

Name: Frank T. Kaczmarek

Role: Lieutenant/ Captain of the Nebraska National Guard stationed in North Africa

Age when first enlisted: 21

Age now: 96

Year of recruit: 1939

The Interview:

(I didn't start recording soon enough so I put the missed information above)

Where were you stationed in the war?

Six years, four and a half years in north Africa overseas where the Germans were fighting Europe.

What was your role in the war?

We were guarding the North African coast because Hitler had Europe you know he had conquered France and you know he was heading down to Italy down to the Mediterranean Sea. And you know the Mediterranean Sea hits North Africa. He wanted to go through North Africa and get Israel but you know, he never made it, because we stopped him.

What was your position?

I was a Lieutenant or a captain in the combat.

What did you do as a lieutenant?

I had a company of men we'd distribute them around all over the place. I was in research and development also. I was designing engineering equipment.

How old were you when you joined?

I was in the Nebraska Nat'l guard. I was about twenty one ... I was a junior or sophomore in college, when the war broke up we were called up. I was in college two years.

What were you studying in college?

Engineering. I got a degree in Mechanical Engineering. I was an Ace student in high school but I didn't study then and I finally learned how to study in college because it was rough. You gotta study 'em books. Boy I fooled myself good.

Do you remember which battles you fought?

We were not in any direct battles, we were just guarding the coast from the Germans, no rain at all, just sun everyday for four and a half years.

Any battles or combat while you were there?

We didn't have battles only skirmishes,

With who?

With the local people sometimes, they didn't want us there. We were guarding them and they were throwing us out. That's how they appreciated being saved from the Germans you know? They didn't know the story, see, Hitler wanted to get to Israel.

Do you remember how you felt when you were fighting the war?

Tough. And Mean. We had to shoot rifles and machineguns. You couldn't smile.

Were you scared while you were fighting?

Oh yeah, sure you get scared. We couldn't get scared so then we'd quit. So we just thought that we were gonna die.

Did any of your comrades die?

Not too many, very few.

Was your life ever threatened?

Egyptians were pretty friendly. Well we saw King Farouk. He invited us in, sixteen of us to come and talk to him. We had a nice chat with him. In a private room. With ol' King Farouk. When I was there he was only 15 or 16 and a king.

Did you make any close friends while you were in war?

Oh yeah, there was a girl, I met her in Egypt, and her name was Tania. You see she visited me here cause she wanted to get married but I hadn't gotten my college degree and I have to get my degree first and get back to school. She wanted to get married over there. No I gotta back to school. I left here there. She came to visit me here. She went back home. Tania Massnasa.

Do you know any comrades?

No not today I did about two years ago or they moved out or died. I kept friends with George west, he was one of my friends, in the last five years I lost all my buddies we lost contact.

What are your feelings about war?

I hate it. It deprives you of everything. I was still in school when we were called up by the national guard. I had to leave school! I had to leave in my junior year and I didn't have my degree yet. So I was gunning to come back I wanted to get that doggone mechanical engineering diploma and I got it. Later.

After you got your degree what did you do? After the war?

Mechanical engineering. Master of science.

Where did you work?

Office chief of engineers. Nice job. I was doing research and development. On engineer equipment. And we also designed special equipment like the mine detector! We made the mine detector and a soldier would go around carrying a pack on his back.

You saved a lot of lives.

We did. Oh yeah. Mines are scary. If you stepped on the mines they'd blow all over your face. So we built something that would sweep over the ground and get the mines and take them out. Saved millions of lives. Our mine detector would go along a road where the Germans put mines and we'd put a ticker on it so other people would know not to go where the mines are.

How did your going into the war affected your family?

Well I was single I wasn't married and my mother and father well we had ten kids and-

Wow! Ten kids!

Yeah! Well I don't know how it affected them; I wasn't there.

Did any of your siblings serve?

Yeah, two of my brothers served, Eddy and Leo, and Francis, my sister, was a nurse.

What number are you in the kids?

I'm third from the bottom. Leo was the baby then Eddy then me. Then there were seven other kids. Uh, they were Francis, Martha, Helen, Lillian, Mitchell, Joseph and Cassimere.

Where did you live as a child?

In Pennsylvania. But for college I moved to Nebraska.

Did you marry?

Oh yes, a southerner. Cory McGraff.

Did you have children?

Dr. Joanne Carpenter.

How long were you married?

I must've been married..... well I'm 96 now and I married at 28....

Where did you meet her?

Well, I met Cory in Seagram's distillery. And she was a lab technician.

How did the war change you?

It made me grow old pretty quick. Before I came I felt as a junior in High school but after I left for the war and fought a little I felt like a senior.

Alright! That's it. Thank you so much for speaking with me today!!!!