

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**GEORGE KOHLWEY**  
Runner and Rifleman, Army, World War II.

2002

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**Kohlwey, George F.**, (1920-2008). Oral History Interview, 2002.

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.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

**Abstract:**

George Kohlwey, a Grafton, Wisconsin native, discusses his World War II service as a runner with the 33rd Infantry Division in the Pacific theater. Kohlwey touches upon being drafted, basic training at Fort Lewis (Washington), training as a runner, desert training, and being shipped to Hawaii. He tells of being injured by a fall in Hawaii and spending seven weeks in a hospital. Assigned to Finschhafen (New Guinea) while preparing for the invasion of the Philippines, he talks about visiting his wounded brother in the hospital before being sent to Luzon (Philippines). In the Philippines, Kohlwey discusses laying telephone wire, riding to Baguio on tanks, and seeing dead Japanese at Camp John Hayes. Kohlwey details being the bazooka man as his unit moved through the mountains, being wounded in the arm while attempting to help American casualties, and being carried out of the mountains on a stretcher by Filipino women. After hospitalization in Leyte, he was eventually sent to Percy Jones Army Hospital (Michigan). Kohlwey reflects on use of the atomic bomb on Japan and speaks of his military pay, discharge, and civilian career.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Kohlwey (1920-2008) served in the Army from 1942 to 1945. He was honorably discharged from service in 1945 and settled on a farm in Saukville (Wisconsin) in 1947.

Interviewed by Laurie Arendt, 2002

Transcribed by Dan Hudson, 2010

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**Interview Transcript:**

- George: I was in World War II; I went in September 26, '42, and I come out in November of '45.
- Laurie: Okay, good. What branch of the service were you in?
- George: I was in the 33rd Division, Illinois National Guard, Company F-130.
- Laurie: And today is April 15th, 2002. We are in Mr. Kohlwey's house in Saukville, Wisconsin, and the other person attending the interview is Mrs. Kohlwey. [Hereafter referred to by her first name, Shirley]. There is no relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, except that this is for the Ozaukee County Veterans Book Project. So now we can start!
- George: Oh, that's good, somebody lying [all laugh]. I don't think so.
- Laurie: Now, explain something to me, you went into the Illinois National Guard. Why so?
- George: Well, I was drafted. We got books there—
- Laurie: Oh, look at this!
- Shirley: That's the card.
- Laurie: And I bet you were real happy to receive this—
- Shirley: And Gary sent a letter.
- George: Oh, I couldn't wait.
- Laurie: Really [all laugh]. Okay. Good.
- George: Is there other stuff there?
- Shirley: Not this, no.
- George: Not [unintelligible], okay. Anyhow, I was drafted, went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. From there we was on a train. They sent us out to Fort Lewis, Washington. The 33rd Division of the National Guard that had people from Illinois, and they shipped out a bunch of people that went to European Theatre, and they kept enough officers and non-com to make up a new unit, and that's how I got into it. And at Fort Lewis, well, we had them from literally fifty different states, and therefore we have lots of friends all over.

- Laurie: Oh, so you've kept in contact?
- George: Well, more or less—
- Laurie: Oh, that's good.
- George: That's if they're still alive; three-quarters of them are dead. And at Fort Sheridan we got our clothes and blankets and what have you.
- Laurie: Mess kit.
- Shirley: That's the mess kit, yeah. I imagine you've seen some of those.
- Laurie: Yup.
- George: And then from there we went to Fort Lewis and took our basic training. We were there for several months—
- Laurie: So you were there towards fall and winter?
- George: Yeah.
- Laurie: What was the weather like out there?
- George: Not too bad, it was fairly warm, but we went up on Mount Rainier which is only twenty or thirty miles away, but there we run into some snow, about 8 inches, and we didn't have the proper clothes to go up in that cold weather, and we half froze to death that night in tents. And then the next day they decided this wasn't a good move so they took us back to camp. So you have the ocean breezes there. That keeps it fairly warm. There was water not too far away, I mean miles, but—anyhow, from there we went down into California and took Camp Clipper. That's just a tent camp, that's north of—north of, uh—or west of Needles, California, forty miles. Now this is a picture of Fort Lewis, roll call in the morning and an officer and a sergeant making sure that nobody got lost at night. And see a couple of my buddies, you see the showers down on New Guinea. This was taken in Fort Lewis; this is of the mess sergeant and two of the officers. And this is how the tents were set up down there. This was a church in the desert, that's the way we had it. And this was in a tent, a USO show.
- Laurie: Who was on the stage, do you remember?
- Shirley: No, it didn't say on the back. [laughs]
- Laurie: No?

- George: I wish[??] I remembered.
- Laurie: Because--
- George: Okay. Here, back here—
- Laurie: Uh-huh, you can't see anybody anyway [laughs]
- George: That's from here to the barn away, and you couldn't—you can see something that's goin', but not in exact—
- Laurie: Well we have a picture that someone took of Betty Hutton on a USO show.
- Shirley: Oh, yeah? Uh huh.
- Laurie: We have a picture of Ann Margaret, and the man that took her picture, that was in Vietnam. When he gave it to me, he said, "I was no further away from her then we are right now as I'm giving you this picture." And it's a really nice picture.
- George: Oh, but we were so far away--
- Shirley: Yeah, so far away—in the back.
- George: It would be impossible.
- Laurie: And then I just interviewed a widow last week, and she had pictures from her husband of Bing Crosby. So that's gonna be in the book too.
- Shirley: Oh, well, that's neat, too.
- George: Oh, that's good. But I mean, if you're lucky you can get up close. When you got 10,000 people, and you got a couple of 'em standing in the way back there—[Laurie laughs]. It all depends on when they told you to get there. So, I received my clothes and stuff, and then at Fort Lewis they—we learned how to shoot the rifles and all that. And then they put me in as a runner. That's a person that carries messages from one person to another. Sometimes you use a radio, and sometimes you run there and hope that you get there before somebody sees you.
- Laurie: What did you think about that job? Were you indifferent? Did it appeal to you?

- George: I didn't mind it, but I did what I had to do. I always tried to obey the rules if it was possible. And I believe that is a good thing to do. As far as a runner is concerned, you're just as important as anybody else. And if you don't look out, you get your head blowed off. Then we went in the desert, and there we were doing desert training. I suspect they wanted to send us to North Africa that time, but they were done over there, and then one good day they loaded us up and went to Camp Stoneman, California, and we got on a ship, and we went to Hawaii.
- Laurie: Okay. Then did you have a good idea of where you were headed?
- George: When we went there, not yet, but after that we got smarter. [Laurie laughs] Anyhow—
- Laurie: Because I've interviewed a couple veterans just like yourself who said once we got out to Hawaii we kinda had a good idea.
- Shirley: Where [Shirley and Laurie laugh], yeah.
- George: But we went to Hawaii, and we guarded the island, the "Big Island," and they had outposts right up on the cliffs on the edge of the ocean. And then they had one company, I believe it was, in reserve, and we would have to do training during that time. And being a runner I had to carry a message up to somebody about a quarter mile, half mile away. This was out on the Parker Ranch. That's apparently one of the biggest ranches in the world. And I stumbled over a stone and knocked a chip off of my elbow. And then I got up to the top, and I was standing up there—presumably it was an officer, and he says, "You're dead because you didn't"—you know, you're supposed to get up and down. I got mad, and I just walked up, and I says, "Hell, I'm hurt. Get me to a hospital" [both laugh]. Well, I had tore the muscles in the backside of my arm, and a chip off the end of my elbow. Thusly, I was in the hospital seven weeks.
- Laurie: Oh, my Lord.
- George: Well, there's one thing about that, they don't throw you out the next day because if you're out you have to be on duty. So then I joined the outfit again, and then we, after some time, we went over to Kauai, that's the pineapple island, and were guarding there and so forth. We were up on top of the mountain. There's the second oldest fish[??] in the world is up there. It rains continuously, and we were maybe five miles away from that point. And it wound up that—it was so wet in our—it had been park of some kind or a golf course, we had mud about four inches deep in the company street, and you put your socks on in the morning, they were wet from yesterday. You didn't walk two steps and they were all wet again. So we--just, it didn't pay to change them. And that took for, oh, four or five

days, and then finally it dried down, and then they just started to take us for a walk then. There were lots of blisters accomplished. [Laurie and Shirley laugh] And then from Hawaii, ah, Kauai, we went to Oahu, Honolulu, we got—Pearl Harbor. We got off of the ship there, and we took all our stuff, and we went up the dock about a quarter mile or whatever, and then we got on a ship called the Lurline which was part of the Matson Line, and they took us to New Guinea.

Laurie: Okay. So now you were there after Pearl Harbor was attacked, correct?

George: Oh, yeah. See, that happened in '41. I was out in '42. And from there in New Guinea we loaded ships for the people that were going to land at Leyte on the Philippines. We were there for several months. While I was there my brother was at Aitape, [New Guinea], and I was at Finschhafen [New Guinea]. And it so happened that my brother was wounded, and the Red Cross let me know that he was up there in the hospital. This is a tent hospital. Anyhow, I could hitchhike a ride, and I got onto some Army trucks, and they dropped me off there. It was only about maybe twenty miles or so. There is no way of knowing because there was no street signs

Laurie: No mile markers. [Shirley and Laurie laugh].

George: And there was only one road, and that's the way you are going to go.

Shirley: And it was very muddy.

George: Yeah, about that much mud on the road, and it was constantly going like that, but anyhow we got there, and I visited with him a few hours, and I made my way back. He was wounded in his right arm, and shrapnel had taken out about three quarter inch of bone. Oh, it got healed up in about two months.

Laurie: What was your brother's name?

George: Benoit.

Laurie: B-E-N-O-I-T?

George: Mm hmm.

Laurie: Okay.

George: He's deceased now. But anyhow from there we went to Morotai which is on the north west corner of New Guinea. There we were guarding an airport there. I don't know, it's about [unintelligible]. We follow a [unintelligible].

- Laurie: Were you still working as a runner at this point, or were you just --
- George: I stayed in there as a runner all the way through. There we had tents dug in the ground about four feet, and then there was above that there were logs. We had little slits in the logs so we could look out at night, and we had lights that we could shine out to see if anything was—well, unusual and then we flashed lights out there at night. Anyhow, we weren't there too long. Then the Army had went to work and went to Luzon, that's the northern Philippine Island. Then one day we loaded up and went to Luzon, and there we went up into the mountains. Our object was to take Baguio, which was the summer capitol of the Philippines.
- Shirley: That's the New Guinea—the newsletter.
- George: This here is a paper that we got, of the news, what was going on in the world and so forth. This here was another one. But not necessarily all articles – it's a pulse[??] on the world – history and stuff – and this here—
- Shirley: Tells of him.
- George: That I was on that patrol at that time. We – I don't know, we went up several miles with rows of telephone wire, and we – that unraveled, and then we hooked up some more. We got up there late in the evening before sundown. But anyhow, then we had gotten to – they sent some messages through the wire back to our unit. It wasn't but a couple of messages and that was the end of it. Somebody cut the wire. Then the next day we walked back, and we found the wire and spliced it. We run into a little enemy that were living in that general area at the time. It's kind of an interesting thing how things happen, and anyhow – Did I get ahead of myself?
- Shirley: -- Luzon.
- George: I better start looking[??] [Shirley and Laurie laugh].
- Laurie: See, I'm good practice.
- Shirley: And how [laughs].
- George: We've practice enough on this in the last weeks.
- Shirley: Here's how you wrote the letters. Have you seen the V-mail?
- George: No. I just had a lot of guys complain about censorship, being the censors.



Shirley: Oh, yeah.

Laurie: And one guy said, “I never knew what the hell was going on anyway. There was nothing to censor in my” – [laughs].

Shirley: To say, yeah.

George: Well, you got a point there.

Shirley: Yeah, that’s what the letter—

George: Was that coming from Benoit?

Shirley: Is that [unintelligible]? I don’t remember.

Laurie: Yeah. So they made copies of it?

Shirley: Yeah. See, you wrote a letter, and then they copied it.

George: See, they have that sheet just –

Laurie: I wonder what ever happened to all those letters, if they were in an archive somewhere or if they burned or—

Shirley: Yeah, I don’t know.

George: Oh, no. Well, see, you weren’t supposed to write home and tell where you were so the enemy could find you, I don’t know what they’d want with me, but then [George and Shirley laugh] --

Laurie: Well, when my husband was in Desert Storm, and they said do not put your return address on any packages.

George: Yeah, it’ll all go through –

Shirley: Oh! So they would get to you.

Laurie: Right. And –

George: Well, that makes sense –

Laurie: I sat and argued with the post office in Saukville – this was when I was in college and living at home, and I said, “The US Department of Defense told me not to put my address on this package.” They said, “We’re not going to send it until you put your address on this package.”

Shirley: Oh, no!

Laurie: And I went around and around and around and around and around, and they said because it has to go -- I had to fill out like a declaration thing.

George: If it could have got lost, that's the theory.

Laurie: Right. Well, and she said, "Well, what's in here?" I said, "It's food. You know, there's no money. My husband is hungry."

Shirley: Yeah, right, right.

Laurie: And finally she said, "You need to put *a* address on here. Do you understand me?" And I said "So you're saying I can make up an address?" She said, "I'm not telling you anything except that you need to put an address on here." So I just made up an address.

Shirley: Ah! An address and then they would take it.

Laurie: Yeah.

Shirley: Oh, my golly.

George: Well, if there are spies along the way, that's what that's all about.

Shirley: Yeah.

Laurie: Oh, yeah.

George: Ah –

Laurie: Does he know it was just bread, tuna and mayonnaise? [Laurie and Shirley laugh].

Shirley: [unintelligible] was hungry! Oh, yeah.

George: Did we get into the Philippines?

Laurie: Yeah.

Shirley: Mm hmm. You were at Luzon.

George: Luzon. Anyhow, we worked our way up to Luzon; I was among the first troops that went into Luzon. But there were more groups, and they were coming from different corners. The road that normally went up there—I don't know what the name was; I have no clue. But they had all their

fortifications shooting down the road. If you were gonna come up you weren't gonna get there. And then they had some of that mined apparently. So our troops went to work, and they built a road with a bulldozer. They made roads that we could get up there in a different way where the enemy hadn't been set up. It wound up that the roads when we went around the mountains some of them were so short that we had to back up the big trucks to make the corner. But we got up there, and we were quite successful gettin' there. And then we got up as far as Baguio and – [phone rings] we went up to Baguio, there were tanks going up in there, and we rode on tanks, much easier than walking, and it's safer because they figured some of these roads would be mined. We wound up in Camp John Hayes, that was a US Army camp prior to World War II.

Laurie: Oh, okay. So when you rode up were you on the tanks or in the tanks?

George: On.

Laurie: On top of the tanks, okay.

George: It's a lot nicer and safer if they miss you the first time they've got a chance. [Laurie laughs] Anyhow, then we went -- we took Camp John Hayes, and on the other side there was a big parade trail up there that usually is with the military. On the other side of the parade field there was a whole bunch of dead Japs there, about fifty of 'em in a row.

Laurie: Oh, wow!

George: We didn't go close to them because sometimes they'd booby trap anybody. You know, you'd go to move [unintelligible] you'd get your head blown off. So then we went back to a rest area for a short period of time. From there we left, and we went up -- I believe it's north of Baguio. I can't even tell you because there's no way of knowing. But we followed the leader, and there was -- a bunch of trucks hauled us up as far as they could go, and then from there it was up and down over mountains. We wound up, the first night out we were up on a real steep hill. You couldn't go up from the sides because it was too steep to climb. We got up to a point in which we were protected from three sides, but somebody had to guard the backside more or less, and we spent a night there. The next morning we went further. We went back down, and then we -- there was a big valley down in the bottom, and then the mountains all around, and we were going along fairly well. I was carrying a bazooka then. I carried a flame thrower, a bazooka, almost anything that could hang on to a pack horse. Then I -- we were pretty close to the front people. Our guys got pinned down, and when you come around a mountain they go like this and back and forth. And later on the curve here a guy was shooting across. So some of our guys had gotten on a path below the road where

there was a lot of brush that they couldn't see us, and somebody got wounded slightly in the leg, in the knee I believe. And then they told me to drop my pack and stuff, and I said, "Take the stretcher up for this guy." A cot cover is really what it amounts to, because they didn't have -- just a rope around it. That's the safe, easy, right way to handle it. So I got up there, and here is my friend who is not in very good shape at all right now. I was sitting there, and he said, "Here, you take these guns back, and I'll -- us four guys will carry him back." And it wound up that I got two guns on one side, and I'm putting a fourth one up, and pow! I got one on the left arm here. The thing is I'm not supposed to do is run if you get wounded. I took off like a big bird, [Laurie laughs] and I run back up to the road where it was safe, and I had blood running in my shoes by the time I got back there. Anyhow, then they give me a couple of units of blood or plasma or whatever, and then they gave me back, and I don't know, they give you wound pills we were supposed to take. That's the first thing you do after you get wounded.

Laurie: What was it? An antibiotic? Or morphine?

George: I haven't got a clue, but I know you drink water like you can't believe, and then once you have it down it comes back out. [laughs] So anyhow, they carried me back to that valley in the bottom. They had dropped a tent in there from the air, and if the doctors parachuted in or if they walked in I haven't got a clue. But anyhow, when I got there and they -- this was -- I think I was wounded around 3 o'clock in the afternoon or somethin' like that. It's in one of those slips. Anyhow, he was flippin' away I there --

Laurie: Uh huh, cleaning and fixing it.

George: "I want some water." "You ain't getting no water." [both laugh] He knew -- who'da gave you that? Anyhow there were more of us that were wounded in there. But anyhow, then the next day they had taken everything away outside of a set of shorts and no shoes, either. So then they carried me back. This is clear around the mountain. See, when we originally went that way we had went over the mountain, but here they're following the road back. We get to a point on the edge of the road, and they had with bombs -- they had bombed away the corner of the road. So all you had was a path about that wide. And we had some Filipino women that'd carry us plus a guard or two, and they wanted to carry me over that, and I'm looking down there maybe a hundred feet or more, and I'm thinking, "You're not carrying me over these." I looked, and they were gone, you know. So anyhow, I insisted that they would let me walk across there, and then the guide he held me by one hand or arm, and we walked across. Then when we got beyond that point then they could carry me again, and it took up quite a stretch before we got to a place where they had an ambulance waiting. And they took us to -- oh, I don't know just

exactly where we went. I think they had me drugged that I didn't know everything I should be, but I know the next morning we got on to a plane. And that flew us to Leyte. That's [unintelligible] away, and we was in the hospital there for weeks.

Laurie: So with your arm, did the bone shatter?

George: No, a nerve injury. It's somewhere underneath.

Laurie: Oh, there it is.

George: And that's from back here.

Laurie: So it went in here and out on the top?

George: Yeah, because I had my back to them, and meanwhile I was picking the guns up. So, I'm lucky. But anyhow, then I was at Leyte for several weeks. And you might as well shut that off for a second. [crackling sound].

Laurie: Oh, sure.

Shirley: How did you get? You're done?

Laurie: We're wounded now.

Shirley: Oh, you're wounded – oh, all right. Yeah, there you've got some papers [laughs].

George: Should we run this through once more? **[End of Side A, Tape 1]**

Laurie: No, I think we're fine 'cause I'll put this in your profile.

George: Then I come back to the States. I went to Percy Jones [Army Hospital; Battle Creek, Michigan]. I went there, and I could come home from there once in awhile.

Shirley: Did you show –

George: Yeah. [unintelligible] letter I didn't put in.

Shirley: No. Did you tell her you're going to visit him?

George: Yeah, I hope we do. Make too much disturbance—

Shirley: Oh, I'm sorry [all laugh].

- George: Anyhow, I'd come home sometimes for a week and then I was home for a couple of weeks in between that. [Approx. 15 sec. pause in recording] Putting up silage at that time, they had a corn binder, and they put it in bundles, and you'd pick up the bundle and put it in your arm and throw it up there. I had my arm in an airplane splint pretty much of the time, and in fall there I didn't need the splint no more, but I went to work, and I helped pitch bundles onto the wagon. I did that for a week or so while I was home, and when I went back I couldn't hardly straighten my arm out. It was almost like that by then, and the doctor says, "What happened to you?" [George and Shirley laugh]
- Laurie: I did some work.
- George: A lot of guys, they didn't particularly like to do anything. They figured they could live high on the hog with government subsidies. That's not quite my idea of living. So anyhow, it turned out quite well. I'm pretty well satisfied with it. I got a nerve injury that affects this here and in here. But that's come back a little bit over forty – no, fifty—
- Shirley: Sixty years since you went in, '42, forty-five years maybe.
- George: Well, whatever.
- Shirley: Fifty-seven years.
- George: This is the discharge.
- Laurie: Your honorable discharge.
- Shirley: That's Georgia[??] where some of those things are there.
- George: Yeah.
- Laurie: So now when you were discharged -- prior to being wounded were you on the point system that they were over in Europe as well, or were you in for a specific amount of time?
- George: I presume I was on the point system, but once you are wounded –
- Laurie: Then that doesn't apply, yeah.
- George: In fact I got out in November –
- Shirley: November 17<sup>th</sup>, was it? Yeah.

- George: And most of the guys that I was in got out about the same time. See, if I wouldn't had been wounded when I was, in another week our guys were off the front line, and they were going to take amphibious training to land in Japan. And at the time they were told that they would lose between half to three quarters of the people would be wounded or killed. Actually, the atomic bomb did us a tremendous favor. The people that are opposed to the atomic bomb, but it's a different thing if you're the one that would have got killed before [unintelligible].
- Laurie: Well, I just typed a profile yesterday of a man who landed in Nagasaki after they dropped the bomb. And he said you would not believe the destruction seeing it firsthand, and he said what has always amazed him is that was a pretty weak atom bomb. You know, for being one of the weaker ones, the damage that it did; it was just incredible.
- George: There's no question of it, but like I said, it's either you or them.
- Laurie: Better be them [both laugh]. So, okay.
- George: This is my dog tags. That's the tents in the desert, and this is in the desert. Purple Heart. This here one is the oak leaf cluster. That's if you had two emblems. The rest I can't even explain to you.
- Laurie: Probably good conduct
- George: Yeah – one of these here—
- Shirley: Yeah, that's the ribbon. I think the ribbon is for conduct.
- George: The red one. This here is our [unintelligible] emblem. That's because I was a rifleman.
- Laurie: Okay, good. So now, if you have the oak leaf cluster, were you injured a second time?
- George: I was burnt at one time.
- Laurie: Oh, okay.
- George: I don't make much of it. In fact I was shocked when I got it. [laughs]
- Laurie: We have -- do you know Gene Pierron from Belgium [Wisconsin]?
- George: Yeah.

- Laurie: He qualifies for a Purple Heart because he had shrapnel in his rear end. And he said I never pursued it because I was always kinda embarrassed. But now I think he is in the process of pursuing it.
- Shirley: Sure, sure, and why not?
- George: You get the picture? Yeah, I get [the] picture [all laugh]. But, no, I know Gene. We went to GI [Bill] school together sometimes.
- Laurie: Oh, and he hasn't read his profile yet, but I interviewed him, and he got promoted to PFC four times. So that's what I wrote. [Shirley and Laurie laugh].
- George: I won't say any more than that.
- Laurie: Well, he was very honest about the way he was.
- Shirley: Sure, sure.
- George: He's really a nice guy. But we had all kinds of people. We've got a world full of friends that we've –
- Shirley: Oh, wonderful!
- George: All just over. In fact we were hoping to go in a couple of weeks and visit some. They're gonna supposedly have a reunion in Milwaukee this year, a divisional reunion.
- Shirley: Mm hmm. In September.
- Laurie: Oh, really?
- George: There's only a handful of people that will go to that.
- Shirley: Well, a lot of them can't travel anymore either. Did you talk about the dog tags?
- George: She knows about that.
- Shirley: Oh, you know that?
- Laurie: Oh, yeah.
- Shirley: One little boy, I think it was, had a question, "Why did they always wear two?" He mentioned about wearing two of them. He was really curious about that.



- George: Well, if you were killed they would take one, and one stayed with the body.
- Laurie: Then I bet his eyes got as round as saucers.
- Shirley: Oh, these kids – they were just so – they were very, very good in class, and the whole hour – well, not quite, but we were there a long time, and we just --
- George: About forty minutes; we were supposed to be there about twenty.
- Shirley: Yeah, and she just said, “Just keep on talking.” You know, the children were good.
- George: The kids gave up their recess for us.
- Laurie: Wow!
- Shirley: Yes! Isn't that something?
- George: That tells you how dumb farmers can get [all laugh]. But anyhow, we have a whole book on divisional—
- Shirley: The different battles.
- Laurie: Oh, wow!
- George: This goes into way from the beginning. I've had a few things in here. My brother was at Aitape. That's where he was wounded. I presume he was down in here someplace when I went to see him in the hospital.
- Laurie: Now before -- you went in at 21, you said? Roughly?
- George: Yeah, I would have been 21. I'd have been 22 a couple –
- Shirley: 22 the end of the month. Yeah, we were married in October.
- Laurie: Were you working as a farmer? Were you here?
- George: Well, I had worked as a farmer earlier. Then I went to work, and I got a job in Milwaukee that lasted a few months. Then they made portable, demountable [prefabricated] Harnischfeger houses. They were shipped up to Manitowoc for defense workers, shipyards, and then that closed up. Then I went to work at Groves. I was a welder there.

- Laurie: Oh okay. So did you work with Alphonse Schanen?
- George: Oh, yeah.
- Laurie: That's the widow I just interviewed. He's in his Bing Crosby [unintelligible]. She has his Bing Crosby picture.
- George: Oh, I knew Al quite well. And then from there –
- Shirley: Yeah, when you [were] working at Groves.
- George: And when I come back, due to the fact that I was wounded I went to see Ben and Mr. [??] [unintelligible] If you can work, fine, you know. Then after I was there for a couple of weeks he gave me the same wages as all the other guys.
- Laurie: Oh, that was nice of him.
- Shirley: Did you talk about the wages here?
- George: No, when I went in the service I believe we got \$21 a month. And then if you went overseas you got a few dollars more and a few more dollars if you got to be a PFC and so forth, and then when we got on the front lines they gave us another \$4 just to get shot at. [Shirley and Laurie laugh]. I thought, boy, I never any money easier. But anyhow, that's the way I look at it. You can put it any way you want. But anyhow, it would up that I think I was up around \$34 when I got out. I'm not really sure there was any raise or two in between. I can't even tell ya.
- Laurie: But did you find -- this is something I've heard from a lot of people, you had nowhere to spend it anyway. No -- I mean, you could gamble and do that sort of thing.
- George: Well, I saved money –
- Shirley: Yeah, that's what I think some of 'em did was gamble—
- George: I saved money—
- Shirley: Did you even send some home to your mom?
- George: Yeah, I had saved maybe \$500 in the three years. But I'm not a gambler, and I don't drink a lot. So—
- Shirley: There was no problem.

- George: My wife was waiting for the money to come [laughs].
- Shirley: We weren't married then.
- Laurie: Did you know each other then?
- Shirley: I knew of him, yeah.
- George: Anyhow, it's good to have it, and later on we used it to buy the farm after we got married in '47.
- Shirley: Did you read that letter? That V-mail to his brother? He mentioned that he would be going home soon and that he'd be home for his sister's wedding. His sister's wedding was in August. And do you know what happened? George got wounded after that, and then he was stationed at Percy Jones Hospital in Michigan. He got home for his sister's wedding and that's where we start going out together. So I remember that wedding. I was a table waiter for that meal [Shirley and Laurie laugh].
- George: You never know how strange this world –
- Shirley: Funny world. The Lord works in mysterious ways [laughs].
- Laurie: Oh, that's right. That's right. Good.
- Shirley: And his brother that was in service also then of course was home for wedding, and he met his girlfriend, and they start -- so the four of us start going out together.
- George: This was a bag I think we used to carry some supplies and stuff, shaving equipment.
- Laurie: Personal things.
- George: This here -- one of my buddies that went to Japan.
- Shirley: Dave [unintelligible].
- Laurie: Oh, how cool. Wow, is that the silk[??]?
- George: I don't know.
- Laurie: I interviewed a man from Mequan [Wisconsin] who was in New Guinea or Guam, somewhere in the Pacific. He was in charge of intelligence, and his job was to go out and acquire things. I took a picture of it. He found a silk handkerchief. We think it's a handkerchief, and it's got Japanese

writing all over it. And he said I've always wondered what this says. I was looking, and I said, "To be honest with you, Mr. Ahrenholz, I think you got somebody's doodles." Because it's, you know, this way and this way—somebody looked like drew pictures on it. I could just see like some Japanese soldier terrifically bored or just taking notes.

Shirley: George has a Japanese little bag like this, too, with all[??] figures on it.

George: But they don't even think about it, leaving their language. Now, this here is our Company F-130 and the guys that were in it.

Laurie: Oh, how neat!

George: Our friends in Nebraska that we want to go visit. His wife is into that [phone rings]. Shirley?

Shirley: Mm hmm. There's some things in there. On the back of that [unintelligible] there's some --

Laurie: Oh, okay. See, now that looks official, like it means something. It's not just doodles.

George: Well, I have no clue what it's all about. Then we have -- all kinds of stuff.

**[End of Interview]**