

James E. Norman, Sr.

Interviewer: We're at the Nevada State Veterans Home in Boulder City, Nevada. Today is May 3, 2006. We're interviewing James Norman, Sr. My name is Shannon Berndt and our cameraman is Ed Feldman. Thank you so much for doing this for us. We haven't interviewed a Korean Vet yet, a Korean War Vet, but first let's talk a little bit about what you were doing before you enlisted.

James Norman: I was fresh out of school.

Interviewer: Were you?

James Norman: I went in at seventeen.

Interviewer: Seventeen?

James Norman: Right.

Interviewer: And you had just graduated high school then.

James Norman: No, I didn't graduate.

Interviewer: Oh, you *didn't* graduate?

James Norman: Then. I did later.

Interviewer: Oh, you did later?

James Norman: Right.

Interviewer: Where were you living at?

James Norman: Escanaba, Michigan.

Interviewer: Escanaba, Michigan.

James Norman: Or no, at that time I was up in [##] 0:01:01, Michigan.

Interviewer: And why did you decide to enlist into the Air Force or enlist at all?

James Norman: Bored with school. Decided I wanted to learn things, so I quit school and went in the Air Force.

Interviewer: Was it like today, you didn't have to take a test? You just were enlisted and they took you?

James Norman: Just walked in and signed the papers and my mother had to sign.

Interviewer: Because you were under age, huh?

James Norman: Right.

Interviewer: So why did you choose the Air Force?

James Norman: I really thought eventually I'd fly a plane. I was wrong.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. It says that you were an Airman Second Class. What does-- what was that--your job in the Air Force?

James Norman: I started out in AOCP and then moved to VDP.

Interviewer: [Laughter]

James Norman: I worked in an office and it was Aircraft Out of Commission for Parts and it was my job to call every base in Europe and try to find a part. If I couldn't, then I'd go to the manuals and research it and come up with what they called "the next higher assembly", so if somebody needed a bolt to bolt their engine with it I went all the way up the ladder till I found the next higher assembly, which at one time was a complete engine, just to get the new bolt.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

James Norman: Then they moved me to VDP, which is Vehicle Dependent on Parts and most of that was American [##] 0:02:57 fire trucks. I'd do the same thing -- research, trying to find the parts and then they shipped me to France to set up a VDP Department because they never had one, so I spent a year in France before I got discharged. Two in England.

Interviewer: Hmm, why was it in France instead of somewhere closer to Korea? Or that was after the Korean War?

James Norman: Well, we had--the aircraft could spread out. A lot of your aircraft was based in England.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

James Norman: Yeah, they flew from there to Korea and the vehicles, I say there was mostly fire trucks, they were for, basically, base usage. They were out of base for fire protection.

Interviewer: Okay. When you first went into the Air Force did you have to go through basic training and?

James Norman: Right. Went through basic training, Lackland Air Force Base in Texas and I went to school in Colorado.

Interviewer: For your--the special job that you did in the Air Force?

James Norman: Right, right.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you ever see combat?

James Norman: Nope.

Interviewer: Tell me your most memorable experience.

James Norman: It was the day we had to paint their Quonset hut in England. A couple of the guys went to town, came back on a bus rolling a [##] 0:04:57. We took it into Quonset hut and my job was to paint the trim around the windows and I did a perfect job. I never got a drop of paint on the trim, but the windows were all painted.

Interviewer: [Laughter]

James Norman: And we spent the next two days scrubbing floors on our hands and knees.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. That's a good one. What kind of food and provisions were you provided?

James Norman: Dining hall.

Interviewer: You had a dining hall, so they served regular food there?

James Norman: Right.

Interviewer: Was it French cuisine?

James Norman: No, it was SOS for breakfast and, basically, I'm up to there. Not as bad as it is here.

Interviewer: [Laughter]. Did you have free time? How did you pass the time if you had free time? Did you go into the towns or...?

James Norman: We'd go into towns very seldom. We had to get leave to go in the town and most of the time was spent in the barracks playing cards, reading.

Interviewer: Did you get, receive letters and packages from home on a regular basis?

James Norman: Oh yes.

Interviewer: How about holidays? Did you...?

James Norman: Same as any other day there.

Interviewer: Same as any other day.

James Norman: Except we ate a little better.

Interviewer: Did you on Thanksgiving Day, did you get to eat turkey?

James Norman: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: Christmas, did you get packages from home?

James Norman: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Well good. What skills or lessons did you learn?

James Norman: Skills probably, I'm very good in math. I do a lot of reading and writing, which was basically what I learned over there. I like to think I'm above average in [##] 0:06:55 business skills, but basically, everything I learned from over there, used over there.

Interviewer: So then, when you came home were you able to use those skills in your everyday life?

James Norman: Nope.

Interviewer: No?

James Norman: Went into building construction.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Well, that's where your business sense came in. Do you recall the day that you left the service?

James Norman: Yep, because I got on a plane. We were supposed to refuel in the Azores. Coming in we lost an engine. We got into another plane, took off, lost an engine, came back and spent the night and our original plane was fixed and we flew right back.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Goodness. Where were you when the war ended?

James Norman: The war ended before I went in.

Interviewer: Oh it did?

James Norman: Right. I was considered a Korean War Veteran because they still had occupation and as far as the GI Bill I was classified as a Korean War Vet, but technically, the war ended before then.

Interviewer: I see, okay. How did your experiences contribute to your thinking about war and military service? Did they change much?

James Norman: Yes. I'm against it. At the time, I was all gung-ho, but now I'm just totally against any war, particularly right now.

Interviewer: Are you a member of like the VFW or any of those kinds of groups?

James Norman: No because when I got out of service I applied to every organization, they all told me the same thing, you have to be in during time of war to join. Now they take anybody, but at the time, they had so many veterans from wars that they weren't accepting people that didn't actually serve in a war, so I joined the Moose Lodge.

Interviewer: Did you make a lot of friends when you were in the service?

James Norman: Yes, yeah, but then when you leave, you lose them.

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah that's...do you go to, do you have reunions or go to any kind of reunions?

James Norman: No, we've never had a reunion.

Interviewer: Okay, let's see...those are about all our questions. Do you have any memories or things that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to share?

James Norman: A whole lot of memories.

Interviewer: Okay.

James Norman: Buried my wife in England.

Interviewer: Oh, she's English?

James Norman: Right.

Interviewer: An English rose, huh?

James Norman: I climbed the Eiffel tower.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Yes, it seems like you just had...

James Norman: I learned to play darts playing in the pubs over there. Then I had a daughter born in England, a son born in France.

Interviewer: You were still in the service then or you stayed there?

James Norman: Right, I was still in the service.

Interviewer: How'd you meet your wife?

James Norman: In a pub.

Interviewer: In a pub?

James Norman: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, that's awesome. Well, that's about all I have, all the questions I have. Thank you so much for participating and helping us out.

James Norman: All righty.

Interviewer: That's all I have unless you have something else you'd like share with us.

James Norman: Nope, not a thing.

Interviewer: Okay, well thank you so much. It was nice meeting you.

James Norman: Thank you.