

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**ROBERT KREBS**  
Artillery 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Army  
2002

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**Krebs, Robert.** (b. 1937). Oral History Interview, 2002.

Approximate length: 2 hours 25 minutes

*Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.*

**Abstract:**

In this oral history interview, Robert Krebs discusses his service with the Army from 1961 to 1963, his experiences in basic training, his duties at Fort Carson (Colorado) and Fort Sill (Oklahoma), being in the Army during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and his post-army work in a cheese factory. Krebs talks mainly about his experiences in basic training at Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri): his first day, being trained on an M1 rifle and hand grenades, bivouac, war games, and infiltration courses. Krebs also discusses his duties in the artillery division at Fort Carson and his duties with the motor pool at Fort Sill. He also talks about his feelings at the time about being drafted and serving in the Army, as well as his time with the Army Reserve for two years after being discharged.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Krebs (1937-2013) served with the United States Army from 1961 to 1963. After being discharged he worked for Saputo Cheese in Fond du Lac for forty-one years.

Interviewed by Aaron Krebs, 2002.

Transcribed by Dana Peterson, 2012.

Reviewed by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

Abstract by Jennifer Kick, 2016.

## Interview Transcript:

A. Krebs: Okay, this is an interview with Robert Krebs, who served in the United States Army during 1961 and '63. This interview is being conducted at his home in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, [REDACTED]. And today's date is the thirty-first of August, 2002, and I am Aaron Krebs, the interviewer.

Thank you, Bob, for coming to take this time. Let's start with a few easy questions. When were you born?

R. Krebs: November 16, 1937, Chicago Illinois.

A. Krebs: Chicago, Illinois, great. And did you stay there your entire life?

R. Krebs: I was there sixteen years. Then we moved to California, San Bernardino, California. Finished one year of high school there and two years of high school in Fontana, California. Graduated June 13, 1957 and then I was unemployed because the country was in a recession. Eisenhower was president at the time. I didn't get a job until February of '59. And I had a firefighter's job which only lasted a month 'cause I was laid off because of a draft age, they had the draft then. When I was laid off then I went back to the unemployment office and then they told me about a hospital job that I could apply for as a laundry worker, washing clothes eight hours a day: bed sheets, pillow cases, blankets, baby diapers, whatever. I had that job two years and then I moved back to Fond du Lac, Wisconsin because my mother remarried after my first step-dad died. I moved back to Fond du Lac, Wisconsin and I went into the Army from Fond du Lac at the corner of Merrill and Main. I had to be at the bus to go to Milwaukee at five o'clock in the morning. Once I got down to the induction center I had to take another physical. If I passed it, I was in; if I failed, I was out. I guess I passed it okay 'cause I was in for the next two years. We left Milwaukee on a train to go to Chicago, to the LaSalle Street depot. We got in, I believe it was eleven o'clock at night, and we had an hour layover to meet a military train that took us from Chicago to St. Louis. And then we transferred trains from there to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri where basic training started.

A. Krebs: Okay, let me back you up a little bit. Was your father in the service?

R. Krebs: My dad was in the Army. He was in Korea, World War II, in the South Pacific.

A. Krebs: Any brothers or sisters?

R. Krebs: I have one brother that went to Vietnam. I believe he was in the Navy. His name is Douglas, everybody calls him Doug. He went to Vietnam.

A. Krebs: You were in probably early stages of high school, late grade school when Korea was going on. Do you remember any of that?

R. Krebs: Just what I saw in the newspaper. I heard about Korea. I didn't know where Korea was, I didn't know anything about Korea, just that they were fighting communism. From what I understand Korea was overrun by the Russians.

A. Krebs: Did they talk about it in class at all in any of your schools? Did they debate any of it?

R. Krebs: No, no. Nobody ever talked about any war time or anything. We were there to learn basic arithmetic, history, and whatever else.

A. Krebs: You mention you were drafted. How did you feel about being drafted?

R. Krebs: Being drafted – I was kind of leaning toward volunteering my draft so my name would go first on the list because I wanted to get it over with and done with. But family members said, “No, just wait and when they call ya, you can go.” So that's the way it worked out.

A. Krebs: By family members you meant your mom?

R. Krebs: My mother, yes. My mother more or less raised me 'cause I didn't have no father.

A. Krebs: Did she support you going off to the Army?

R. Krebs: Yeah, she supported it. She had to support it 'cause I was in the draft age and once you get your letter you had to go. She had to go along with it.

A. Krebs: Were you heartfelt? Was it disappointing when you got the letter? Or were you relieved?

R. Krebs: I was glad that it came so I can get in there and get it done and get out.

A. Krebs: That's the way I felt, too.

R. Krebs: Put it behind me.

A. Krebs: From when you got the letter, how long before you met that bus at the corner of Merrill and Main?

R. Krebs: I believe it was two months.

A. Krebs: That's not a lot of time.

R. Krebs: There was a date on the letter: you are hereby ordered to report on such and such a date for the US Army. Maybe not exactly in those words, but basically I had to be ready to go.

A. Krebs: What did you do in those two months? Did you party?

R. Krebs: What did I do? I had to get some clothes ready. I had to go get new clothes – socks. Just kind of prepare myself for the military. I had to get a overnight bag, a small suitcase to carry personal items in. When the time came, I had to go meet the Red Cross at the corner of Merrill and Main. It was like four o'clock in the morning. They gave everybody that reported there, they gave everybody a small New Testament Bible, which they offered to everybody. And then the bus came and then I went down to Milwaukee.

A. Krebs: Were there other draftees on the bus with you?

R. Krebs: There was a bus load. There was a whole bunch--people who had to go.

A. Krebs: Did you know any of them?

R. Krebs: No, everybody was a stranger.

A. Krebs: When you went to basic, were you in that same group with them?

R. Krebs: They divided everybody up into groups. Certain people had to go here; certain people had to go there—different groups. Not everybody went to the same place. We went to Milwaukee for a physical. If I passed the physical I was in, if I didn't I was out.

A. Krebs: What was the physical like?

R. Krebs: The physical was an examination from head to foot. They examined your arms, your legs, your eyes, your teeth, your ears--have I ever been sick of this, sick of that—different sicknesses. They ask you questions, you answer to the best of your knowledge.

A. Krebs: Were you all in one big room or were you in separate --?

R. Krebs: We were all in one big room. They examined the vital parts of your body. You had to drop your pants and cough and that. If that was okay then you went onto another doctor. He would examine your eyes, look at your

mouth and teeth or one would look in your ears if you ever had ear trouble. Different things like that.

A. Krebs: How long did this all take?

R. Krebs: It would take—I think as much as two to three hours. After the examination then you went in and saw one doctor and he would tell you that it looks like you're in good health, or you got this wrong or that wrong. We'll take you or we won't take you because of some kind of a sickness.

A. Krebs: You said this was in Milwaukee?

R. Krebs: This was in Milwaukee for a final examination.

A. Krebs: What was the building like? Was it a huge—

R. Krebs: It was big, it was a big—

A. Krebs: Was it in downtown Milwaukee?

R. Krebs: In downtown Milwaukee—I don't remember exactly. It was a huge building, a big building. And it had to do with the Army.

A. Krebs: So the bus picked you up around five o'clock in Fond du Lac—

R. Krebs: Five o'clock in the morning.

A. Krebs: Drove you down to Milwaukee and then they did this examination and then did you take the train that evening or did you stay overnight?

R. Krebs: We took the train that evening when they told us—the ones that passed the physical—they told us we're gonna put you on a train and send ya. First you get sworn in. You raise your right hand and then they give ya your service number and you had to memorize that. And then they said they would put you on a train and the train would go down to Chicago, to the South Street depot and then we had to transfer trains from there to a different train and go from Chicago to St Louis Missouri and then transfer to a slower train.

A. Krebs: Do you still remember your service number?

R. Krebs: 55676977.

A. Krebs: It's been drilled into your head?

R. Krebs: Yes. They more or less brand it to you.

A. Krebs: You live and die by that number, I imagine. So, you took the train. Going back to the oath part – you mentioned that most of the people there all of them were draftees, right?

R. Krebs: They were all draftees.

A. Krebs: Were there many at that point who did not raise their hand? Or did you all raise your hand?

R. Krebs: The ones that didn't make it, they dismissed. The ones that made it, they were all in one room and everybody – you raise your right hand and they tell you what to say and then you state your name as you recite what they tell you and from there on in you're in the army.

A. Krebs: What was the train ride like? Were you all cramped like sardines?

R. Krebs: The train ride was two people to a seat. And it was a long ride from Milwaukee all the way down to St. Louis. It was like three different trains. We had to transfer. From Milwaukee to Chicago you transfer, get on a different train that was an overnight train. We slept in the overnight bunkers because it was a real slow train. And then once we got to St. Louis we had to transfer to a slower train again from St. Louis to Fort Leonard Wood.

A. Krebs: So what time did you get to St. Louis? Afternoon, evening, the next day?

R. Krebs: It was in the afternoon. And we got into St Louis in the morning and we transferred trains in the morning and then we got into Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri I believe it was like two, or 2:30 in the afternoon at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

A. Krebs: So you're on the train, you get to Fort Leonard Wood. That's not very far out of St. Louis. When you get there did uh – now I always hear these stories about basic training. You pull up, and then all the sudden the doors fly open. What was that like when you got there?

R. Krebs: I heard rumors of people saying it's the garden spot of the nation because it was right in the middle of the Ozarks of Missouri. Once we got into Fort Leonard Wood you remained in your seat and then some big sergeant come up on the train and he says, "Get the hell off of my train! You don't belong on my train! This is my train! Get outside in formation!"

A. Krebs: Were you scared?

R. Krebs: From then on I was scared. He had a few choice words to say.

A. Krebs: Sure. And he just met you.

R. Krebs: Yep. And he just met me. He was like 250 pounds, six foot four or five, and right away the language came.

A. Krebs: I think they intentionally throw you in and change you right away to make you –

R. Krebs: They scare the devil outta ya. So it makes ya think of what you're getting into. You get off of the railroad car and you're standing out on the platform in formation. You don't what a formation is, you're just standing there.

A. Krebs: It's your first day!

R. Krebs: It was my first day. "You stand at attention when you talk to me!" We were all standing there, waiting and the longer you stood there the hotter you got because it was warm!

A. Krebs: What month was this again?

R. Krebs: In September. September nineteenth.

A. Krebs: Yeah, it's pretty warm down there.

R. Krebs: It was like in the middle of the Ozarks, hill country, wherever you would walk you would trip over a rock so they called it the garden spot of the nation.

A. Krebs: Little sarcasm there. So he jumps on the train, he tells you all to get off the train, line up in formation. Everyone else was scared, did anyone not get off the train?

R. Krebs: There was a few that was scared that didn't want to get off and then they chased them off. They were scared, it was only natural that they would shed a few tears, 'cause they were being yelled at and they were shaking in their shoes. They were just naturally scared. They took us from the train depot down to the induction center—I believe it was called the induction center. And they would tell you, "You're in the Army. Our job is to teach you the basic things of the Army. Right now it's lunch time, so we're all going to have lunch." The food was good. We had steak. First time in the Army you had steak, so you ate well.

A. Krebs: Was that the last time in the Army you had steak?

- R. Krebs: That was the last time I had steak in basic training. Other than that we had chipped beef on toast. They called it blank on toast.
- A. Krebs: Going back to the train part, you mentioned there was one guy who came on who just started yelling. Was there just one guy?
- R. Krebs: Just one sergeant, "Get the blank off of my train!" And he didn't mean hell either.
- A. Krebs: Was he your drill instructor then from that point on?
- R. Krebs: No, we had a different drill instructor. We were assigned to different drill instructors. When we met them, they were mean. They were mean to us because they had to teach us the discipline of the Army and the yelling started in right away.
- A. Krebs: So they feed you lunch, they do the induction hall or whatever.
- R. Krebs: Ceremony. And then after lunch you go and get all your Army clothes. You go and get your uniforms. You go and get your pants – they measure you for your pants, your shoes, your socks, your shirts. You have one saucer cap and two fatigue caps. I think fatigue is the right word. After you get everything then you get a duffle bag and then they show you how to fold everything and put it in your duffle bag. Everything you get must, without a doubt, fit in that duffle bag.
- A. Krebs: Were there people that left stuff there because it wouldn't fit?
- R. Krebs: There was people there that couldn't get their stuff in the duffle bag 'cause they didn't know how to fold the shirt or pants or socks. Everything had to be folded a certain way, the Army way.
- A. Krebs: I'm sure they got yelled at if they didn't do it the right way.
- R. Krebs: They got more than yelled at.
- A. Krebs: How many in your group? In the Air Force it's called a like a flight where we've got, basic training there was like, forty or fifty of us.
- R. Krebs: I believe there was twenty of us that went through the clothes line at a time. You got everything in a duffel bag, they showed you how to fold everything up and then you waited outside. You got your two pair of shoes. You got two pair of boots. You got almost everything in that duffle bag and then you had to wait outside in formation until everybody

was ready. When everybody was ready and then we went on like a ten mile hike to the barracks.

A. Krebs: They start you off right away with a—

R. Krebs: Right away with a hike. We walked about five or six miles and took a ten minute break and then we walked the other four or five miles, whatever it was, to the barracks.

A. Krebs: And this is all on that first day?

R. Krebs: All on that first day.

A. Krebs: Wow, they really break you in the first day. Did anyone fall out?

R. Krebs: There was a few of them that was sweatin', getting dehydrated that first day 'cause it was quite warm.

A. Krebs: How'd you do though? I imagine it was tough.

R. Krebs: I was alright. It was tough. You know I never went on a ten mile hike before.

A. Krebs: Especially with a full pack of clothes.

R. Krebs: Yeah, you had to carry that duffle bag and it was heavy.

A. Krebs: Did you change into fatigues?

R. Krebs: Once we got to the barracks everybody was assigned to a box and you stripped down, take your civilian clothes off and put your fatigues on, right away. And then you packed up that cardboard box with your civilian clothes and you write out on the box your address. And everything that you had on that base was sent home. Your civilian shoes, socks, shirt, pants, everything they sent home.

A. Krebs: Did you ever see that again?

R. Krebs: After I got out of the Army. Or when I came home on leave.

A. Krebs: So you take the hike and you get back to your barracks. You put your stuff in the cardboard box, you change. What time was this? This was pretty late at night then? Like after sunset?

R. Krebs: This was around supper time.

- A. Krebs: Did you go to chow then?
- R. Krebs: After we changed into our fatigues and got assigned to our beds we got squared away, put all our clothes into lockers and shoes under the beds, everything got squared away then we went to chow. And then we had an hour for chow.
- A. Krebs: They didn't rush you through it?
- R. Krebs: No, no. You stand in line single file and you go through the kitchen. You pick up aluminum tray, you go through the line and somebody behind the counter slaps a cup of mashed potatoes on the tray, slops some gravy on it and then they throw whatever they – I don't remember if we got another steak – whatever kind of meat they had.
- A. Krebs: Mystery meat.
- R. Krebs: Mystery meat. They put it on your tray and there's like a spoonful of vegetables and then a glass of milk – a carton of milk. Yeah, it was a carton of milk at the end of the line.
- A. Krebs: And did you go sit anywhere?
- R. Krebs: And then you go sit. Wherever there was a vacant place to sit, you would sit. If you were sitting with a total stranger, get to know him. When you were in basic training he might have been your partner. Later on you would choose up partners.
- A. Krebs: At this point did you make very many friends so far? Did you talk to many of them?
- R. Krebs: Just a few, just a few friends. Your friends came along the further you got into basic training your friends were there – buddies. So to speak, buddies.
- A. Krebs: I imagine it was very hard to go in not knowing anyone.
- R. Krebs: The next day the first thing they would teach you how to dress in your Class A uniform or how to salute. They get you out at seven o'clock in the morning, wake you up and take you out to the field and do your Army daily dozen exercises. Push-ups, jumping jacks, you'd run around the mile race track, they say it was a mile long, you'd run around there, make a lap around, whether you were first or last in line, didn't matter, you ran.
- A. Krebs: And you probably still got yelled at if you were first or last.

- R. Krebs: Yeah, they would constantly yell at you. “Pick your legs up, pick your feet up! Won’t have you slacking off!” That sort of thing. After you ran then you went back to the barracks and you would get breakfast. After breakfast you had to make formation again and then came the classes. A variety of different classes.
- A. Krebs: Like what? Army history?
- R. Krebs: They would teach you how to hand salute an officer. They would teach you how to stand at attention. Your hands can’t be open they had to be curled under they had to be like a cuff, standing at the side of your legs. They expressed how to say, “Yes, sir; no, sir,” very sharply. Anytime you were in the company of an officer it was always, “Yes, sir; no, sir; yes, ma’am; no, ma’am.”
- A. Krebs: Do you still do that?
- R. Krebs: You were raised on courtesy, you try to keep it.
- A. Krebs: It stays –
- R. Krebs: It stays with you. You try to say, “Yes, sir; no, sir; yes, ma’am; no, ma’am.”
- A. Krebs: Going back to that first night, how long did you get to sleep? Couple hours? Or they sent you to bed right away?
- R. Krebs: Your time in bed was limited, it was like five hours. Sometimes four, sometimes five, depending on your next day’s schedule. Sometimes you get up at four o’clock in the morning. They would come through with a old beat up pot and somebody would have a shoe and they’d bang on the side of that pot [bangs on table] bang, bang, bang, bang! “Get up outta that bed before I get in there and there ain’t room enough for the two of us in there!” So you jumped out of that bed and get your pants on and get your shoes and socks on and stand in formation, get ready to go.
- A. Krebs: What time did you normally wake up in the morning – or what time did they normally wake you up in the morning?
- R. Krebs: Sometimes they would wake you up at four, sometimes they’d wake you up at 4:30, five, depending on what kind of a class you would have.
- A. Krebs: Then what time did you normally go to sleep?
- R. Krebs: At night they would keep you up until about 10:30, or eleven o’clock, sometimes midnight.

A. Krebs: Wow, that's not a lot of sleep.

R. Krebs: No, they didn't give you much sleep.

A. Krebs: What were the barracks like? Were you on the first floor? Second floor?

R. Krebs: I was lucky. Ah I take that back, in basic training I was on the second floor and then you had a cold linoleum floor. It was not the best. It was drafty, it was cold. At night you would cover up with a blanket. Every Friday night they start mentioning a GI party. "Oh boy," I thought to myself, "oh boy, a party, alright, I could go for a good party!" And then the sergeant that was in charge he'd bring out the pails and the soap and the mops and the rags and you'd have to go down to the latrine to get water, downstairs. "This is your GI party, start cleaning this place up." I thought to myself, "this ain't a party this is housework." We went down to the latrine and filled up the buckets with water and we were down on our hands and knees with a scrub brush scrubbing the floor. And it better be clean.

A. Krebs: I'm sure if it wasn't they got on ya about it.

R. Krebs: Everybody was assigned to a certain job. A few people got to wash windows, a few people got to wash walls, a few people got to scrub the floor, which happened to be me. How many times I scrub that floor and not have to do it over again.

A. Krebs: And every time you redid it he'd still find something else.

R. Krebs: He would still find something that didn't look good so you'd have to do it over again.

A. Krebs: And this GI party was that Sunday or Saturday?

R. Krebs: GI party was every Friday night.

A. Krebs: Oh every Friday night, okay.

R. Krebs: 'Cause Saturday morning was inspection and they kept us up until like two in the morning and somebody would say, "Well, I guess it looks alright, it looks clean enough, but I don't know. I guess it looks alright." So with about two or three hours of sleep they then get you up on a Saturday morning. Saturdays we had like a half a day of activity. We had to make Saturday morning inspection. Your clothes all had to be lined up in your locker a certain way, your shoes, and the boots had to be under your bed. Later on in the military life you got a foot locker to put your personal

items in but in basic training everything was put into a locker. I didn't have no foot locker then. It was like a great big huge trunk. I didn't get one until later on when I got to other bases. Basic training, the longer you were there the rougher it got. When we got down to our uniforms and we learned how to hand salute officers and then we were assigned to a rifle, an M1 rifle. Then we went to these firing ranges. They would give us a ride out. One firing range was like seventeen miles out, another one was twenty miles out, and the furthest one was twenty-two miles out. You would get a ride out and then you'd have to hike back.

A. Krebs: That doesn't sound like fun.

R. Krebs: Twenty-two miles was the furthest I've ever walked.

A. Krebs: How many times did you do that?

R. Krebs: It was, I believe, three times a week we had to go to a firing range. It was a class. You'd be assigned to an M1 rifle, they'd show you how to take it apart and you had to clean it, oil it, make sure it didn't have any rust on it, that it wasn't defective. It had to work right 'cause you had to shoot it, fire it, learn how to fire. When you first learn how to fire they would give you one shot, a single bullet. You would lock and load a single shot in the chamber. Then they had silhouette targets that would pop up. There was an instructor behind you in a booth. He had all the controls operating on the firing range. A silhouette target, the smallest target was from the shoulder up to the top of the head and the larger target was the full body. First they would show you how to lock and load that one shot and then they would sit you in fox hole and you would watch for your target to pop up and then you would practice. You'd cock your rifle and then pull the trigger. All it would do is just click, there would be no ammunition in there. You'd have to learn how to cock it and then just like a pretend, like you were firing from a fox hole. And there was different layouts you had to go through. Lay on the ground, lay on one knee, steady your arm on the other knee. You had to use that rifle strap different ways; different ways of learning how to fire a rifle. When you got that all down then they would give you that one shot and then you had to learn how to fire a rifle with one shot. And then later on they would give you a full clip. Once you got that first shot down okay they'd give you a marked target. If you get that one shot within that target two or three times they would give you a full clip. And the rifle that I had, had a lot of problems so I had a lot of problems with it. It would malfunction. They would tell you to fire one shot off. My rifle would fire two or three shots automatically.

A. Krebs: I'm sure they yelled at you too.

- R. Krebs: Yes, then they yelled, “Why are you firing three shots off?” “It malfunctioned, it, there’s something wrong with it.” Then they would take the rifle then they would fire a single shot and it would work fine, “This rifle is okay,” they’d hand it back to you. I go to fire another shot off at the silhouette target it would fire two times, bang, bang! And then they took the rifle back to the maintenance shop to have it looked at. They would take it all apart, inspect it, everything looked okay, they put it all back together and tell a sergeant it’s okay. They go and tell a sergeant it was okay and it’d be the same thing all over again. I would fire, it would malfunction.
- A. Krebs: You would get the same one back every time?
- R. Krebs: I’d get the same rifle back.
- A. Krebs: Did you have that throughout the whole basic training?
- R. Krebs: I had that rifle throughout the whole basic training.
- A. Krebs: And it kept doing it?
- R. Krebs: There was times where you had to sleep with it, because of something that you would do wrong.
- A. Krebs: Aah, kind of like a punishment of some sort?
- R. Krebs: Some kind of a punishment would come along, if you did something wrong. You didn’t have your shoes shined right or you weren’t dressed right, you didn’t look good – you slept with that rifle.
- A. Krebs: Did you hit many of the targets?
- R. Krebs: When I learned how to use that rifle and it didn’t malfunction I made marksman. The first time I made marksman and then I went to sharp shooter and I think I was two shots away from expert. I just couldn’t get expert, because of the rifle that I had malfunctioned. It would fire two or three shots at a time. Your pop up targets were silhouette targets, they were scattered throughout woods. You had to watch when a target would pop up; you had your own firing range. When a target would pop up you’d fire a shot at it. If it would go down you knew you had a hit. If it didn’t go down, forget that target. Another target would pop up.
- A. Krebs: You were the only one on the range at that time?
- R. Krebs: I was the only one using that lane. You had a certain amount of feet wide for a lane to shoot at. These targets were scattered all over. They weren’t

all together, they were scattered throughout the woods. Other guys that were with us, they were scattered out. They were like about five, six feet away. Maybe some were ten feet away.

A. Krebs: Shooting at different targets.

R. Krebs: Shooting at silhouette targets.

A. Krebs: And besides for the rifle, did they train you on any other weapons?

R. Krebs: I fired a hand gun once. It was, I think they called it a Colt 45, or it was a pistol, a 45 pistol, magazine loaded. I didn't have to learn that but they wanted everybody, like on a volunteer basis. If you want to learn how to shoot a pistol they would teach you how to do that.

A. Krebs: Did they do any grenade training?

R. Krebs: After the pistol, after I fired that pistol then it was back to other types of training. They got us up early in the morning to go—

[Break in recording][00:45:08]

A. Krebs: Okay, we're back. Bob, you were telling me a little bit about grenade training. Why don't you pick up back where – before we flipped sides.

R. Krebs: I was learning how to throw a hand grenade. First they would teach you how to throw a dummy grenade, just like a cap, it would go bang, just a simple little thing. But they would show you how to pull a pin, and how to hen [??], how to hold it in your hand and then throw it something like a football. Once you got that down they would hand you a live grenade. The instructor would stand behind you incase you might drop that grenade, he would pick it up and throw it over the wall.

A. Krebs: Were you scared?

R. Krebs: At first I was scared. A twenty year old kid handing a live grenade, you didn't know how to throw it. They would show you how to throw it. So I got this grenade in my hand and you got your finger in the pin and you listen for the instructor to yell out, "Pull a pin!" So you would pull a pin and you would hold that handle down until he would say, "Throw it over the wall!" When he would say that, then you threw it over the wall, like you were trained to do, over the wall, down a hillside into a river. So we did that and if he didn't like the way you did that you had to do it over again, you'd be yelled at. You'd get your first tail chewing. As far as I can remember I threw two grenades, one at day time, one at night time. We had to go to a class all day to learn how to throw a single grenade.

But one time at night, you throw this grenade over the wall down into the river. And you did good then you were dismissed. If you didn't do good then you had to do it over until you got it right. Then you'd go back to your class and you wait until everybody was done. And that was your day for throwing hand grenades.

A. Krebs: Sounds interesting.

R. Krebs: It was interesting. It was the first real chewing out I got 'cause he didn't like the way I threw it. After grenade training came bivouac. That was a lot of fun.

A. Krebs: What stage in basic training was this? Was this like in week—

R. Krebs: I think this was in the sixth week of basic training. We learned how to survive in the woods in rough weather. We got everything packed up and ready to go on a Sunday morning. We left like two o'clock Sunday afternoon. By four o'clock you had to have your tent all put up. You choose your partner. You had a two man tent. You choose your partner who you were teamed up with. The faster you got your tent up, the quicker you get inside where it was dry. It was getting late in September, it was turning cold. When we got inside the tent then it started raining and it didn't stop until that following Saturday. One week straight of rain. Sometimes it would rain heavy, sometimes it would rain like a mist, real fine. The longer we stayed in that week, the colder it got. It got down to like thirty or forty or so.

A. Krebs: I'm sure that wasn't very fun. Out in the middle of nowhere, raining.

R. Krebs: Out in the middle of the woods. Everything turned into mud. You put your poncho on, you had your steel pot helmet on your head. Sometimes that thing would give you a headache. And you had to have your rifle with you at all times. You would turn it upside down and you have the steel butt end of the rifle up on top of your shoulder because you didn't want any water going down into that barrel because the rifle would turn rusty and it was up to you to keep it clean.

A. Krebs: What did you eat out on bivouac?

R. Krebs: When we were in bivouac when chow time came we ate on your canteen set. You had a canteen for water. You had a silver plate, a silver knife, fork and spoon, and that's what you use to eat with. It wasn't like a silver tray, it was smaller. Everything that they gave you, you had to eat. You take something, you eat it. You never waste any food, no matter what it was. If it was a big T-bone steak, you ate it. If it was chipped beef on toast, you ate it, no matter what.

A. Krebs: Is that they way it stayed for you throughout the Army then?

R. Krebs: Once I got assigned to a different base then harassment let up some.

A. Krebs: Oh, of course. Okay.

R. Krebs: All through basic training it was like the discipline of the Army. They had to teach you this and that. You would get yelled at a lot.

A. Krebs: Even if you did something right they would probably yell at you.

R. Krebs: Even if you did something right, you did it their way, you'd still get yelled at; because they had to teach you the discipline.

A. Krebs: What did you do out on bivouac? You just set up and then –

R. Krebs: Bivouac was all about compass reading. You had to learn how to use a compass at night. Find your way through the woods, which direction you were going. They would take you out a few miles and you had to find your way back with – they put you in different groups of people, like three or four people to a group – they take you out about four miles out and you had to walk back. Read a compass at night, tracking through the woods.

A. Krebs: Doesn't sound like, very fun.

R. Krebs: It wasn't much fun. It wasn't much fun. You had to find your way back to camp.

A. Krebs: Did they play any like war games or anything?

R. Krebs: We played a few war games. The red army against the blue army; that sort of thing. But it wasn't with guns or anything. It was the red army has to get back to camp before the blue army, so to speak. They would give you every Saturday during basic training you had post liberty. You had special time off. You would have to stay on the base, but you had the freedom of walking around the base. Whoever would get back from compass reading first got special privileges.

A. Krebs: On base was there like a movie theater or--?

R. Krebs: Not in basic training. You didn't have time to see any movies, it was all school.

A. Krebs: Could you like go and get coffee at a coffee shop or use the phone?

- R. Krebs: You could use the phone to call home but there was no place to get any change. You best have some money with you. After basic training then they would pay you. You'd get a partial payment, like twenty-five or thirty dollars. Whatever private made that day, I think it was like a hundred dollars a month, you would get a partial payment of that until you got to your next base.
- A. Krebs: While you were in basic training, like recreation, did you write or receive many letters from family or friends?
- R. Krebs: There was one time where you could get the mail.
- A. Krebs: Like once a week? Or once throughout the whole—
- R. Krebs: Once throughout the whole basic training. You didn't know your address, you didn't have much time to write; you didn't have any paper or pencils. There wasn't much time to write. I never wrote until I got to my next base.
- A. Krebs: Did you listen to like the radio or be able to watch to TV or anything?
- R. Krebs: No, there was no TV, no radio, nothing. Nobody had nothing.
- A. Krebs: How about newspapers?
- R. Krebs: No, nobody had – unless you would go the post, to the PX store, and buy a newspaper. That's the only time you had to read, like on a Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon, that was the only time you had to read.
- A. Krebs: Did you have just one drill instructor then?
- R. Krebs: No, I believe we had four; three sergeants and one lieutenant.
- A. Krebs: Were they all equally mean?
- R. Krebs: Everybody was pretty much mean, particularly the lieutenant. They were all World War II veterans but one sergeant in particular, he had a nickname for everybody, not just one person. He would call everybody young war heroes, that was his nickname, "All you young war heroes! You will do this, or you will do that!"
- A. Krebs: Just as he says.
- R. Krebs: "You will do just as I say."
- A. Krebs: Do you remember any of their names?

- R. Krebs: One is Sergeant Nance [sp??]. One was, I don't remember the other three, just Sergeant Nance, he stood out more than the others. The lieutenant that was in charge of our company, each company had a lieutenant, our lieutenant was Lieutenant Peach. P-E-A-C-H. Peach. He was particularly mean to everybody. Bivouac was basically like compass reading. Each day of the week was compass reading. You'd read a compass during the day, you'd read a compass during night time.
- A. Krebs: Was it easy to get the hang of doing that?
- R. Krebs: Not at first. You'd have to go to different classes for it.
- A. Krebs: So you got lost a few times?
- R. Krebs: We got lost a few times, yep. When we get lost then you get yelled at.
- A. Krebs: And when you made it back to camp they still yelled at you 'cause you didn't get there fast enough?
- R. Krebs: When we got back to camp we got yelled at because they took too long, although we beat the other team. We still got yelled at. It was their job to teach you the discipline. And I mean they would discipline ya.
- A. Krebs: Oh, I believe ya. You mentioned you choose up partners or something like that. Did you have one partner throughout the whole time? The whole basic training?
- R. Krebs: Just at bivouac. Just beginning of bivouac, from Sunday when you got to the bivouac area there was certain places that were numbered, they would give you a number and you had to basically get your stuff off the truck and go and look for that number and then once you find that number that's where you would pitch up your tent. Your tent would fit with the other guy's tent. They were half and half, your tents would snap together. There was three poles on one end and three poles on the other end and you had to tie them down with rope. You pitched your tent up with these poles and then one person would hold it up and then the other end would hold up the other end, and then the other person would tie it down so the wind wouldn't blow it over.
- A. Krebs: It sounds like they do that on purpose for a team building. You and your partner get to know each other and would work together.
- R. Krebs: Those poles, they were like a foot, once you fit them all together they were like three feet long. You better pray and hope they don't break, once they break you were in bad luck. There was no other pole.

- A. Krebs: You had to make due.
- R. Krebs: You had to make due with what you had.
- A. Krebs: Do you remember at basic training were there many minorities. Was your particular group all white or was it very integrated?
- R. Krebs: You were mixed in with black people. There was no segregation, blacks and whites, everybody was mixed. There was Puerto Ricans, there was black people, there was white people, there was Jewish people, everybody was mixed. If you teamed up with a black guy, so be it, he was your partner.
- A. Krebs: You were both in for it.
- R. Krebs: You had to make due with what you got. If you were assigned to a certain person, they would give you a name and you would look for that name. Whoever had that name, black, white, Jewish, whatever, whoever had that name that was your partner for that week.
- A. Krebs: Were any of the minorities, in your opinion, treated unfairly? You were all treated equally?
- R. Krebs: We were all treated equally. We were all treated the same.
- A. Krebs: Equally bad, huh.
- R. Krebs: There was no excuse for anything that you did. You could come up with some kind of excuse and they wouldn't take it.
- A. Krebs: How about at the end of basic training, you're finally getting towards the end –
- R. Krebs: Toward the end you had to get your class A uniform ready for inspection. And then toward the last week of basic training you would go into a cerem--they would teach you about different ceremonies. A graduation parade because you passed your course with flying colors. They would grade you on what your performance was. If you were over a certain number then you made it. You were all set for graduation. Graduation day came, it did nothing but rain, we got soaked and wet.
- A. Krebs: You were still outside?
- R. Krebs: We were outside on the parade field but this is our day come rain or shine, this was our day. We got our class A uniform soakin' wet. Shoes were full of mud. Everything was all mud. That's what you had to do.

- A. Krebs: Did any family members come watch this?
- R. Krebs: A lot of family members came for parade day. But my family members lived too far away to come. They couldn't make it so I had my own personal day for graduation.
- A. Krebs: So did you march in front of a reviewing stand or something?
- R. Krebs: Yeah. The post commander and all of his aides, officers and that were all on a parade stand, a reviewing stand, and different groups of people -- we would take our turns and we would march down the field to a column left and then a column left again and past this reviewing stand and then as we passed by you would give him a hand salute and he would salute you back. A hand salute, you would recognize his rank. He was a post commander, he was some kind of a general, a lieutenant general or something, he had to be a high ranking officer. We would pass the review and then go back to where we were and then after passing review he would say a few words, "Enjoy your Army career. Some of you will stay, some of you will be dismissed. Some of you will probably go off to war, some of you won't." Whatever came along.
- A. Krebs: How did you feel that day? Did you feel—
- R. Krebs: I felt proud that I accomplished something. It was my day. I did what they taught me and I was proud of that day. I traveled home in the class A uniform. I had fourteen days to get to my next assignment.
- A. Krebs: Where was that?
- R. Krebs: My next assignment was Fort Carson, Colorado.
- A. Krebs: Was that for like technical training or?
- R. Krebs: I was assigned to the artillery division, learn how to fire big canons. That was a whole different kind of an operation.
- A. Krebs: Going back to basic training, you had mentioned before how you had a funny story about how you were out crawling around in the mud, the dust or something, what happened there?
- R. Krebs: Oh, yeah, yeah. We did that twice that day. During the day it was like one o'clock in the afternoon. When we got to the infiltration course, they would explain to you what was going on. I don't remember what all was involved. We had to crawl underneath barbed wire from way back a long ways. They would take you like under ground and then you had to -- as

you came out -- you had to climb this wooden wall, like ten feet up. Once you got to the top you would swing your leg over the top of it and then without getting up, you couldn't get up, they wouldn't let you get up, you had to crawl over hard rock, there was a lot of rocks in that ground. You had to crawl quite a ways. You'd crawl around these, they had these pillars, these fox holes, where they would set 'em off, they would scare the daylights out of you, like they dropped a bomb and it exploded, the big sound of a boom and you were right next to it. While you were crawling you'd hear this big boom and you were crawling along the ground, on a fifty caliber machine gun they would fire live rounds over your head so you couldn't stick your head up so you had to crawl and crawl fast to get out of that range. And once you got to the end then you'd go sit up in the stands.

A. Krebs: And watch everyone else?

R. Krebs: And watch everyone else. And once everybody got done then you had to do the same thing all over again, a second time, at night! At night training. It was the same thing you had to climb up that wooden fence, that wooden wall, and lift your leg over and then without getting up crawl along that same course again. They'd be setting off them bombs. Scare the holy devil outta you. This time you could see the tracers they were shooting over your head. They would glow in the dark and they call them tracers. They would stagger the shots, first you get three or four or five shots and then somebody else and then they come back and forth and back and forth. Live ammunition being fired over your head so you don't stand up. With my experience I had a partial payment on me of money, sixty-five dollars. They said not to trust anybody. You had locker back at barracks, you leave all your personal items in that locker. So instead of putting my wallet in my shirt pocket, I put it in my pants pocket. Those pants pockets were big, you know, and you had a lot of room. They were more or less down toward the middle of your leg and there was no buttons to button them. So with that partial payment of sixty-five dollars in my wallet you had to crawl underneath barbed wire on your back, somehow or other I lost that wallet and somebody that was following me either picked it up or some sergeant picked it up and I never saw it again.

A. Krebs: And I suppose you got in trouble for that.

R. Krebs: I got in trouble for it and I had my service card in there and when you lose your service card, it's like your identification card, when you lose that you wanna know what a really chewing out is, you lose that you'll find out what a chewing out is. That's a no-no. You can't do that, but I lost mine. And two other people lost theirs, but they didn't lose any money like I did. When that was all over and they asked anybody if they lost something, my hand stood up like a sore thumb and I said, "Yeah I lost my wallet, I lost

sixty-five dollars of money and I lost the ID card.” And that sergeant that asked me if I lost anything he just went wild, “You dumb blank blank blank, you don’t do that, we teach you all this and then you go and lose it!” He tells you how stupid you are.

A. Krebs: Probably didn’t make you feel very well.

R. Krebs: No, you felt like crawling in a hole and hiding. So it wasn’t the best day.

A. Krebs: No, I can’t imagine. Then after basic training you went to Fort Carson. No, you said you had fourteen days?

R. Krebs: After basic training you had a fourteen day leave so I came home to Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. I came home on the bus, I took the bus all the way home, through St. Louis, through Chicago, through Milwaukee, up to Fond du Lac.

A. Krebs: Were you in your uniform?

R. Krebs: I traveled by uniform, ‘cause you get the bus ticket cheaper when you were in the service. After the fourteen days were up I had to go to Fort Carson in Colorado. Then I bought a train ticket from Fond du Lac to Chicago and then I transferred trains from Chicago to Colorado Springs, Colorado. It was like a two day trip. I traveled all day, all night, all day. Once we got to Fort Carson, Colorado you had to check in, get your clothes, get your barracks, get straight away. They would assign you to a team, to a company. I can’t recall the name of the company. Things seemed to ease up a little bit, it wasn’t so hectic. There was more or less a lot of schooling on how to fire a canon, a 55 Howitzer, which was quite bigger than a 107. By that time it was Christmas time and I was at Fort Carson for two weeks and then I had a two week leave. Another fourteen days then I came back home again, I came back home to Fond du Lac. I spent Christmas at home and then I went back to Fort Carson Colorado, went through a second eight weeks of schooling, of how to fire a canon. Then I learned all about guard duty. I pulled guard duty twice in eight weeks of training.

A. Krebs: Guard duty for like on for the base?

R. Krebs: Guard duty for the base.

A. Krebs: Like at the front gates or walking the perimeter or something?

R. Krebs: We walked around a two city block on base.

A. Krebs: So you’re walking that in Colorado in December time?

R. Krebs: It was in the month of January. One of the coldest months there was, it was like twenty-five below zero. Our clothes weren't the best, we had wool pants, wool shirts, wool socks, a wool hat to wear. When you pulled guard duty, it was twenty-five below zero, it was plenty cold. For two hours you walk around two blocks. We wore two pair of pants, we wore two shirts and two pair of socks and heavy duty boots and a wool cap.

A. Krebs: Was it warm enough?

R. Krebs: And you were still cold. You had cold cheeks, cold nose, and hope to God you didn't catch cold. It was pretty cold. Two hours on, two hours off, two hours on, two hours off, two hours on and then you were done. All through the night.

A. Krebs: Just by yourself?

R. Krebs: Everybody would take their turn. The lieutenant would come out with your replacement and you had to go through some kind of a challenge to make him identify himself because you didn't know who he was, it was pitch dark out. He would state his name and rank and "you're Private Krebs, we're here to replace you." Okay. And he would replace you with somebody else, so you go back to the barracks and get warmed up for a couple hours, or sleep.

A. Krebs: Just to go back out again in two more hours.

R. Krebs: Yep, in two more hours.

A. Krebs: And you would replace that same person who you just?

R. Krebs: You would replace somebody else. You would rotate.

A. Krebs: Oh, like a different section or something.

R. Krebs: Yep. They would instruct you what you're guarding, the motor pool, the barracks, or whatever.

A. Krebs: The latrine or something, whatever they wanted.

R. Krebs: You might be guarding a garbage can, you never know.

A. Krebs: They probably did that to keep you busy, maybe.

R. Krebs: No, no it was like a semi-discipline. Teaching a little more discipline, but not quite as rough as basic training.

A. Krebs: Then after basic training, from basic training to tech school, you mentioned you had fourteen days off took a train to Fond du Lac, then you went to Fort Carson, then you had a little time off there between –

R. Krebs: Then I had a second eight weeks of training, then after that then I went to my next assignment.

A. Krebs: What were those fourteen days when you came back to Fond du Lac, what were those like.

R. Krebs: When I came back to Fond du Lac that was cold also but not as cold as Fort Carson.

A. Krebs: Was everybody happy to see you?

R. Krebs: It was in winter time, everybody was happy to see me. I traveled in my class A uniform.

A. Krebs: Did you feel proud?

R. Krebs: I felt very proud. I was a young teenager, twenty some years old, serving my country. I was a private in the Army. I didn't have any stripes on my sleeve. I was a big time private. I had gotten a partial payment. When you get paid in basic training you get a partial payment, then when you got to your second eight weeks, then you got another partial payment, the rest of your money that was due to you. I believe you got paid once a month and then eight weeks, the second eight weeks that you were there I believe it was twice, one and half payments. You would get a partial payment and then at the end of the second eight weeks you would get a full payment to your next assignment.

A. Krebs: At that point after basic training or even during tech school did you feel resentful that they drafted you or did you feel like --?

R. Krebs: I felt like an American soldier. I had good feelings. I more or less was kind of proud.

A. Krebs: Do you think that was popular with other draftees?

R. Krebs: Most everybody, once they got their uniforms on and they looked good, it was pretty popular. It was a good situation. Some guys were happy, some guys were so-so. It was mediocre.

A. Krebs: What was living at Fort Carson like? What were the barracks like? Chow?

- R. Krebs: The barracks at Fort Carson were just a little better than basic training. They were a little bit cleaner. We still had to keep them clean, like housework and that, but it wasn't like an all night party. You weren't down on your hands and knees hand scrubbing the floor, they gave you buckets and mops and you mopped the floor.
- A. Krebs: How many people were like in your room? Was it smaller than --?
- R. Krebs: Then again I was up on the second floor. There was like twenty-five people to one big room and there was twenty-five downstairs, like fifty people to a barrack.
- A. Krebs: Did anyone from your basic training in Fort Leonard Wood go to Fort Carson with you?
- R. Krebs: I believe there was half of what we had at basic training went to Fort Carson.
- A. Krebs: So you knew some people?
- R. Krebs: Some people I got acquainted with at basic training went to second eight weeks. The other people that was with us in basic training went somewhere else for other training.
- A. Krebs: Probably never saw them ever again.
- R. Krebs: I've never seen them again. When we weren't firing the 55 Howitzers then they would teach us how to fire machine guns, how to load machine guns, twenty-five caliber machine guns. We would fire them at gas cans up on top of a hill. If you were lucky enough to hit a gas can, a barrel, it would explode, let out a big ball of fire. And you're laying down knee deep in snow, you were laying down in snow, and you were dressed warm to lay down in snow because it was in the month of January.
- A. Krebs: In Colorado.
- R. Krebs: In Colorado and it was plenty cold. It was like zero or ten below.
- A. Krebs: So after Fort Carson then you went to Fort Sill. Did you travel by train again?
- R. Krebs: In that last week of Fort Carson we would have a special formation. A sergeant that was there, he would call out each person's name, "You're going to Fort Sill. You're going to Fort Benning. You're going to Fort Ord." You're going here, you're going there. Different, where ever you

were assigned to. And they came to me and they said that I'm going to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

A. Krebs: Were you happy about that?

R. Krebs: I was pretty much happy about that. Then when I got my next assignment then I called home and told my mother, "I'll be in Oklahoma for the next eighteen months. That's my assigned Army base."

A. Krebs: Was she happy about that?

R. Krebs: She was happy about it, yeah. She was afraid I was going to go overseas somewhere.

A. Krebs: Like to Korea or Germany or something.

R. Krebs: At first we had orders to go to Nuremburg, Germany, but then they were told that that was canceled because they didn't need us there and they needed more help at Fort Sill, so they sent us to Fort Sill. I think there was three or four people, out of all us that went to Fort Sill, there was three or four people that went to Alaska. And the rest of us, they loaded us up on Greyhound buses and we went to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. We got to Fort Sill, Oklahoma like eleven o'clock at night and somebody had our beds and that all made, everything was all ready for us.

A. Krebs: Not like basic training.

R. Krebs: No, where you had to make your own bed. It's just that the person that was in charge on that bus he had all the paper work of everybody. He had to turn that in to the receiving officer and then come the following morning when you made your first formation at Fort Sill, Oklahoma they would say, "Welcome aboard. This is Company A." I think there was Company A, B, and C. I think I was in Company B. We were up on the third floor. There was three floors and we were up on top. And then we had formation out on the balcony which was wide enough for all of us people. You get up early in the morning, have formation. They would take a count of everybody that was there, everybody's here, okay, then dismissed for breakfast and you go down and have breakfast and you'd stand single file in line, go through the mess hall and get your breakfast

[Break in recording][01:30:23]

A. Krebs: Okay, we're back. We flipped over on the tape. Bob, you were talking about Fort Sill and roughly your first couple of days there. Continue on with that, please.

R. Krebs: In Fort Sill, Oklahoma then your job was driving a truck, truck driver for a company that you were assigned with. Ya keep it clean for inspections, you'd gas up your own truck, you'd wash it, you'd keep it clean, ready for different inspections. When time came, the National Guard would come in and you had to drive for the National Guard. The National Guard people would load up on the back end. The officer that was in charge would sit along side of you so it was all very military. You take the people out to the field so they could do their exercises, whatever they had planned for the day. You'd go back to the motor pool where the canon is. You'd hook up the canon to the back of the truck, you'd take that out to the field, and you'd back that into placement. They would unload it for you. Their ammunition shells and that were all there. And then I had to go back into motor pool once more and hook up the water trailer and bring out the water trailer 'cause they had to have water. 'Cause it was hot out there. I'd fill the water trailer up with a garden hose. It would take like three hours or so to fill that water trailer up and while I did that I sat in the PX and drank coffee, read the paper. Maybe at that time I ate a doughnut, I don't recall.

A. Krebs: Sounds like you got the better end of the deal. They're out there shooting guns and you're in the PX.

R. Krebs: I was sitting in the PX drinking coffee and maybe have a soda or something. Maybe have a bite to eat or something. And then once I got the water trailer filled up I closed the top up and lock it. It was hooked up to the back of the truck and then I would haul that up to the field and put it next to the mess tent where those people would go and have their dinner and supper. After I dropped the water trailer off then I had to stay out in the field 'cause I couldn't go back to base. There was a few things that maybe some people wanted. I had to occasionally play their war game I had to cover up the truck, camouflage the truck. I had to park it underneath a tree where nobody could see it, get some branches and cover it up. Once in a while I had to play their game. Just basically I sat in the truck all day, outta that hot sun.

A. Krebs: What kind of truck was it?

R. Krebs: It was a two and half ton GMC Army truck.

A. Krebs: Don't find many of those out on the road.

R. Krebs: Automatic shift. Wasn't a stick shift it was automatic. It was a World War II type, two and a half ton. Lord only knows it must have gone through a few engines. Motors were pretty well wore.

A. Krebs: So you were at Fort Sill for eighteen months.

R. Krebs: I was Fort Sill eighteen months.

A. Krebs: Which is like one winter and two summers, the summer of '62, the summer of '63.

R. Krebs: Right. The summer of '62 the winter into the next year, '62-'63 the winter, and then all of the summer of '63 up until September. I went in September 18, 1961 and you get out September 19, 1963, the day after you go in. I spent all summer long, the 1<sup>st</sup> of January up until the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, it was like nine months.

A. Krebs: Your first nine months or your last nine months?

R. Krebs: My last nine months of Fort Sill. By that time I was a Private First Class, a PFC rank. I made I think it was a hundred and four dollars at that time I made.

A. Krebs: A month?

R. Krebs: A month. Every time you would be out in the field doing something, you were working with the National Guard or so, somebody would come out and tell the officer we need so and so for a special formation. They would come and tell you for a special formation that they were holding. You'd have get in your truck and drive back into base 'cause you were way out in the field. You'd find out what the special formation was, that would be like for spiritual guidance, the Lord is behind you, he's backing you up. Other formations were for preaching about buying savings bonds. Once a month they would have a special formation about buying savings bonds. Invest in your country; it would be a good thing. And when I first signed up for payroll I told them that I wanted a savings bond sent home to my mother. So when I got home I had quite a bit of money saved up.

A. Krebs: Sounds like you spent those two years wisely then.

R. Krebs: Yeah. I got to learn about savings bonds before I went into service. So I was prepared for that. I bought a \$25 savings bond once a month and it was automatically deducted outta your pay check.

A. Krebs: So you never saw it.

R. Krebs: I never saw it. It was here in Fond du Lac. When I came home here to Fond du Lac I had money waiting in the bank for me.

A. Krebs: Great.

R. Krebs: Other formations were spiritual guidance, different types of formations. They were about an hour long, two hours long. Some were half a day. Spiritual guidance, it was like, your church stands behind you, it was all religion. That was more or less some minister would preach to you. That was more or less like a half a day. And then he would dismiss you and you'd go back to your job. When it came time to pack up you'd hook up the water trailer and then the same people who were assigned to your truck would load up on the back end. Once we got everything loaded up then I took them back to their barracks where they were assigned to. Then I went and dropped the water trailer off, and then I went back to motor pool, cleaned up my truck, gassed her up for the next day. Whenever you would take a truck out in the morning, you'd drive it all day and you come back, you would always gas it up for the next day. You would never gas it up in the morning 'cause your truck was always waiting for you, instead of you waiting to gas the truck up. You would always gas it up at the end of the day, check the oil, pull a little maintenance.

A. Krebs: Is that why you always have lots of gas in your truck?

R. Krebs: That's why I always had a full tank. Washing the truck, some guys would take it right down into a river, a very shallow river. They would steal a hand brush or some kind of a long handled brush and they would wash underneath the fenders because the mud and dried dirt that would gather up underneath where the tires were, that would gather up under the fenders. They park the truck right down in the river, because it was very shallow, and they take the brush and they would wash everything. When they get it up out of that river, everything was water proof, water would splash up underneath the truck, get in the engine compartment, but it didn't matter because it was all water proof. They would take it to motor pool, gas her up and put it down line. You would do the best you could of parking your truck so they were all even. The person that was on guard duty he would tell you how far to back your truck up so the nose of your truck would be even with the rest of them, it wouldn't stick out or it wouldn't be back too far. Your trucks would be all in formation, just like you would be.

A. Krebs: The Army way.

R. Krebs: The Army way. You would do that every time you take that truck out you come back, you would line it up, square it off.

A. Krebs: You were at Fort Sill during Cuban Missile crisis. Do you remember any of that?

R. Krebs: Just barely. At that time it was like a hot item. Nikita Krushchev wanted to put missiles wanted to put missiles on Cuba because Cuba went

communism. John F. Kennedy was president; he surrounded the island with Navy ships because he was in the Navy. He had like a blockade going. He would block the island for any Russian ships that would come in and they would turn those Russian ships back so that they had to turn back and go back to Russia with their missiles. If anything came up outta that we had to be ready to be shipped out in eight hours. We had to be ready to go in eight hours. Packed up and ready to go.

A. Krebs: Did they tell you where you might go?

R. Krebs: No, they never said where you were going but when something came up, war or the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Bay of Pigs; if you got shipped out you had to be ready to go in eight hours.

A. Krebs: Were you scared that you would have to get shipped out?

R. Krebs: No, I didn't want to go out, but you had to go out. Luckily nothing came out of it. I didn't have to go. Day after day it was a hot item but you went about your job until it came time to get out, you were discharged. Each day that went by it was a hot item but you did your job. I was driving for the National Guard. During the winter months I had three months off where I didn't have to drive for the National Guard. We just hung around motor pool and do odd jobs in motor pool. Clean this, clean that, do this, do that, gas that truck up, gas this one up, different things until late January when the National Guard came back. From then on, you worked for the National Guard.

A. Krebs: Sounds like it kept you busy.

R. Krebs: I was very busy.

A. Krebs: Were you able to go home at any part during when you were at Fort Sill? Take a train back to Fond du Lac or something?

R. Krebs: I think I came home once. I had thirty days. I used up almost all of that. I came home once during the summer months. A relative met me at the train depot and took me to my mother's and my second step father's. When time came then I had to go back. Then I stayed at Fort Sill and finished up my time.

A. Krebs: After your time was done I'm sure they probably asked you if you wanted to re-enlist. What were you thinking at that point?

R. Krebs: Luckily at that time I was expecting somebody to come and ask me to re-enlist but nobody ever did. I went to the – there was a special barracks where you went to get your out pay.

- A. Krebs: Discharge pay or something like that?
- R. Krebs: Your discharge pay, your out paper. You had some paper work to do. You had to go around certain places of the base and get your okay to be discharged. You had to take a final physical of getting out of the Army. They would test your eyes, take a blood count. They would look at your feet, look in your ears, your mouth, your nose, listen to your heart. It was all part of getting out of the Army like getting into the Army. It was a physical getting out. I passed that okay. I got Army glasses, two pair. And then 'cause I got false teeth, I got a partial plate from the Army, Army glasses. Then the last two days of the enlistment I had to go get mustering out pay which I think was \$300.16.
- A. Krebs: That's a nice chunk of change.
- R. Krebs: When you got out, the Captain, whatever loose change you had, I had sixteen cents, he had a gallon jar on his desk, he ask you about donating that sixteen cents or whatever amount of change you had. You didn't have to donate it, but it was up to you, if you didn't want to donate it, fine. It was for some charity, so I gave him the sixteen cents, because he asked for it, but I didn't have to give it to him.
- A. Krebs: Well if everyone gave him their extra change then that would be –
- R. Krebs: That jug was almost full when I gave him the sixteen cents. It was three quarters full.
- A. Krebs: Wow, so that was a lot of money.
- R. Krebs: I was going to take the bus all the way home but the guy that was traveling with me was from Michigan. He had the car and he had a credit card so he said if you want, it won't cost you anything, you just ride along with me, all the way up to Chicago. So three of us rode in that one car all the way up to Chicago and all we did was buy him breakfast. That's all he wanted. So when I got to Chicago I went to the LaSalle Street depot where I caught the train again, caught the Chicago Northwestern up to Fond du Lac. And my mother and my second stepfather met me at the train depot. The funniest part of the train ride, I was the only one on the passenger car. The Chicago Northwestern train was going broke. Shortly after that they filed bankruptcy.
- A. Krebs: Did you travel in your uniform?
- R. Krebs: Wherever I went I traveled in my uniform. It was a summer uniform, light brown, khaki color, with what they call a saucer cap, it was a round cap.

A. Krebs: With a little brim on the front or something?

R. Krebs: With a little brim on the front, yeah, with a great big eagle insignia on the front.

A. Krebs: What did it feel like when your train rolled into Fond du Lac? You walked off the train. Was your mom there?

R. Krebs: She was standing outside the railroad station.

A. Krebs: What did it feel like when you stepped off that train?

R. Krebs: When I got off of that train, “Thank God I’m home.” I got down on the ground and I gave the ground a little kiss. Back home in Fond du Lac. My mother came in and greeted me and my second step father, he greeted me. I had that great big old duffle bag with me. I threw that in the back of trunk of a ’57 Buick I had, my stepdad had, and then we went home.

A. Krebs: Did you have any thoughts of re-enlisting?

R. Krebs: I had some thoughts of re-enlisting but I really didn’t want to enlist. I wanted to get a civilian job, working in some kind of a factory. I didn’t care where it was, I wanted to do factory work and it just happened to be that it was a cheese factory.

A. Krebs: How appropriate! Wisconsin, cheese.

R. Krebs: My second step father, Henry Peters, he knew the cheese maker, his name was John Wissy [sp??]. He was a World War II veteran. He’s passed on by now. I had to go and see the personnel department at the cheese factory. I told the lady I was fresh out of the Army, I’m looking for work. I filed for unemployment. I got two checks for unemployment, Twenty-one dollars on each check and then had to take another physical. Had to go up to the hospital and take that physical and then I came back and told the lady I passed it okay but they’re going to mail you the papers. She said fine, okay, you can start tomorrow morning, and I’ve been there for thirty-eight years.

A. Krebs: What was the name of the –

R. Krebs: At that time the name of the cheese factory was Tolibia.

A. Krebs: In fact I think I still call it Tolibia.

R. Krebs: Jose Ramirez Tolibia. He had an American mother and a Mexican father. He was quite rich. Rich man to own and operate a cheese factory. That was on a Monday. I started work on a Tuesday. I fell right in with the schedule. I had Wednesday off and then I worked the rest of the week.

A. Krebs: You've been working there ever since.

R. Krebs: I've been working there ever since.

A. Krebs: Seems like you don't get a day off either.

R. Krebs: No, days off are few and far between. They steal them on ya'. They ask you to work. You really don't have to but they want you to because they're short handed. They don't have enough help on hand.

A. Krebs: Along those same lines do you feel like your military training in the Army has helped you at your factory?

R. Krebs: In a way it has. I couldn't tell you which way.

A. Krebs: Perhaps you listen better to orders than anyone else.

R. Krebs: Yeah, when they tell you to do something you went and did it. It's just listening to a variety of different orders. Be kind, be courteous. Say 'yes sir', 'no sir', 'yes ma'am, 'no ma'am.' Show a little courtesy it will get you a long way. That's why I stayed there.

A. Krebs: That seems to be a common phrase that people use. I've heard lots of stories about people, when they're in the service they pull certain pranks on other people. Did that ever happen? Did you ever pull any pranks or have any pranks?

R. Krebs: Once, one guy went AWOL just for one night. He cut down a Christmas tree out in the yard and he put it in his bed to make like he was sleeping in bed, because every once in a while they would check on you.

A. Krebs: This was at basic or tech school?

R. Krebs: This was at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He had a pine tree under his blanket, if you wouldn't turn the light on and you could see his bed, it looked like there was someone sleeping in there, but he was gone into town, some tavern, out drinking or something. Later on they would find out it was a tree or something, it wasn't him. So he got --

A. Krebs: So he got in trouble?

R. Krebs: He got himself into trouble.

A. Krebs: You didn't pull any pranks?

R. Krebs: No, I never pulled any pranks. I wasn't into that sort of thing. I just kept my nose clean. I had time off I'd do my own thing. If I had guard duty or KP duty to do, I did my job. I never had time to disrupt anybody or pull pranks.

A. Krebs: Do you have any injuries or any body damage from when you were in the service? Some people say they froze their hand or something so now it doesn't work as well or something like that.

R. Krebs: When I was at Fort Carson, Colorado in that below zero weather I stood at a movie theater; the cold wind was blowing, hitting you in the face. I was standing in line to see a movie at a movie theater. I had frost bite of the ear, I think it was the right ear. The wind was hitting my right ear and it turned it real red. The next day I had to go to a sick bay and they had to thaw that ear out. It was real red and it hurt. The outside of the ear hurt. It was very cold. You put your fingers on the ear and it was cold. So I had to go thaw that ear out. But that was the only injury that I ever had. But I just had to go to that movie and see that movie.

A. Krebs: Do you remember what it was?

R. Krebs: That movie, it was about racing, car racing. Not NASCAR racing but open wheel, open car racing, like Indie type racing. It was I believe Curt Douglas and Gilbert Roland and few other people. Some big, top actors.

A. Krebs: After you got back to Fond du Lac and started working the cheese factory did you give any thought to joining any veterans organizations like the American Legion or –

R. Krebs: I never thought about the American Legion, but I had to join the Army Reserve. It was mandatory to join the Army Reserve. It was for two years. One year of active duty. Twice a month on a Saturday I had to go to the Army Reserve and then one year was inactive.

A. Krebs: Inactive duty. That was here in Fond du Lac as well then?

R. Krebs: Army Reserve was here in Fond du Lac on Fond du Lac Avenue.

A. Krebs: Over by the fair grounds?

R. Krebs: Over by the fair grounds.

A. Krebs: Isn't there still a reserve building over there?

R. Krebs: I think so.

A. Krebs: Like behind the pool I think there's one.

R. Krebs: And we had to leave from there to go in the summer of '64 the Army Reserve had a summer camp up in Little Falls Minnesota. I spent two weeks up there, still learning about firing a Howitzer, the big canons. And then after that we came back to Fond du Lac, and then the following year you were inactive, your name was still on the list, but you're inactive. For two weeks we had to have summer camp at Camp McCoy.

A. Krebs: Over by Tomah, right?

R. Krebs: Over by Tomah and LaCrosse, that area. There we learned about tanks, military tanks, and what kind of shells and projectiles they fired, in two weeks. It's just like a crash course. A lot of people had interest in it and some people didn't, but we had to go. And that was basically my military career. After Camp McCoy I didn't have to make any more meetings. Got my discharge in the mail from St. Louis. I was out, I was done.

A. Krebs: Good feeling?

R. Krebs: A very good feeling. When I saw that discharge paper -- I still have it upstairs -- when I saw that, that was a real good feeling. I'm a veteran, I put my time in, somebody else can do it now.

A. Krebs: What did you think overall of your Army experience? Did you like it? Did you enjoy it? Did you hate it? Would you do it again?

R. Krebs: There was some days where I liked it, pay day especially, when you got paid. Other days when I had to pull KP duty or guard duty, I didn't like that 'cause I knew everybody else was out partying and I had to pull guard duty, walk around the motor pool area guarding trucks. And nobody was gonna take -- they say there was always somebody gonna take a truck out. Nobody ever took a truck! They were there. There were some days where I thought it was a little bit of a waste of time. Nobody bothered them.

A. Krebs: They probably kept you out there just to keep you busy or something.

R. Krebs: In certain times they had to keep you busy. A little bit of harassment, not much. Sometimes they would come by and say "Prepare your truck for inspection. We want to inspect certain trucks and you're one of them." So I go down there and lay my equipment all out on the ground, all the tools that were assigned to me. The truck was there and you would wait

and wait and wait and wait and nobody showed up, so it was nothing but harassment. After a certain time somebody would say to you, “The inspection is called off so you don’t have to.” After they would tell you there was no inspection. So you’d wrap all your tools back up and put ‘em back in the truck and lock them up.

A. Krebs: And wait for the next day.

R. Krebs: Wait for the next time. But that was it. And the motor pool office, it was a little bit of a funny thing. At that time, 12 ounce bottles of Coca Cola – that’s all they had on base, was Coke – in glass bottle, not plastic but glass bottles – they were 12 ounce bottles; at that time it was six cents for a bottle. Everybody had a nickel in their pocket, but to try and find that penny, nobody had pennies. “I don’t have a penny, do you have one?” “I don’t have one.” There were times where we were thirsty but we didn’t have a penny. Other times when we did have, you get a bottle of Coke out of there somebody wanted to take a taste of it.

A. Krebs: Because they didn’t have a penny.

R. Krebs: Because they didn’t have a penny.

A. Krebs: Bottles of Coke nowadays don’t go for six cents.

R. Krebs: No. It was like a twelve ounce bottle. Try and find a penny; you’d have to go into town. Into Lawton, Oklahoma to get change. Just to get some pennies. You go to a bank or something, some store, you trade a nickel in for five pennies. You have five pennies in your pocket and you get a Coke for six cents. “How’d you do that?! How’d you do that?!” “I went into town.” “No, I ain’t going into town.”

A. Krebs: Not for five pennies.

R. Krebs: Not for five pennies.

A. Krebs: Yeah but they’d be crying when they don’t have a Coke.

R. Krebs: Well, let them cry! Their tongue would be hanging out, “Wish I had a Coke.” Well you ain’t getting mine! They want a Coke, they go to the PX or something.

A. Krebs: Well that answers all my questions. Do you have anything else you want to add, any other stories, or anything you can think of that we didn’t touch upon.

R. Krebs: No, I think that's basically it. Some days were better than others. There were some days where you were broke, you didn't have the money. I sort of -- it was like getting spanked for doing something wrong. You spend a little money, well that was wrong, you shouldn't have done that. So I slapped myself on the hand and said "can't do that," so I'd save my money where other people would go into town and get drunk. The next day they'd have a hang over and they'd borrow money from somebody. And they get themselves into trouble because they never pay it back. I never loaned out any money and I never gave any money out. Money I had, I kept.

A. Krebs: And that money you sent home in savings bonds, did you buy anything big with that?

R. Krebs: After I got out I got a job in a cheese factory then I had to have a car so I bought myself a '62 white Chrysler. I bought a Newport 300 Chrysler, as it was called, the big four-door hard top. After I got it home then it ran for a while and then the car got into trouble, it wouldn't run. I had a lot of problems with it, electrical problems. Something in the car was always shorting out. It's like you have to have an electrician to rewire the car. Stop and go, stop and go. This burned out that burned out. The lights wouldn't work, the dashboard lights burned out, the tail lights would burn out. The thing just wouldn't want to run. After I had it a year and half then I traded it in on a '66 Pontiac GTO. I think that was money well spent, that car ran and ran and ran. After that then I got married and a family came along and I had to trade the GTO in for a '73 Chevy Nova.

A. Krebs: That car was orange, right?

R. Krebs: That car was orange in color. Got it from the Chevrolet dealer.

A. Krebs: Now you have one daughter and one son, right?

R. Krebs: I have one daughter and one son.

A. Krebs: And they're both did some --

R. Krebs: They both did military time.

A. Krebs: What did you feel about that?

R. Krebs: My daughter was in four years and my son was in five years.

A. Krebs: Did you feel okay about that?

R. Krebs: I felt okay. As long as they're not in war time and nobody's shooting at them or they don't get shot or wounded, it was okay. Join the service and see the world, which I think they did.

A. Krebs: Yeah, I think they did, and I think they had a good time.

R. Krebs: They probably had a good time. But the military life now, they say it's more fun than when I was in. Military time when I was in, it was a little harder.

A. Krebs: Seems like you had a lot less creature comforts than what they have nowadays.

R. Krebs: When I was in Oklahoma, I just remembered, when I was in Oklahoma, the summer of '62, we had to go to Norfolk, Virginia as guests of the Navy. For two weeks of amphibious training. It just came to me I almost forgot about it.

A. Krebs: Well I'm glad you remembered it.

R. Krebs: It was called amphibious training and it was climbing up and down the side of a ship. The ship was called a LST where the front end would open up and you would drive your truck up on that ship and they would take you out on the bay and turn you around in the bay and you would sit there until you landed on the beach. There was truck drivers that were assigned different trucks. They drove the trucks off of the LST into the water up on the beach. The ones that didn't have a truck were like infantry. You'd go down the ramp, waist high in ocean water and salt water and you would land up on the beach. The salt water would eat the shoe polish off your shoes. They would be all white instead of black. And you had to re-polish them which was very hard to do because your shoes were all full of salt, the shoe polish just wouldn't take to the shoes. You had to go get new shoes, new boots. It was boots. After that, that was in the summer of '62, and in the summer of '63 we had to play two weeks of war games with the paratroopers out of North Carolina. They were a simulated enemy and we were invading their territory. Just playing war games in the woods. That lasted for about two weeks. They were the enemy and they would capture us and we would go sit in their jail, simulated jail. Just playing war games, just to keep us busy. At that time we took a train ride from

[Break in recording][02:15:42]

A. Krebs: Okay, go ahead, Bob, continue about your discussion about when you went to North Carolina.

- R. Krebs: We went to North Carolina on a train. We were playing war games out in the woods with an airborne. I forget the name of the fort that they came from.
- A. Krebs: Fort Bragg or something like that.
- R. Krebs: Yeah, Fort Bragg. In LaFayette, North Carolina I believe, Fort Bragg. It's just basically playing war games out in the woods. Red Army against the Blue Army. Invasion of each other's territory. Laying in fox holes waiting for the enemy to come. We didn't have any live ammunition we just had blanks, M1 rifles. They load up a clip of blanks when you see the enemy coming you fire a blank and they would do the same with us. It was something like bivouac. We'd sleep in tents. Pitch a tent, team up with somebody. A lot of ground work.
- A. Krebs: Sounds like it was a nice break from Oklahoma, though.
- R. Krebs: It was a good break, it was a good time. Being stationed in Oklahoma was boring. Didn't have much to do there but look at the motor pool all day long. They get us up at five o'clock in the morning to go catch a train from Fortsville, Oklahoma and ride that train all the way over to North Carolina. Same way when we went to Virginia to be the guest of the Navy. It was something different. North Carolina, that trip, that two weeks was a little bit rougher than Virginia, being with the Navy, 'cause we were camped out in the woods. With the Navy we slept in Navy barracks, different Navy personnel. We were under their jurisdiction so we would do as they said. The food was very good. Navy food was always good. We could have as much ice cream as we wanted. At that time they had a freezer full of ice cream. They had these little Dixie cups, little pint sized ice cream, you'd cut it in half and share it with somebody. Ice cream and food was plentiful.
- A. Krebs: I've heard an old saying that the fastest way to a soldier's heart or a sailor's heart is through his stomach, ya know.
- R. Krebs: Yeah, I've heard that too.
- A. Krebs: Navy food is better than Army food?
- R. Krebs: Yeah, they were more or less, more free with the steaks than what the Army was. The Army, you'd always get chipped beef on toast or eggs. Some were half done, some weren't. The toast was lightly brown or cremated or burnt. Some food was cooked and other food was like half done, almost raw. Navy food was excellent. They had good cooks, more experienced. And you could have whatever you wanted. When time came when we were with the Navy for those two weeks and that one weekend

you were on your own so we went for a five mile walk into town. You didn't have no transportation so you walked, from the Navy base into Virginia Beach, Virginia. It was right on the ocean. Souvenir shops galore! So I picked up a few souvenirs, a beach towel, old key chains, coffee mug. Everything that I bought I don't have anymore, it wore out or broke, so I tossed it out.

A. Krebs: That's a long time ago.

R. Krebs: That was quite awhile ago. Sitting on that boat when you're out on the ocean, two days of that amphibious training. They would put you on a landing craft and take you out into the bay and they would pull up along side that LST and then you would have to climb up that rope ladder all the way up to the top, carrying that steel pot helmet on your head and your M1 rifle on your shoulder and Army boots, plus a backpack on your back. Once you get up on top of the ship then you sat there. You find yourself a chair or you sit down on the floor or something. You just sat there in that hot sun, waiting for them to go back in. When you go back in on that one day you would climb over the side of the ship and down that rope ladder for that one day. And then you would get into that landing craft and then they would take you into that landing craft and they said they would put you right up on the beach with that landing craft, which they didn't. You were waist high in water. That's where --

A. Krebs: That's where your boots got --

R. Krebs: That's where your boots got damaged from salt water. You couldn't polish them because the polish wouldn't hold. You just couldn't get up on dry land but they said that they -- they would open the door up and you'd walk into salt water and walk right up on the beach.

A. Krebs: Did you have to drive your trucks off it too then?

R. Krebs: They drove their trucks off it. The LST pulled into shore as close as he could get then dropped that front door gate down and then the trucks drove through the salt water onto the beach. Other than that, that's it.

A. Krebs: Anything else you want to add?

R. Krebs: I don't know, I think that's it.

A. Krebs: Alright, well thank you very much!

[End of interview]