

**Kenneth George
Narrator**

**Mike Russert and Wayne Clark
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on 9/27/2007
New Scotland Historical Society
New Scotland, NY**

INT: This is an interview at the New Scotland Historical Society. 27th of September, 2007. Approximately 11:30 AM. Interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clark. Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth please?

KG: Kenneth George. Born in Brooklyn, New York. August 29th, 1925.

INT: What was your educational background prior to going into the service?

KG: High school.

INT: Do you remember where you were when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

KG: Yes I do, I was in high school... in my high school classes when I heard about it.

INT: Do you remember your reaction at all?

KG: It really didn't hit me. It did not make an impact. I didn't realize what the, you know, extent of Pearl Harbor was at that time.

INT: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

KG: I enlisted.

INT: Why?

KG: When I was in high school, I took a test to qualify for the Army ASTP Program. Passed it. And after I graduated from high school, I enlisted to get into that program, which was to train me to be an engineer.

INT: So, how long did you last in that program?

KG: 6 weeks. I took my basic at Ft. Benning. While I was at Ft. Benning, I fractured my wrist. I did not go to have it examined until basic was over. By that time, the bones had worn away and my wrist had to be put in a cast. After basic, I was transferred to Carnegie Tech, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in their engineering school. Lasted six weeks and I was doing quite well at that, but there was a manpower emergency at that time, and they dissolved the whole program.

INT: We have very seldom interviewed anyone who had completed that program.

KG: Oh, okay.

INT: So where about did you go from there once that program ended?

KG: Went to Camp Pickett in combat engineering Basics. I went through two combat engineering basics because of my wrist, which was still in a cast. I could do certain things, but the fractured wrist prevented me from doing all. Two of my outfits were transferred overseas. At the end of the second basic, I was transferred to the Air Force, to be reassigned. From there, I went to Wake Forest (???), Georgia. [Editor's note: Wake Forest is in North Carolina.]

INT: Now, did you request to go into the Air Force, or did the Army just decide that that's where you were going?

KG: No, no I did not. Yes, they just reshuffled the manpower. And I don't know why I was sent to the Air Force. At that time, I went to Wake Forest ???, Georgia, [North Carolina] and I did not have any training background, as far as the armed forces were concerned, except what I got in basic training. So, I was assigned to an Air Force airplane graveyard, where I was given a toolbox, and proceeded to take spare parts off of damaged airplanes. They were short of mechanics on a crew, so I was placed on a crew. No formal mechanical background or training, but I was part of an airplane crew. The war was winding down around about that time, and I was transferred to Jacksonville, where I was part of the alert crew.

INT: What does the alert crew mean?

KG: The alert crew was to take care of transit airplanes that came into the field. You had a Jeep and....

INT: So this was Jacksonville, Florida?

KG: This was Jacksonville, Florida. You had a Jeep with a big sign on the back, "FOLLOW ME." We'd go out, park the airplanes, gas them up, and take care of whatever needs to be done. That about ended my... That took 2 and ½ years to do all of that.

INT: So you stayed in the states the whole time?

KG: Yes. I stayed in the states all of the time. My only regret was not being able to advance my status in the service.

INT: What rank were you then?

KG: PFC... and I got a good conduct medal, and that was about it. I think it was because of the dissolving of the program and the fractured wrist, being shifted from one base to the other, and finally putting me someplace where I could just do something. That was my extent of my armed service. I do not regret any part of my service. I was a young kid, did not leave anything behind. I was 18 when I went in. When I came back out, I was married by that time. But I had the GI Bill.

INT: How did you make use of it, the GI Bill?

KG: I went back to my old neighborhood, which was the south end of Albany. I would have not had been able to go onto college, but I did enroll at Albany State, and went

through the college, received my teaching degree, and ended up in Voorheesville teaching. So that was a big plus.

INT: Did you use it for anything else?

KG: No.

INT: Did you ever use the 5220 clause?

KG: No. I did not have to do that because there were plenty of jobs available when a man came out of the service. So I worked for a while before I started college.

INT: Did you join any veteran's organizations?

KG: No. I did not. Stayed away.

INT: I know you kind of jumped around, but was there anyone in service that you stayed friends with?

KG: No. And I regret that. I think it was because I never stayed with one (unclear) for very long. I met some good friends. I played on some basketball teams, where we got pretty close. I played on a softball team at Wake Forest, (?) Georgia, [North Carolina] that won the 3rd Air Force Tournament. We were champions of the third [Air Force Tournament]. Now, by doing that I met certain people, but I did not stay long enough. And, also, most of my classmates in high school, went into the service. And by that time, by the end of the war, they had drifted to all parts of the world. Although, I still keep track of my high school class.

INT: Now, your wife. Did you meet her where you were stationed, or was she from around here?

KG: No, she was from around here. She went to Albany High School, I went to Phillip Schuyler. Met her out at a summer camp when were 11th graders, and we've been together ever since. Had 3 boys. We had two boys when I was in college... that was a struggle. No regrets, except for not being able to possibly get more training, more advancement in the service. I probably would've stayed in the service if I had completed the engineering program.

INT: How do you think... I think you basically have told us this... but how do you think your time in the service had an effect on your life?

KG: It taught me how to get along with very little, and taught me how to get along with all types of people. And, it matured me... got rid of my wanderlust. So that when I got out of the service I was ready to settle down and do the things I'd like to do. I was always connecting with young people, teaching. At summer camps, summer programs, winter programs, that involved children and young people. So, I continued to do that. And, I think that the service allowed me to sort of settle down.

INT: And you said that it provided you that opportunity to go to college?

KG: Yes. Oh absolutely. Absolutely.

INT: Okay. Are there any incidences or things you remember that maybe you want to add? Little anecdotes or anything?

KG: Not really. There were some amusing things. I did not have a driver's license when I was in the service. I knew the alert crew was good duty, because you sat and waited. So when somebody said, 'Does anybody have experience on the alert crew?' I volunteered. And when they took me, I said, 'Well, there's one thing. I don't have my license with me'. They said, 'That's okay,' and took me into the office and typed out a license for me, and I learned how to drive in a hurry. I was taught by a lot of older people. I'm driving a double gasoline tanker truck out on the ramp to service an airplane, and an old timer stopped me, and he said, 'Hey son, don't turn so sharp like that... that tank, you're going to tip it over.' So I was blissful of what I was doing, and different people would help me get back to normal.

The funniest incident I have, which is not, maybe militarily. But I never had shrimp before, and I was put in Biloxi, Mississippi, for assignment. They were famous for their shrimp. So, I went and ordered shrimp. Large, beautiful shrimp, but they tasted terrible. And the waiter came over, and he said, 'Son, you have to peel them first.' I'd never had them before, so I learned many different things. Fortunate or unfortunate, I did not go overseas.

INT: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

KG: Thank you.