wasn't Pearl Harbor, or --

ROBERT: No. But, Ike was our president and we had confidence, well I mean, no not at first, of course, Mr. Truman was, but I think so many, the culture was acceptance because so soon after World War II and so many of us had family members that went and--.

MARK: Did you?

ROBERT: Have, yes, I had --

MARK: Have family members that were in WW II?

ROBERT: Yes, yes, I had an uncle, yes. And in our small town all the veterans of WW II would come back and establish themselves and life went on and we didn't hear many, uh, not many horror stories. I mean people had bad times and there were a few in our small town that were lost, but in 1950, we were close to WWII yet and it was the accepted thing to do when your country called and you went.

MARK: Was there a role for anti-communism and that sort of thing, outlook as well. I mean ostensibly the Korean War was part of the other cold war ---

ROBERT: Right, well.

MARK: --towards the communists.

ROBERT: Right. Well, I have always been a voracious reader. I mean I read everything. And I, even as a kid, you know, in learning about drinking beer and having fun in my first car [laughing] uh, still, I subscribed to Newsweek magazine at that time and I read the daily papers. But, and our family received campaign literature from Joe McCarthy and it really didn't seem to touch the lives of an 18-year old. I just,

I mean the war was a dark cloud on the horizon and we all accepted the fact that when our time came we would go. I just speeded it up a little by volunteering. Before I volunteered though for the draft a lot of the fellows I worked with were members of the Wisconsin Guard, members of the Elkhorn unit. So I joined them and golly, it wasn't exactly a social thing, but it was too because a lot of the fellows in the Elkhorn unit were from the towns around there and I knew them. So I went, I joined in '52, went to Camp Ripley, Minnesota that summer and I enjoyed it. I had been a boy scout as a kid and then with the guard, so I was used to camp living, I guess you might say. A little bit of communal living. Oh, I had been at YMCA camp too, so like from the age 10 I guess I was just used to living with others and getting along in a camp setting. So I guess the army just appeared to be an extension of that. I never really thought of it in terms of actually getting hurt [chuckling]. And being a small town kid and maybe a little bit of it mixed up in there, but the adventure of leaving home and going off to the vast unknown.

MARK: So the time came when Uncle Sam finally sent his greeting, and you went off to the service. Why don't you just walk me through the steps of going from your actual induction, the physical, the interviews and that sort of thing and then off to basic training. And sort of walk me through those steps, where did you go and who did you see and what you experienced.

ROBERT: Sure. Well, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February, 1953, I reported to Elkhorn and we were kind of a jolly group. I remember one fella didn't show up. We always wondered what happened to him. But we went into Milwaukee and the induction center. We had a physical. [Light laugh] I thought it was rather quick and I don't know if you had to be missing a limb or something but on the other hand, there were a couple guys rejected. And then there were some that were held over to be retested and we figured that they were doing something to try to jack up their blood pressure. We heard there were the old bar of soap and the lifebuoy soap under the arm. I don't know if that was a rumor or what, so we did that and then I remember we were inducted, and took the one step forward. Immediately there was a controversy over whether one fella stepped forward or not, I remember that. And then uh----

MARK: Sort of a half-step forward, maybe?

ROBERT: [Laughing] Maybe. Maybe he has just trying their patience. But, I don't remember any minorities. Now being from a small town, I'd only known one black family that lived in Delavan and, but, neither here nor there to me. I had no feelings against them. I thought they were just other people and so we were overnight in Milwaukee and then we took a bus to, let's see, to Chicago. I don't know somewhere we got on the inter-urban it seemed like, and we went to Chicago and we changed trains. I remember there were a lot of Chicago, we met with a lot of Chicago guys and remember them rushing to the phones trying to call mother where they were going. And then we took the train to Alabama. And so I thought up to then, well, this is interesting, but we got off the train [laughing]

and it was a different world, because then, the world, you know I was a little bit used to it, but we got off the train and the yelling began, and –

MARK: This was not YMCA camp.

ROBERT: No, it wasn't.

MARK: It became evident right away I take it.

ROBERT: No, and a lot of their cadre was, were Korean veterans and so naturally they, may have thought we were the dumbest thing they had ever seen and that they'd try to impress us [laughing] to that point. So there were in Fort McClellan in Alabama, a chemical branch of the service.

MARK: So, by the time you went to Fort McClellan, you already knew you were going to go into the chemical service.

ROBERT: Yes, of yes. The tests at Fort Sheridan, oh, that's it. From Milwaukee you went to Fort Sheridan, and then it was inter-urban to the train station. Yes, at Fort Sheridan we took our tests and were issued our clothes and were in our old WW II barracks which were pretty well worn, because, but the strange thing was that I had been to that same receiving company three times before visiting friends of mine. And at that time, you could just go to their barracks with them, you know or just go and have a couple of beers with them and so I was familiar with that same company. Even seen some of the noncommissioned and there was a very impressive first sergeant, a black guy. I had never seen anyone so in command or so confident. I'd never seen a black man in a command situation before and he was the right man to be a first sergeant. And, so that's when we met some of the people from the Chicago area that we ended up with. Anyway, after taking tests, I even had an interview to go to the Signal Corp. and these two guys interviewing me thought it was awful funny. They thought that I could go work with carrier pigeons. They still had a few of those left. They thought that was funny. Well, when the results came out, I don't know what I did wrong, but my name was at the head of a list of 150 people to go to the chemical corp. In the army, you always wonder why your name is at the head of the list. You know, G is not alphabetical. So, okay, that was it. It was a good thing you brought that up. I left out Fort Sheridan. But Fort Sheridan in February is very cold.

MARK: I bet it is. Alabama was much different I suspect.

ROBERT: Well, it was, but in February, it was pretty cold but we were under pressure. We lived in tents, concrete floor, and about four foot walls. So they were pretty chilly but we were told that we could have a fire but it had to pass white glove inspection the next day so we never had a fire. And I would wear everything I had to bed and then come spring and it was tornado season. We had a lot of tornadoes here, I remember. In fact, it and then, the Tennessee guard came down

and they had some accidents. I don't know, about six guys got killed that spring. But being in the guard, Wisconsin Guard, I went in the service and everybody else's serial number started with a 55, mine started with 27 and so that immediately identified me as being NGSOB. And then when they saw the Tennessee fellas, they would have their brass on wrong. A lot of them looked like it was the first time they had seen shoes. Well, of course, the culture at the time. So I was tired of the same brush. I had to be awful stupid because I had been in the National Guard. But then, we were having a session on maps and intelligence and this fella asked a question. And I couldn't resist, I knew the answer word for word and he was amazed, but then on the other hand, my peers were not impressed either. I should have just kept quiet. To this day, I haven't learned yet to keep quiet when I should. [Laughter] So in our training battalion, the commanding officer, Lt. Colonel Bell and three of the company commanders, they had all been together, plus some of the sergeants, they had been together in Korea. They were at the wrong place at the wrong time when the Chinese came across the yellow, and most of the battalion was wiped out. So here are these, these were our leaders now and so we kind of wondered about them. And then so many of the cadres, well being cadre, lorded it over us, but some of them went right on through the weekends and everything. This one guy got busted I remember because he had us on a Sunday night doing push-ups and he would put his feet on us to hold us down. He [laughter] got busted for that, so it was rather intense, 16 weeks.

MARK: Which consisted of, which was composed of what. How much of it was marching and drilling? How much of it was rifle training? How much of it was in a class room?

ROBERT: Oh boy.

MARK: Any to your recollection.

ROBERT: Yes. It seemed like 60% was classroom stuff. I really, even though I was familiar with the rifles, and I, uh, carving, but those were the only two weapons I was trained on and then it didn't seem like we much, we each got to throw one grenade, I think. And then we got to carry around and clean a machine gun, a .30 caliber, but we never got to fire that. I got to shoot a bazooka. So I thought we had rather limited weapons training. And I look back on it and I don't even think we were shown pictures of what the North Koreans wore, what their uniforms were. I know we didn't have any training on what to do if our weapons jammed, you know, in muddy conditions or anything. I really didn't feel a bit prepared for combat. Our company commander liked to ridicule us, you know he liked to yell at us about you know how dumb we thought we were and he said that in about six months 90% of you will be casualties because you don't know squat. So, it just seemed like basic was more with the cadre and the officers impressing on us the power structure rather than actually learning experience to prepare us for anything. And then as I noted there, all my life I volunteered for things and I

probably wouldn't have survived, or else would have been an awfully quick-study,. [chuckle] but even so, it s such a matter of luck. This friend of mine says that day he got his orders to leave over to Korea and he said goodbye to everybody and he was walking across and they dropped a mortar round right on the top of his head. So, just luck.

MARK: In terms of your training again, as you mentioned when you first got there, you were struck by the language. Were there some parts of military life that you found difficult to handle and did others around you have difficulty handling it and have to leave for some reason? Some people don't like the language and that sort of thing. In terms of adjusting to this new world, how did you and those around you cope with it?

ROBERT: Oh, I took it pretty well. I thought it was quite unfair at times where they would blame everybody for what some one had done. And, it was some of them were just so personal. And then events, it seemed like the guys in the company kind of turned on each other. We didn't have much of a feeling of togetherness. Did have one fellow in my tent that just couldn't take it. I remember he was laying on the floor crying when we all left because he was going to go through basic training again and but, generally, there was no one that got into trouble such as fighting back or sassing back or anything. We just had one fella that was taken away because he was caught stealing in a locker room. There was a sporting, a sports event of the third army, we all had to go watch it and I think he was one of the competitors in track or something, and well he went back to the locker room early and was caught taking wallets. So we didn't see him for about a year and a half and then he suddenly appeared out in Utah where we were. So, no one, you know lashed out or fought with the NCOs. Generally, a docile [chuckle] I think would be a good word. So we dug in and we knew it would be over sometime.

MARK: Now when I went off to basic training, it sort of brought together people from all different parts of the country of regional and cultural backgrounds and that sort of thing. Was that your experience as well and if so, --

ROBERT: Yes.

MARK: If so how did the people from these different backgrounds get along that seemed to indicate everyone, everything wasn't "rosy" shall we say.

ROBERT: Yes. Well, in Alabama, we were brought together with people from the east coast and just like war movies; there was one fellow from Brooklyn. And we had some coal miners, I had two coal miners in my tent that hadn't been anywhere before and I don't think were very well educated. Had a black fellow from Boston that was, had a lot of leadership potential. We had a couple that I don't know if they graduated from high school, or if they did they didn't deserve too. But we had in other platoons, there were some interesting fellows. Some had been in college. In fact, I remember this one college fellow. He, there was an officer on the post,



we met at the swimming pool that he had gone to school with, and so it was dark and we were sitting around in their barracks talking and I thought these were all college level folks and that they didn't know that we were enlisted guys, and if they had, it probably would have been different. So we had all levels. Not many from the south. They were mostly from the east and the Midwest.

MARK: And everyone pretty much got along in terms of –

ROBERT: Yes. Yes.

MARK: Now, what about race? As we have discussed already, this is sort of a new frontier for the American military in this period in some ways. There were some blacks in training.

ROBERT: Not in basic. I couldn't understand, later in Utah, we came up with some because when we got to Utah then we, guys were coming, it was a new battalion. Newly formed, so they had not, half came from California or from the west, from Camp Roberts and the other half from Fort McClellan. And at that point, then we had about a company of about 120 or whatever there were about 4 blacks, one Chinese, I remember that, two Japanese and two Mexicans. And, we got along okay. You know I never met much less lived with minorities, but heck, I took this black fellow up to Idaho to retrieve a car one weekend and things like that.

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ROBERT: The Chinese fellow, he kept to himself, he didn't talk to hardly anyone. He was just patiently waiting out his time.

MARK: Well, so after basic training, I imagine you had to go off to some sort of specialized training and ----

ROBERT: No, we didn't. Oh, no that was basic

MARK: That was taken care of at basic as well.

ROBERT: Yea, we had a little bit of training in gas, and smoke generator mostly. That was our—

MARK: See, you think that chemical weapons in World War I and that sort of thing and that's not necessarily what you were doing I'm taking.

ROBERT: No, we had to be familiar with the use of gases and the smoke for camouflage. That was used in both wars before and in Korea the battalion had been the chemical border battalion but they were mostly a mortar battalion and like you said, chemical weapons weren't used.

MARK: So after basic training, is that when you went to California?

ROBERT: Utah.

MARK: You went to Utah after that?

ROBERT: Yes.

MARK: And that was the Second Chemical Weapons Battalion?

ROBERT: Yes.

MARK: How long did you spend in Utah?

ROBERT: Well, for the remainder of my, about 20 months. I was fortunate; I took training and audio visual equipment that was a short one. But then I was three weeks in California for more chemical biological, radiological training. That was pleasant. That was the only time in two years I actually slept in the barracks where I had the bathroom. [Laughter] The rest of the time was go out across the yard.

MARK: So twenty months, now you are cadre, I guess, I was in the Air Force, they didn't use that term, but this is your duty station then. Why don't if you could, describe for me a typical day as the newest man in the chemical unit in Utah during the 1950's. I mean how, what such things were you doing?

ROBERT: Well, dug way proving ground, there were ongoing projects and experiments, and our main experience was experiment, was introducing poison gas into the smoke cloud; which would have been unexpected so we used the most lethal agent they had, or probably still have, a "G" agent. And so we did eventually kill a lot of pigeons but after quite a bit of our time was taken up with this experiment, and it turned out that it wasn't practical. The gas would precipitate out of the smoke cloud too early. But, while,--

MARK: So, there were other missions like this where you were experimenting with different ways to --

ROBERT: Yes, decontamination.

MARK: This is out in the desert somewhere I take it.

ROBERT: Yes, it was.

MARK: Which is necessarily where you lived?

ROBERT: Yes, that's where we lived. We lived in tar paper shacks that had been used in WW II for interning Japanese. So there I just, wood with tar paper on it and then the Utah climate out there was almost like Wisconsin only hotter in the summer. So in the winter time when it was below zero they had to have a constant fire watch because they had to have stoves running so hot. So they were pretty well worn out and we were in the same area where there is an air field, run by the air force and they were testing, well I believe they were testing a forerunner to the phantom jet. Because it had the dropped nose, I remember that. And a lot of the times it was a civilian pilot testing it so he got to really wring it out but I remember they had the B57 bomber there. They were flying different missions too with the laying gas, and because it was an experimental station, our mess hall, there could be navy people eating there with us, or you know people on TDY, occasionally marines, and the air force detachment was there. You never knew who you would see although civilians never ate with us. ?? Some of us would be in a different area, but different areas of the post were laid off. One area was radiological, and we don't know what they were doing there.

MARK: So, I'd imagine they kept you pretty busy.

ROBERT: Well, yeah, there was maintenance---

MARK: It's pretty isolated but it sounds like it's a busy place.

ROBERT: In training, there is always training like I said I was pretty fortunate to get sent off and another time it was a month's long exercise out on the desert living in our tents and, aghhhh, the weather was really bad. So there was always something. Yes, and then toward the end they were starting to make a change over to using 4.5 rockets. I would like to see them set it off.

MARK: Was it 24 tubes and—

ROBERT: That would have been spectacular!

MARK: So, I would imagine there was some time for recreation. There were times when you weren't on duty and that sort of thing, now you were pretty isolated out there. What sorts of amusements did the army provide and that sort of thing?

ROBERT: It was in a different area. It was ten miles away and getting there, not many fellows had cars on post because the insurance restrictions were pretty. Lot of fellows when they could by hook or crook went to Salt Lake City, which was 90 miles away. On post, boy there wasn't much. There really wasn't. We had a small beer hall area. It, in your form there, it said something about gambling. We didn't gamble much. On pay day some of the older guys you know had been in the service would try to get some of the younger ones and there were a couple of nights they would maybe play cards but there wasn't much gambling. And not, --

- MARK: What about drinking? Oh, I'm sorry; you were going to say something.
- ROBERT: Yeah, well go to town for drinking and there was, oh there was a movie theatre in our area and it was only a half a block away. I remember it cost a quarter. A lot of the times I didn't have the quarter, but I do remember I got over there to see "From Here to Eternity."
- MARK: Well, how current were these movies?
- ROBERT: They were brand new.
- MARK: They were.
- ROBERT: Yes. At Fort McClellan I only went to a movie once and I remember it was "Stalin 17" and then in Utah, "From Here to Eternity" was brand new, they were brand new. I was always volunteering; I volunteered to be a movie projectionist so that got me out of different things. I would show movies. I also volunteered for a military license so I was always driving. I remember one project we had was up in the mountain, we were building bunkers similar to what was used in Korea, so they could see how well gas would penetrate the bunkers. So I remember jets going by lower than we were. [Chuckle] So there was always something and I did right from the first day we got out there I was acting corporal. And then when I got enough time in grade then I eventually was corporal. Then after I was married, I left my rifle locked up in the guard house after guard duty instead of returning it and I was broken back to PFC. So that was my total advancement. But I didn't get in any trouble and because of that, I didn't get a good conduct medal, and that's a small thing. But I saw these guys that were drunks, the guys that stretched the rules. The guys that snook out or AWOL, did all sorts of things, they stole gas, and they all got good conduct medals. They were good little boys, supposedly, and because I got off guard duty a Sunday morning and there's this guy leaving for Salt Lake right then, so I thought my rifle being locked up in the arm's rack was going to be no problem. Monday I could, but nope. So when they asked me to re-enlist, I said no thank you. I, by that time, was married and that didn't work out.
- MARK: But you got married while you were in the service.
- ROBERT: Yes, yes.
- MARK: I don't suppose there were too many available young women hanging around the post in the desert?
- ROBERT: No.
- MARK: I don't want to pry too much, but I am interested in how you make these sorts of connections, you may have gone into town with some regularity.

ROBERT: Yes. So when I was in town, I couldn't see getting lit in the middle of the afternoon, so I would walk around Salt Lake and while I usually walk, wherever I go, Los Angeles, San Francisco, but at the state capitol I met a couple of young ladies.

MARK: Well, see, Salt Lake City is not what you call a party town necessarily either, --

ROBERT: No, it isn't.

MARK: Its sort of known for its --

ROBERT: Straight-laced, yea. It's a church city.

MARK: How did these young GIs looking for amusements, I mean, I would imagine that there is some sort of tension there between the military and the community.

ROBERT: I don't think they met many, I only met a couple of girls that were acknowledged Mormons, I probably should have stuck with them than the one I did [chuckle]. So, the one I met was not a practicing Mormon and not terribly agnostic and it turned out to be a mistake. Eleven years, it lasted about eleven years. So I lived out there about 15 years, including the two years army time.

MARK: See, now we are to the point where it is time for you to re-enlist. As you already indicated, you touched upon this. You were asked to re-enlist and you didn't, so I want to flush out a little bit more about your decision not to stay in the service.

ROBERT: Well, that was the unfairness of what happened plus, well, I didn't think my wife, we were expecting our first child and, she just didn't think it would be our kind of life. If I had been single, I don't know. I would have gone into something else because I was just starting to find out there were other fields. I was starting to get interested in with my electronic background, before I went in; I found that there were, about records and accounting. If I had been able to maybe get a promise or a transfer. There had to be more life than just out in the desert. [Laughter]

MARK: So, you were out of the service.

ROBERT: Yes.

MARK: You got discharged and its time to get your life back on track. What were your priorities at the time for example there was a Korean GI bill. Did you use that at all?

ROBERT: When I got out I just went home and it was kinda of anti-climatic you know. We got out at different times so we just cleared post and left. So I, my wife was expecting a baby, so I drove straight through and I came home and there was no,

it was no big deal. It was like returning from a vacation or something and I just went back to work. And of course the law was that you were supposed to get your job back but I went and they pretended they didn't know who I was. So, I did have to mention that I was going to talk to the draft board and then the attitude did change but I had to prove myself all over again. I was in a department that made the sets work and there were three levels. So they reluctantly let me try out for this lowest level, which I had done years before, and I worked my way back up again. And then after that I was having problems with the wife, and she had gone back west, so I had to give up the good job and go out to who knows what. But my father and stepmother own, did encourage me, they lived in Waukesha and I lived in Darien, so at a distance, they did encourage me to try to go to college on the GI bill but my wife thought I would make much better money if we moved back to Utah, and of course, it didn't work out that way. However, now that I am retired, remarried, retired from General Motors, I am now attending UW's center U-Rock in Janesville.

MARK: I assume the Korean GI bill doesn't cover that. That's just something you are doing on your own. Or does it?

ROBERT: It does. Part-time.

MARK: Is that the state or the federal?

ROBERT: State.

MARK: I see.

ROBERT: I was very surprised when the fellow at school told me about it. I went and applied to the Rock County Veteran's officers, through the office and I received some reimbursement on my tuition, and so that'll help. I am retired. I always wanted to go to school. As an office machine repairman out west, I had all of Utah and half of Wyoming and half of Idaho for my territory, and a lot of our machines were in universities and colleges. And I always fit in and I always thought I would enjoy it. But I had, well my life was always in turmoil. The wife is very unhappy and problems. So I did use my GI benefits for an apprenticeship in office machine repair.

MARK: Now, there were other parts to the GI bill, of course, there are the state programs which you already covered, and then again, I don't want to get too much into personal details, but I would like to get at the use of the benefits available to you and if you were even aware of them in the first place. There were other aspects of the GI bill, for example, home loans and that sort of thing. Did you ever use a state or federal home loan?

ROBERT: Not till 1972 for a second mortgage, I used a Wisconsin, that benefit. Paid it back real soon so I appreciated getting, I only needed it until I sold another piece of

property. So, yes, I did use that but at the time I got out, um, no I didn't buy insurance or didn't use anything until I took the apprenticeship.

MARK: I just got one last area I want to cover, and it may or may not even apply to you. It involves veteran's organizations. Did you ever join a group, one of the major veteran's groups, like the legion, the VFW or anything of that sort?

ROBERT: I joined the legion almost 25 years after I got out.

MARK: So, you were in Beloit already.

ROBERT: Yes. So I joined my post to my hometown, Darien. So I don't have much contact with it but I kept up my membership in support of it ---

MARK: You see, that's why I'm curious. What possessed you to join the legion in your hometown where you lived after 25 years?

ROBERT: Because a friend of mine asked me. And I thought, yeah, I was extremely busy in church and scouting work, but I thought, I'll join, I'll keep up my membership. That helps too, you know, the paying members, helps pay the bills. But I have never actively; I've only been to just a few meetings in ten years or more. So, so I am just one of those absent [chuckle] members. I see it in other organizations too, so I thought well --

MARK: No, no, you're not alone.

ROBERT: Yeah,

MARK: I guess that's really about it then. Is there anything you would like to add that you think we skipped over or glossed over or forgotten about.

ROBERT: No, it's just that I didn't really mind serving. I am not sorry I went. Sometimes at GM I'd work in an area and I'd get to looking around accounting, and there would be no one there that had served. Fellas that were just too old for WW II or pulled strings and stayed out of Korea or stayed out of Viet Nam. And then there would be the occasional guy there that had really been thorough a lot over there, I thought they, these others don't have a clue. They really think they are clever because they skipped out. And they missed out on something. You know, interacting with people of other walks of life and sure some of us, it did set us back a few years financially, or some of us made a bad marriage. But I didn't mind serving and I think everyone should have the opportunity; and in a way it's too bad there aren't ways for young people today to find out that a life isn't just handed to them because they know dad's friends. I think it's partly why the idea of volunteerism and serving in this country is of such a decline. Because I worry about what direction we're going. People don't want to get involved in anything except that they get an immediate satisfaction or immediate fun out of it or a

financial gain. My second wife is Japanese, though I have never been overseas. Another fellow brought her back, but their culture, she can't understand my volunteering all the time. It's just engrained me, its something I have to do. I see something needs to be done and maybe I can help.

MARK: Well, I am glad you volunteered to come in today.

ROBERT: Yeah.

MARK: I appreciate it.

ROBERT: Okay.

MARK: Thanks!