

Harold G. Fomuk
Narrator

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New York State Military Museum
Interviewers

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Key:

Interviewer=INT

Harold Fomuk=HF

Interviewer (INT): Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth please?

Harold Fomuk (HF): Harold G. Fomuk, 3/27/29 birth, and what else?

INT: And where?

HF: Troy

INT: What was your educational background prior to your military service?

HF: High school, finished high school.

INT: Did you enlist or were you drafted?

HF: Drafted, I was the second contention in Troy to go.

INT: And when was that?

HF: It was in '50, 1950. And that was around October, approximately, because there was one in September I think and then we were October. I pretty sure we were second.

INT: So you were entered in Troy?

HF: Yes, and then we went to Albany for a physical.

INT: Where was your basic training?

HF: Fort Lucias, Virginia. Transportation believe it or not, I was in Transportation then and I wound up in transportation when I got in the service, Transportation when I got out of the service, and then 14 years with the government.

INT: What was your basic training like?

HF: It was just like they showed in the movies. We went through the whole business, we went over the top and they shot machine guns over us and we crawled through stuff. It was hard, just a regular basic training and it was very good.

INT: What was the specialized training that you received?

HF: Actually, we were left open you know, we were in transportation and so I assumed that we were going to go to that. And I wound up being in a 508 engineer depot company in Hanau, Germany.

INT: So basically you received on-the-job training?

HF: I was in like an office and there was actually like a clerk general or a general clerk, or whatever they call them. But, I was in an office and actually there was somebody that was to give the correct title for like a PFC, I was a PFC, and actually my job was for a warrant officer. But that was if there was a war or something. And we were only five minutes from the Russian Jets and half an hour from the Russian Tanks. And we were supposed to know how to, in case of a war, to damage all the equipment that we had, all of the same stuff. We were learning how to do that over in Germany. You know but we never had to do it, thank god.

INT: What was it like being in cold war Germany?

HF: Good, they were very nice people. The closest thing to Americans, I think, is Germans. They were very clean, very nice, very good, and I got along very well with them.

INT: You were there during a time of rebuilding and...

HF: Hanau was 80% knocked out, all of the buildings, every block of buildings, there was maybe one building standing or two at the most. And everything else was wiped out, they were bombed to hell. And actually we were uconn's (?)depot, everybody in uconn that needed any equipment at all went through us. To our office, you know we to go and take the stuff, and they had to go over to a factory before they could ship it out. You know because it was all...

INT: Now what do you mean by uconn, so someone watching this could understand?

HF: That's all the areas over in Europe that were under control of America. And we had within different areas, probably in cars in France and all over Germany. We would supply all the service people with equipment that they needed. We even had a water purification unit that at that time was worth a million dollars, I don't know what it's worth now. But, imagine what that would be worth? Anyway, it was quite an experiment and I enjoyed every minute of it.

INT: How much time did you spend in Germany?

HF: Just over a year but it was great. Every day we had to fallout and do calisthenics and stuff to get ourselves in training, and I'll tell you they kept us in pretty good shape. In fact, I lost about fifty pounds and I was in the best shape of my life over there because they kept us going, they took us on hikes and stuff like that. Like a 20 mile hike overnight or something. It was really an education, quite an experience.

INT: Now in your leave time, were you able to tour other parts of Europe?

HF: You could. I mostly didn't...but I did go to Frankfurt a lot. Frankfurt was 20 kilometers from Hanau. On the Main River, anyway it's right near Kaiserslautern, Frankfurt is, that's the airbase up there and I think it still is an airbase, isn't it?

INT: I believe it is. Where did you go from Germany?

HF: Well I got out of there and went home.

INT: So you didn't get sent to Korea?

HF: No, no I was just in the German area. No horror shows.

INT: Did you get to see any kind of USO shows or anything over there?

HF: Not really. They didn't have any, in fact.

INT: How long did you stay in the service?

HF: Well I was supposed to be in for a couple of years. I went in and did my time, and I got out after about 18 months.

INT: So did you get an early out?

HF: Yes.

INT: Did you use the GI bill at all once you got out?

HF: No I didn't at all, I never had to...because I was in the restaurant business when I was younger, my family was in it, and that's how I ended up being in it also. And then I finally ended up getting out of the business to work for the New York State Army National Guard.

INT: What restaurant was that?

HF: The Country Grove Inn...

INT: Oh really?

HF: I open that up in 1956...

INT: Oh my god, I didn't know that! Why that's a legend in this area.

HF: It took me from 1953 to 1956 to get the license but we had to have food and we had to be an established business before they would issue a license for beverages, you know for drinking. But, anyway my brother runs it right now.

INT: Oh, that place is an institution...it's a landmark.

HF: Yeah well it used to be G building for Hudson Valley Community College and it's called the Grove, the Country Grove. It goes back a few years.

INT: Did you ever stay in contact with anyone that was in the service with you?

HF: I still write to a guy every year, we send cards and his name is Smith, Harold Smith. And he and I had been corresponding for fifty years, every Christmas we always got cards and during the year he would write, he wound up with about 10 or 11 children and

he's a hell of a nice guy. Harold E. Smith. And I was in the service with him over in Germany and that's how we kept in contact.

INT: And where does he live now?

HF: He lives in Ohio, Edison Ohio.

INT: Okay, how do you think your time in the service changed or had an affect on your life?

HF: It was a very good experience. I am very happy I was in, I am glad I served, and it taught me a lot. Taught me respect, taught me what the country is all about. And I think, as far as I'm concerned, it's the best thing that ever happened. Every man should go through it, every man should be in the service for some time. You know, to serve and to do what they have to do during their youth.

INT: Alright did you want to talk about your job at all at the division of military network there?

HF: I worked for the division of military, naval affairs, and I was in the transportation office. I was doing the bus distribution for all the soldiers that had to go to different camps or had to take AT or whatever. If they needed a bus, I would send out to the bus companies and I have forty of them that I would send a paper saying where I wanted the bus, how many buses I needed, where they were going, where they were returning and I had to set up the whole thing. And I put out bids to the forty companies and whoever had the cheapest one, is the one that we would have to naturally use. So you know, we wouldn't abuse the federal government's money, you know what I mean? We always got the cheapest and it worked out wonderful and we had a very good report.

INT: And how long did you work there?

HF: Since 1989 until I was seventy two, when the hell was that?

INT: About four years ago.

HF: 1989 and that was until about...13 years I'd say.

INT: How old are you now?

HF:

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INT: So you worked until about age 73?

HF: Well 72...over 72. And then I had to retire because of my health so. But I would still be there, I loved it, it was very good, there were very nice and good people who I worked for and they were just great! I had no complaints.

INT: Thank you very much.