

**This interview is being conducted on Thursday, March 30, 2023 at the home of James T. Doyle. My name is Fran Prokop and I'm speaking with Jim Doyle, who served in the United States Air Force and is a veteran of the Korean Conflict. Jim learned of the Veterans' History Project through me, and he has kindly consented to participate in the National Archives Veterans' History Project. Here is his story:**

**Jim, when and where were you born?**

I was born on September 29, 1932 I Brooklyn, New York, Kings County.

**How many siblings did you have?**

I had four – all boys.

**Were any of these boys in the service?**

Yes. Joseph was the one – he was a career man in the U.S. Army. He was the only one other than me, of the group, that was in the service.

**What were your parents' occupations?**

Both of them were just laborers.

**What did you do before entering the service?**

I graduated from high school.

**How did you enter the service – were you drafted or did you enlist?**

I enlisted in the Air Force.

**Why did you choose that specific branch of service?**

Well, the Korean War had just started and I knew it was inevitable that I was going to be spending some time in the military somewhere – so I just arbitrarily selected the Air Force.

**When did you enlist?**

September 14, 1950.

**And the war just started that year.**

Yes, June of 1950.

**How was your departure for training camp and your early days of training?**

Well, my departure was just by train from New York to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

**How long were you at Lackland?**

I lose track of that but I think it was about eight weeks.

**Eight weeks of basic training.**

Yes.

**Could you describe a typical day – like what time did you get up in the morning, how was your food – things like that. What did you do – did you have classroom training or just all field training?**

It's a mixture to try to even remember that – basic training – because it was so new and so different to me that – you know – the military was so new and so different.

**Was this the first time you left home?**

Yes.

**And you were 18?**

And I was 18.

**Okay, ha, ha. Well, what would you say, like when did you get up – how early**

**Did you have to get up?**

Well, during basic training I think they got us up about 5 o'clock in the morning –

**Chow?**

Well, pretty quickly after that was the first meal of the day, yeah.

**And then what did you have to do – go to classrooms –**

No, during that eight weeks in Kelly Field, they were taking us through all kinds of basic training steps because again, we were all kids and had no military experience.

**That included, of course, rifle and gun range training?**

Oh yeah, Oh yeah.

**You had to take down the rifle and put it back together?**

Oh, yeah.

**You spent the whole eight weeks there?**

Yes. In Lackland Field in San Antonio.

**And did you get a furlough after the eight weeks of training?**

Just a few – I think it was only a week or so because when I finished basic training, ha, ha, that's when the interesting part started, in that – again as an 18-year-old kid they hand me a set of Orders to report to an Air Base in Tripoli, Libya.

**Wow! But you went home first?**

Yeah, I was home for a short period of time and then went up to an air base in Massachusetts called Westover and got air transport from Westover to Tripoli.

**Was that the M A T S? Military Air Transport?**

Yes. I was in that MATS Squadron, yes.

**During that eight weeks of basic training, did you have any specialized training?**

Not really, no, it was pretty basic stuff.

**And did you have classroom teaching as well?**

Yes, Oh, yes. Exercise groups and things like that. I guess I'd say it was pretty basic basic training.

**Okay. So how did you adapt to military life, like the physical regimen –**

Not easily.

**The barracks, the food –**

Not easily. For that first few weeks that I was there, I had a tough time even accepting that I was in the service.

**Ha, ha!**

Even though I had enlisted.

**Right. But you eventually got over it.**

Oh, yeah, yeah.

**It's sort of getting used to it –**

All a part of growing up.

**Yeah, growing up. So, after getting your orders and after one week leave, you were on the plane to Tripoli, Libya.**

I was on my way to Libya.

**When you got to Tripoli, Libya, what happened there?**

Well, then I was assigned to the 1603 Maintenance & Supply Squadron.

**What were your duties?**

As a Junior machinist.

**Meaning what – you had to repair –**

I did all kinds of equipment – build parts and things like that for aircraft.

**So it was aircraft maintenance, repair and build.**

Yes. Yes.

**Did you study aircraft? How did you -- get chosen –**

At the high school – no, I didn't – as a matter of fact, to back up in high school, in my final year, my Senior year, I ended up taking some courses at the school in machine shop training. And somebody in the military decided that I would be a machinist.

**Oh, oh, okay. Well, when you were in basic did you take I Q tests?**

Oh, yeah, yeah.

**So they probably figured – and with your other experience and knowledge they figured you'd be good at that.**

Yes, yes.

**You weren't opposed to that, were you?**

Oh, no; Oh, no.

**Okay. What's the highest rank that you achieved?**

Airman First Class – A1C.

**Did you spend all of your time in the Air Force there in Tripoli, Libya?**

No. I was only there for 18 months.

**And during that 18 months you performed the same duties –**

Pretty much the same duties – except that during the 18-month period that I was there, it was decided I needed additional machine shop training and I was sent up to an Army Ordnance School in Germany for a number of weeks – for Advanced Machine Shop Training.

**So that was specialized training.**

Specialized.

**And how long did that last?**

I think it was like six or eight weeks. I lost track of that.

**Just roughly – and what did you – you said you did learn –**

Well, it gave me – it really brought along from being an apprentice machinist to getting to be more than an improved machinist.

**And you eventually got to be senior machinist.**

Yes.

**Back to the 18 months that you were in Libya, was that like a 9 to 5 job or did you work around the clock?**

Oh, we worked whenever work was necessary.

**Did you work 12-hour shifts?**

We didn't – well, we really didn't have any scheduled time. When there were things to be done, we –

**You did what was called for.**

Yeah. The base in Tripoli was primarily just a transit base for military air transport from the United States -- just scattered around the world -- like, just as an example, we had a comparable base in Dyran, (phonetic) Saudi Arabia. The aircraft that we were maintaining probably made one of their first overseas trips in Saudi Arabia. And then after they came to our base in Tripoli, I have no idea where they went.

**What was the name of that base in Tripoli.**

W-H-E-E-L-U-S Air Force Base.

**Okay, that's important. So you were never in any combat situation -- never attacked or anything?**

No, not at all.

**You said it was not a 9 to 5 job, but did you get leave? Did they send you to other places to get leave during that 18 months?**

Well, yes, as a matter of fact. I guess after I was there about a year, that they allowed a group of us from the air base in Tripoli to take a three-day tour of Rome.

**Oh, nice!**

They flew us up to Rome.

**Do you remember the month or what season that was?**

Not really.

**Was it warm in Rome?**

Oh, yeah, it was warm.

**So the summer months, more or less.**

Yeah.

**So how did you enjoy that?**

It was great! We were tourists.

**What did you see in Rome?**

A lot of things. We were the typical tourists for three days.

**Wow! That's wonderful.**

And again it was that – the airplane that we flew out of Tripoli to Rome on, that was just one of their stops on the way up to an air base in Germany.

**Okay. Oh, back to Germany, when you went to the 6-8 week specialized training, what part of Germany was that?**

It was a town that has a negative reputation. It was called Eschwege – E-S-C-H-W-E-G-E, Germany.

**Never heard of that.**

I said it had a disreputable reputation –

**Really.**

During the Second World War it was a Nazi SS Training Camp.

**Oh, really! A Nazi training camp – wow!**

**So the U.S., when they won the war, they just took it over and turned it into a U.S. training school.**

Yes, yeah.

**For the troops –**

They did that all over the world.

**Was that a large facility?**

I don't remember. They kept us busy during that time –

**That was like school, 9 to 5 Monday through Friday?**

Yep, yep.

**So you never really witnessed any casualties or destruction of any kind?**

No.

**How about friendships formed and camaraderie of service – did you meet any fellas that you stayed in touch with or that you were friendly with during your time in service?**

No, not at all; we scattered to the four winds.

**Okay. So no particular guys that you hung around with over there?**

NO – Well, maybe over there –

**Yeah, over there – buddies –**

There were guys like any other service outfit from all over the country. I can't even remember the names of some.

**Okay, there were several you were friendly with and hung around with –**

Oh, yeah, yeah

**And worked with and everything. But nobody comes to mind specifically.**

No, no.

**How about communications from home. How did you stay in touch with family and friends?**

Pretty much just by U.S. Mail.

**So there was not many phone calls or anything like that?**

Oh, no, I don't think I ever made a phone call out of Tripoli.

**So just – yeah, that would have been expensive at that time.**

Yeah.

**So it was mostly letters to your family – were you married at that time?**

No, no, I was just a kid.

**So you wrote to your parents and friends –**

Right.

**Did they send you Care packages and things like that.**



I don't remember any; they may have, 'cuz if I asked for something, they probably sent it to me.

**I'm sure. So you sent letters back and forth –**

Yes.

**You corresponded that way.**

Yes, 'cuz my Mother was still alive at that time.

**How about recreation or off-duty pursuits – besides the three-day tour. Did you have any kind of organized sports when you were off duty?**

We used to go swimming a lot in the Mediterranean Sea, which was right there on the north end of the city.

**Other than swimming, did you have any organized sports?**

Occasional – no, not organized – but occasionally a group of guys would get together and play softball or something like that. But I never really belonged to any organized –

**But they didn't have anything like bowling for you guys, or a place for recreation?**

No.

**Did they have any kind of mess hall that you could go into and shoot pool or play cards?**

Oh, yeah, we had some of that, yeah.

**Just a mess hall.**

Yeah.

**So nothing organized; just happen spontaneously –**

Yeah, yeah.

**After you were there 18 months, where did you go after that?**

I returned to the United States to Kelly air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

**Same Place? And what did you do there?**

I was a senior machinist at that point in time.

**So you continued to repair –**

It was the same kind of work except back in the United States.

**Okay, same kind of duty. Was this 9 to 5 or as needed also?**

Down in San Antonio it was probably more similar to 9 to 5 – routine. The shop that I was in - there was probably something in the range of 20 people, ten of them being civilians.

**Oh. Civilians that worked for the Air Force?**

Yes.

**Were they like more superior or –**

Yes; they were all older and more experienced machinists and civilians.

**Oh, I see, civilians. Hmmm, hot down there in Texas.**

Oh, yeah. In summertime it gets hot down there.

**I've been out to the Alamo – did you tour around Texas?**

Oh, yeah, I got through the Alamo. I can't say I did a lot of traveling around Texas, but did some right around the city of San Antonio.

**Did you have a car with you down there?**

No. Never owned a car.

**Did you stay strictly on the base?**

Pretty much.

**You didn't live off the base or anything.**

Oh, no.

**When were you discharged?**

September 14, 1954.

**How did you get home from the base?**

Well, the military supplied us, me, with chits, if you will, phony money. But I took a train back to New York.

**How was your readjustment to civilian life?**

It was no big deal. By that time I think I had grown up –

**Sure, you're 22 now, when you came back home.**

That's right.

**So did you pursue your previous job that you had?**

No. It was at that time, shortly after returning home, that I entered college.

**Oh. Did you use the G.I. Bill?**

Yes, I did.

**Good for you. Did you complete college or how far did you go?**

Oh, yes, I did, I got a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering.

**So, BS in**

BSME.

**How was your reception by family and friends when you came back home?**

It was, you know, welcoming but nothing out of the ordinary. There was no brass band or parades or anything.

**Well, I'm sure your parents were happy to see you back home again.**

Yeah.

**Did you live with your parents?**

For a short time because I really wasn't there long until I went away to go to college.

**And where did you go to college?**

Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Really! Which college was that.**

Indiana Technical College.

**Oh, Fort Wayne. I didn't know they had a college – Indiana Tech.**

**And why did you choose that school?**

Well, that's interesting because during the time that I was stationed down in Kelly in San Antonio, there was one of the guys in my shop who was a guy from Indiana. And he and I had many conversations saying what were we gonna do with ourselves when we got discharged. And he made me aware of this school in Fort Wayne. So I wrote to them and was accepted into Indiana Technical College.

**So you lived there.**

I spent the next four years there.

**Good for you. Okay. You have not had contact with fellow veterans over the years.**

No, not really.

**But you are a member today of the American Legion or the VFW.**

The VFW.

**And that's here in Carillon. Jim lives in Carillon as do I, and I have interviewed several other veterans who also live here in Carillon and I intend to interview quite a few more who live here.**

**After you finished college, what did you do?**

I went to work for a company in Trenton, New Jersey.

**Wow – oh, back to your home town.**

Back to the East Coast.

**My thing is how did you get here to Illinois, what prompted you --**

Well, it's a long story.

**Well, I don't want the whole story, but how old were you --**

It was transfers; it was a company that I worked for in New Jersey; they transferred me to a plant in Arlington Heights, Illinois –

**Oh, okay.**

And then from there on I spent the next 23 years working with a company in Bedford Park.

**Oh, yes, Bedford Park. I'm from that area, so I know it. Okay, so we got your whole history.**

**How would you say that your military experience affected your life.**

Well, again, I think I mentioned this before. I grew up a lot in those four years. I quit being the baby that was away from home – because you had to grow up.

**Exactly, yes, you do.**

'Cuz I remember also, and it was the day when I registered at Indiana Tech. Most of the Freshman class were ex-G.I.s because one of the things – because the lady who was the Registrar said that this was unusual for a Freshman class in college – we were 22 years and four months old on average.

**Right, wow! Freshman class, yes, that is unusual.**

We were mostly to a large extent military.

**And I'm sure most of those G.I.s completed the class – went through all four years.**

I think so; and then we separated --

**Of course, yeah.**

**So, what life lessons have you learned from the military?**

To be responsible for yourself and others around you. I think that would probably be the biggest one. And if you're going to do something, do it right.

**Right, very good. That's basically it. – We didn't cover your medals – did you receive any medals?**

No, not really.

**Just regular ones – Good Conduct Medal and things like that.**

Good Conduct Medal.

**If there's anything else that you want to add to the story you can always call me. I will type this up verbatim and you will get a chance to review it and make any corrections that you wish. Okay, very interesting; you had interesting stories.**

**Thank you very much for this interview and thank you for your service to our country.**

**James T. Doyle**

**20926 West Blossom Lane**

**Plainfield, IL 60544**

**815-293-0599**