

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Gulf War -- Desert Storm

Personal Experience

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JAMES J KOMARA

Interviewed

by

Angela Cellio

on

October 12, 1991

JAMES KOMARA

James J. Komara Jr. was born on December 24, 1968 in Youngstown, Ohio. His parents, Cheryl and James, and his sister Kathy currently reside in Canfield. James is a member of St. Michael's Church and is very involved in karate. He belongs to the Mahoning Valley Karate Center. On his graduation day from South Range High School in June, 1987, James left for the Army. He completed his basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and from there went to Watuka, Arizona for his advanced individual training. This was where he attended Army intelligence school. Following this, his orders sent him to Germany in January, 1988, where he worked in Army intelligence as a Sergeant.

In December, 1990, his unit -- the Third Armored Division -- was deployed to Saudi Arabia. The mission was to launch his brigade into Iraq to destroy the Republican Guard's motorized rifle divisions. Following the cease fire, James went from Iraq to Kuwait to Saudi Arabia, and finally received orders to return to Germany. He was discharged from the Army and returned to Ohio in June, 1991.

C This is an interview with James Komara for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the Gulf War, by Angela Cellio, at 3329 Decamp Road, on October 12, 1991, at approximately 3 15 p m.

Jim, tell me something about your family and about when you were growing up

K: Most of the time since I was thirteen, I was either at school or at Karate, and that was most of my growing up. Before that I went to Canfield; I do not remember a whole lot of that. Those were childhood memories, like you remember falling off a bike, and stuff like that. Then, when I went to South Range High School -- all through high school -- that is basically when I was involved in going to school, and going to Karate, mostly going to Karate. School was a secondary. Anything specific about when I was growing up?

C You say you went to South Range High School, and now you live where?

K: I live in Boardman I have an apartment in Boardman.

C. Can you tell me about your family members?

K I have a mom that works at Buckeye Pharmacy in Canfield My dad whose always worked at Commercial Shearing in Youngstown. It is called Commercial Intertech now; it was Commercial Shearing. My grandfather and my grandfather before that worked there That is why my dad works there He is a statistical processing coordinator

C: And you have one sister You forgot about her

K Yes, you had to remind me about her. I hope she does not listen to this--"You forgot about me "

C When did you graduate high school? In what year?

K 1987.

C. What did you do following that, following graduation?

K Graduation day, I left for the Army

C You left for the Army on graduation day?

K: Yes There was no in between I went through the delayed entry program to get into the Army They kind of tricked you into doing that, if you go early So, if you go to sign up for them, and your like seventeen, your parents can sign for you to get into the Army Then the Army tells you that if you do not join right now and

sign up, that your job will not be available later They tricked you into signing up your senior year

C. You were tricked into signing up for the Army?

K: Tricked into signing up exactly when I did, yes.

C What made you decide to join the Army then?

K: When I was in high school doing that career thing, they had access to the Mahoning Valley Career Counselor Computer, wherever that is You put in what degree you want to pursue, and it will pop up what careers you can choose from that. I put in political science one day, and it came up with intelligence analyst. I said, "Ooh, that would be a neat thing to do " Then I went to talk to the Army recruiter, because my other friend was going in the Army Intelligence Analyst is one of the jobs that the Army has Short cut for experience in that field That is why I joined.

C. Give me your full rank or your full title I am not sure how that goes

K. It changes a lot when you are in the Army My rank was Sergeant, which goes private, private first class, specialist, then sergeant So the first level of sergeant was what I was, and it takes about three or four years to do Unless your good at what you do, it could take an undetermined amount of time.

C What year was it that you graduated, that you joined the Army?

K: 1987

C And you served until what year?

K: I served until June 28, 1991 That is when I got out.

C A few years then. How did your family react to you joining the Army?

K: They absolutely did not want me to

C Why not?

K Probably because of my uncle, who was in the Marines I do not think they like him being in the Marines, being away from home My grandfather was in World War II. They did not like that idea, either He especially did not want me to be in the Army He did not tell me any specifics Why, he just said, "You do not want to do that " My mom just plain did not want me in the Army She did not want me to do anything that had to do with me going away from home, jeopardizing

myself. My dad did not really say a whole lot. "Be careful," but he did not object. No one really objected to the point to where I had to say, "No, I am going in." They just said, "Well, we do not want you to, but if that is what you want to do." They had to sign the paper work for me to sign up early like I wanted to do. They did it. If they would have objected, they could have refused to sign the paper work.

- C. So they did not encourage you, but on the other hand they did not discourage you.
- K Yes
- C They left it mostly up to you, even though they felt they did not want you to leave. Mostly because they did not want you to leave home?
- K Yes, I think so. They were afraid of a war. So, that probably had something to do with it. My dad was at that age during Vietnam where he could have been drafted, and he was, but he did not pass his physical to go. So they had all been through a war situation with Vietnam, so they had more of an idea of what can happen.
- C On the day you left for the Army, what kind of day was that? How did you react, and what did your family do. What kind of situation was it the day you left?
- K I will try to remember. All I can remember is leaving my house. One of my friends, my best friend, drove me and my other best friend up to Cleveland. That is where you go to in processing for the Army. [He] drove us to the Greyhound Station, and the Greyhound Bus took me to Cleveland. We in-processed in the Army there. We graduated probably before noon, with all the ceremonies, and then about one o'clock we drove up to Cleveland. I do not even think we did much the first night. We had to stay over one night in Cleveland to do all that military in-processing stuff, filling out all the forms and signing yourself over to them for the next four years and all that. I think you swear in the first night, too.
- C. Was it hard for you to leave home that day?
- K. It is not hard when you do it, I do not think, because you are too excited about what you are going to do. So no, not really. Not that day. Later, it is hard being away from home, but the day you do it, it is not hard. No matter where you leave, it seems like you just leave, and you know you are going to miss the people you are leaving, but you do not miss them yet. So it is no big deal just to leave. I was thinking about what I was going to be doing.
- C So, you have more excitement and anticipation on starting off?

- K: Definitely, because you have no idea of what is going on when you go into the Army. You do not know what they are going to do to you or what they can do to you, or what you can do back to them if they do something to you. You have no idea. It is pretty much like you are just anxious
- C: So you did not know what to expect out of the Army?
- K: No, they do not make it a practice of telling you very much, either. When you go to the recruiter, he does not really explain what is going to happen. You just have to find out
- C: So you were still in Cleveland, you took the bus to Cleveland. Then where did you go from there?
- K: They take you right from your in-processing point, whatever city you go to, and they get a little group of you, pick the oldest person, then tell the oldest person he is responsible for the other people flying on the plane. They usually fly you to basic training
- C: Where was that?
- K: That is at Fort Dix, New Jersey. That is where I went to basic training at. When you get there, they do another in-processing thing, because you know you have to in-process the post there. So, they have some that are not drill sergeants, but that are there just for in processing. They just put you in neat little rows. Everybody is still in civilian clothes and has long hair and everything. Then they put you in a row. You have to stand at parade rest. It is a certain way to stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands behind your back. They line you up against the wall. You have to stay as close to the wall as you can, as close to the person in front of you, and you cannot move until the line moves forward.
- You just do that all day, from line to line. In one line you get your hair cut, in one line you pick up your clothes, in one line you sign something. They watch you do ten push-ups to make sure you can get in the Army. The women have to do, like two push-ups and the guys have to do like ten, or they will not even take you at all. What else do they do? They do some really screwed up things. One of the lines is for shots. You get in line and get about five shots in the arm. You have probably already had them from your local doctor, but when you get in the Army they just want to make sure you have them so you go through it again. They show you how to make a bed the first day you are in the Army. They show you how to make hospital corners on the bed. Otherwise, trying to intimidate you, make sure you know where you are at. You are not allowed to talk to anybody or anything like that. They rush you through the mess hall real quick. Things like that.

C· Did basic training get any better than that?

K· No, it was worse because they do not let you sleep very much. It is just like eight weeks of rushing around. No one thing is really that physically difficult, but after four or five weeks of only getting four or five hours of sleep a night, you are always up real early and when you go to do something it is always on a different location or post and you have to march there and put on your equipment. You have a lot of bulky equipment in the Army, like a ruck sack, your LBE, which is like your belt system for carrying your ammo and all that. You have to carry a rifle around. It is kind of fun, really, because everybody is trying to out do each other in their discipline.

There is pressure from your cadre or your drill sergeants to do what you are supposed to do. Then, if you do not do what you are supposed to do, the rest of the people look at you like, "Boy, you are an idiot," or "Boy, you are immature. You can not even stand in line without talking for a half an hour," which most men still cannot do no matter how old they are. You go to some other military schools and 30 year old's are screwing up just like seventeen year-old's do, sometimes. It is funny to see the way people react in a situation like that.

I know when some people were hitting on me because I have bad knees from Karate. I can stand for so long and then I have to crack me knees and crack my back and do all this stuff for Karate. Then in the Army, you are not supposed to move at all. You are just standing there if it is raining or whatever, you just have to stand there for a while. You just wait until whatever your supposed to do, you just stand there in formation. My knee always buckles out, so people used to always give me a hard time about that. Like for no reason at all. You are not allowed to talk, so I could not explain that my knees hurt. I just stood there, and some people would talk bad about me for a while.

C. After this basic training, the eight weeks, where did you go from there?

K. I went to Fort Watuka, Arizona. That is where you go for your advanced individual training. It is just a step above basic training. Whatever your job is going to be in the Army, that is where you go to learn what to do. Mine was at the United States Army Intelligence Center and School at Fort Watuka, which is like ten miles north of the Mexican border in Arizona.

C· How long did you have to stay there?

K. That is a good question. I am not sure. School is fourteen weeks. I was probably there sixteen weeks. I was there almost until Christmas. So, I spent the fall and the summer, and the beginning of winter. I do not think I left until December 5, or something like that.

C. So this is still 1987

- K Yes. It took me all summer and all of fall for my Army training, and then by the time Christmas came around, I took my leave time and went home
- C Following your intelligence training, what was the next step in your career in the Army?
- K: While you are still in school they give you orders and tell you where to go next, so all I had to do was go on leave at home. I am trying to think of where I had to go after that. I had orders but I think all I did was go to the Pittsburgh Airport and find an Army representative and they kind of tell you where to go In every airport there is a USO lounge, an Army personnel in charge of Army people in the airports, and they tell you where to go You just have a set of orders and go into the airport and say, "Where am I supposed to go?" And that is when I flew to Germany. That is what my orders called for, the Third Armored Division in Germany That is where I went, and I went there right before New Year's Two days, two days before New Year's.
- [I] landed in Frankfurt and stayed there because nobody was working during the holidays Since no one was working, no one could in-process me into Germany, so I spent like four or five days over New Year's trapped in this reception station. They do not let new people out in Germany right away I was like stuck in this building with these cadre with these military books and that is it We were stuck there with about twenty other people. That was pretty depressing though, because all we did was play video games, go to the snack machine, and sit and watch T.V. and lounge Then when all this New Year's stuff was going on, you just kind of watched out the window, because you are only allowed to go so far down the street You did not want to get in trouble, nobody did.
- C When you found out you had to go to Germany, was that alright with you? Did you want to go there?
- K. Yes. When I originally signed up, I asked, so that was in the plan
- C Then again, was that the same situation with your family where you got to see them before you left for Germany? What did they think about you going to Germany then after you had been away a couple different places?
- K. I do not know I think they were glad that I got to travel The whole time I was home, I was bragging about Arizona and Mexico and Las Vegas When I was in school in Arizona, I had a long weekend, so I flew to Las Vegas. Almost every weekend when we were in Arizona we took off and did something [We would] go to Mexico and things like that So, I think they were glad that I got to go out and travel
- C So far they were viewing this then as a good opportunity for knowledge and for travel?

K I think so.

C: Nothing detrimental had happened to you yet?

K. Yes, really. They were probably just really glad to see me when I got there, and then, of course, they were not too happy when I left. I think they were just too glad to see me when I got home from basic and AIT. They were not really worked about what else I would be doing, plus it was a holiday. Everybody was in a good mood.

C. So you were in Germany from about the start of 1988 until when?

K I was there continuously -- well, I went home on leave a couple of times -- until December of 1990. That is when we were deployed to the Gulf. Then I came back in May of 1991.

C: Was your deployment to the Gulf another opportunity to travel, or did you view that somewhat differently?

K: No, I did not. We had been seeing pictures and monitoring it during the Desert Shield situation through our radar. I already knew ahead of time there was not much reason to go down there. There is nothing really to see or do down there that I would be interested in doing. I like to do things in the mountains or something. There were no mountains where we were, so I did not like it.

C When you got your deployment orders, what did you feel like? What did that make you feel like, to know that you had to go to the Middle East?

K I think everybody was nervous, but there were days when you would go to work and they would say, "The war is not going to start. We are not going to go," or "They will cancel our deployment." Every day, everybody is trying to figure out what is going on. At that point, even when we went down there, we did not know if we were actually going to war and there were all these steps that the UN had to go through. That is all anybody was really paying attention to. It is like, "Well, mediator is going over there, maybe he can talk them out of it." Everybody would look towards that and something would happen. They would have their little negotiations and nothing would happen out of it. Everybody would say, "Oh, I guess we were going," then something else would come up. Somebody else would go talk to them. That happened while we were down at Saudi Arabia still, so really, when I was still in Germany getting ready to go, I did not think we were still going to war. I thought we were going down there just to deploy, run our exercises, and then probably end up coming home. That is what I thought.

So, I am kind of an optimistic person anyway. I was down there thinking

we were not going to go to war up until the bombs started dropping. Then I kind of figured we were, but at that point you could still say, "Well, maybe we will not have a ground defenses." You can still keep talking yourself out of what is going on up until the last minute. It does not take very much to talk yourself into the better looking situation, and there is enough other people around that would do the same thing. Really, in your own head, you are not sure what is going on. Realistically, I do not think anybody was really. Then, I thought, if we did go to war that there would absolutely be 30,000 casualties. We just kept thinking the most positive thing the whole time as much as you could. "Well, I guess we are going to use the ground defenses, maybe we will not have all these casualties." That was the only thing that was true. We were all saying, "Oh, we will not deploy," and then we deployed. We said, "Maybe we will not go to war, maybe we will not use our ground defense," then we did one, but we did not end up with a lot of casualties.

- C I think that what you are saying is that you and those with you had to view everything as optimistically as possible in order to get through it?
- K We pretty much did just talk yourself out of what is happening. There were some people that were really negative around, like, "I am going to die." Just go around thinking they are Rambo or something. They know they are going to die, and they have their weapon loaded already, and they know where all their ammunition is already. There were some people like that, but most of the other people were pretty optimistic about things. Then, a lot of times we were so busy that you did not have a lot of time to think about everything. We were always thinking about whether we were going to go to war, and who is going to get killed and who is not. Especially because guard duty in the Army is usually Sergeant and below, but during war it was whoever was available. I was a guard. So all these people who were not used to pulling guard duty had to pull guard. It gave them a lot of time to think, but while you were out on guard duty, you really got depressed. People would be walking the perimeter wondering if they are ever going to see their family and their kids. So, it did get pretty bad for some people, mostly people with family -- immediate family. They had more of a problem. Other than that, people did pretty well.
- C. Did you think about that too while you were there? Like, "Oh my gosh, am I ever going to see my family again?"
- K. Oh, yes. They always made estimates like this many people are going to die, and here we did nuclear biological chemical training all the time. Everybody was convinced that as soon as we launch a ground attack, they will have chemicals. You cannot think of anything much worse, you know. With chemicals, anybody would rather get shot, I would think. I do not know. It would depend with some of them. It is strange. Even with mustard gas or chlorine, and all that kind of stuff, that is simple stuff that they would use in World War I. But even if they

used it today, it would still work on you, even if you had protective gear on and all that, especially if it gets you before you get your mask on. Everybody was worried about that.

A lot of times I did quite a bit of thinking about what part of my body was going to get damaged. I did a lot of think about that because if something goes off, there is metal flying everywhere, like shrapnel from mortars. You just wonder what is going to happen. You always seem to have a lot of time to wonder about it, too. I remember we were down there for a while on guard duty and in between stuff. It got to the point, like we have flack vests, I used to always wear my flack vests because you have to get used to wearing it, so when it came time you would wear it. We did not always have to wear it before we rolled across the border, but most people wore it to get used to wearing it. You do have to get used to it. I got worried enough about body parts, I started getting green tape, and I started taping metal plates inside of my flack vests, just in case something comes through this one part. There are like extra pieces of aluminum that come with your trash, little pieces of molding, little pieces of aluminum. I just started taping them in the shape of my flack vest on the inside just to cover this area. Then you wonder about the rest. You do not want to lose anything. Some people did. They stepped on a mine or a CBU, or whatever. From the battle, no one got hurt. It worked out okay. I was ready in case it did not.

C Are you able to tell me now where you were located at over there?

K: It is not so specific because in the desert there was no terrain features to really key off of. All we had was like a grid, the rest of it was like a flat sheet of paper that you are working off of. We started east of Kin Cleve Military Study.

C That is in Saudi Arabia?

K: Yes, and that is south of the neutral zone. Our forward assembly area we went into the night before we rolled across the border was up above the Pier Albatine, a little west of the Pier Albatine. Right almost in the middle of the neutral zone. The neutral zone had like burrs of sand and they had a mission to go. Before we rolled across, the engineers almost a whole day ahead of time went up and made holes in the burrs, and the armored cavalry regiment secured an area around the burrs. So when we were ready to roll, we could roll right through, anytime we were ready.

C. What was your purpose, or your unit's purpose, in going across the border? What did you have to do over there?

K Our mission was to follow. We followed the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment, the Second ACR. We followed them on the flank of the Kuwait border, so it was west of the Albatine, and went north of Kuwait up into Iraq where Republican Guard assembly areas were. So we fought through three or four divisional

areas, but there were not that many obstacles through there because it was west of most of their obstacle belts. So, that was not much of a major difficulty to get that far. Then we went to an assembly area up in Iraq. It was just west of where all the Republican Guard assembly areas were. Then our brigade's mission was to launch into the Tau Kanah. They were a motorized rifle division in the Republican Guards. That was our mission, to attack just a straight line into their assembly there.

C: So did you have to do that then?

K: Yes.

C: Did you attack them?

K: Yes. We went up and had just a big circle of an assembly area that was assembled for our area. So we had the First Armored Division, and we were the Third Armored Division. Those were the two main bodies, and we each had an armored cavalry regiment supporting us. When it was time, they just kind of gave you the time, called LAT time, line and departure time. When you cross LAT, you just stay in your brigade attack formation and roll in the direction you are supposed to. You can stay in the same direction because there is no obstacles. It was all flat sand, gravel terrain. You just let all the tanks and everything roll straight over it. We rolled, it was night time and we rolled up into where Bravo brigade of the Tau Kanahs was and had been for like a month. They had been sitting there because they were getting bombed to the point where they could not move, and we knew they were still there. That is where we first contacted our active resistance. It is kind of hard to give you an idea of where it was without showing you on a map because there are no towns or anything around there. It is not right north of Kuwait, it is not by Highway 8, it is west. That is where we were. Still, west of some oil fields. I do not remember the names of the oil fields. They were all burning anyway, so it does not matter. They probably still are.

C: So you were in Iraq, but we do not know exactly where you were. It is hard to pin point.

K: Right. I would have to show you on a map. They give you a grid, and I do not remember the grid.

C: You do not have the grid. Okay, so from Iraq or Saudi Arabia, from either, were you able to communicate back with your family? How were communications then?

K: I called them once from Saudi Arabia. They had set up like a phone bank and I had called them once from there. I called someone in Germany, and then I

called my parents. That was pretty good, except for you had to put everything on your AT&T calling card. So you start running up your bill right there. Then the next time that I could really talk to them was after the war. After the cease fire, it eventually got to the point where the phones in our track, which is a M-577, that is what we worked out of. We had two military phones in there. It got to the point where I could call an operator on my military phone and call the States from where my track was in the desert. So that was pretty good. We had set up little satellite stations all around for people to do that. We did not have much work because it was after the cease fire and there were things to do after the cease fire, but not enough to fill a whole day and occupy everybody that was out there, so there was a lot of time where people could call back home.

C Was your family able to contact you?

K No. Absolutely not.

C They had to wait for you to get in touch with them?

K Yes. I do not think there was any way they could have called. They could have tried, but I do not think they could have.

C They could communicate by mail, though.

K Yes. Mail got there about anywhere from seven days to 40 days. It was all mixed up. Sometimes you would get mail right on time and then you would get Christmas cards in the middle of January. It was way past Christmas. You could not really depend on it, but the letters did get there, eventually. That was real important.

C Getting mail?

K Right. Letters were real, real important. You were so bored after the cease fire, there was a month or two months after the cease fire where there really was not too much to do. Everyone was really, really bored. They wondered when they were going home.

C Since we are on that, let me ask you. First, why did you have to stay two months after the cease fire when you were there?

K We had to stay in our sector and the mission was defending northern Kuwait, or defending our sector. I am not sure who we were defending against because there really was not anyone to defend against after the cease fire. That was the mission, and the only time we could pull out was when the coalition force put together their own protective units, and take the place that we were. That took forever because that takes coordination between ten different countries, or

however many countries were in it. Getting all the staff people and the supervisors, and all of their equipment. You are waiting for it to get there. It is a lot of waiting on other people to get their things and units and equipment coordinated, to get it into the place where we were. They could just take over our whole sector. We pulled out. Then, after you pull out, you have to wait for everyone else to leave, because we left, the people in the Gulf left, and the orders were forgotten there. We got there and no one had ordered us to get there, so we had to wait for plane space and for our equipment and all of our people. That took a long time. The cease fire was in February, so it took three months to get back to Germany. We were just monitoring Highway 8. We did a lot of that. We just made sure that the rebels were not coming and taking equipment, weapons, and ammunition out of the sectors that we were controlling, and we cleared all the Iraqis bunkers, destroyed all their weapons, ammunition, and all their tanks. Any equipment that was left in the sectors, we totally destroyed. That took a while, but it did not involve everyone, just the engineers, the people to destroy it. So, that was the little mission that we had in that area. We just waited for plane space.

C: So, from February until May you stayed in Iraq?

K: I was in Iraq until May, yes.

C: Okay.

K: Right above Kuwait, and then when it got real close to the time to leave, like two or three weeks from the time we were leaving, then we went into Kuwait. Then we went back to Saudi Arabia for a week. Then we flew out of Saudi Arabia.

C: When you found out you were going to go to the Middle East, did you have any idea how long you were going to have to stay there?

K: They told us six months to a year. But now I was an intelligence analyst. I thought we would be there that long, maybe longer because of the amount of equipment they had. I thought it would be a long drawn out fight. I am thankful that it did not. You know, the fight was over in 48 hours, so it did not take very long at all. When we went to Saudi at first, we did not know when it was going to start exactly, either.

C: You actually stayed there less than you expected to, which was probably good?

K: It just seemed long. It was just under six months, but it seemed like a long time. You just got pretty bored.

C: I am trying to find out, I do not know if you even know how they reacted, how your family reacted when you had to go over there, and while you were over

there. I know it was hard for you being there in the Middle East. How about for them having you there?

K: I heard stories that my mom and my grandmother freaked out. Of course, everybody was watching television the whole time and worrying. I think it was pretty hard because they believed there would be a lot of casualties, too, from the television. That is what everybody heard, so I think that is what they thought, too. Sometimes I am optimistic, but sometimes I am not, too. When I talked to my mom, I did not really give her much to go on because before I left for Saudi Arabia from Germany, I called my mom and I said, "Mom, I do not think we will go to war, but if we go to war, I will probably get killed. We are in the brigade and I know how many of them there are and how many mines they have and all this," so I do not think my mom was optimistic after I talked to her because the numbers were not good. There was enough of them, personnel wise, that if they had been better organized they could have fought a lot more effectively than they did. That is what I was worried about. I think my parents were, too.

C: You started in the Army in 1987. You were out in 1991. That is four years. Did you sign up for four years?

K: Yes.

C: Did you have to remain in a few months longer because of the war?

K: No, not really.

C: Would you have been out of the Army?

K: My ETS date was June 14.

C: What is ETS?

K: End of term in service. I got out June 28, so that is only two weeks difference. That was mainly because when everybody got back to Germany, we had a lot of days off, and the people that were supposed to process me out of the Army were off. So, I had to wait with a lot of people to get out of the Army.

C: Was that a later time that you were supposed to get out of the Army?

K: Just about two weeks, it was not a long time.

C: So, you left the Middle East and you went back to Germany, and that is where you waited for your final departure?

K: Yes. I just out-processed the Army. You have to go through all the places you

have been to make sure you do not owe anybody any money, and make sure your car is disposed of properly. You do whatever you want to do with your car. That takes about a week or two, and then they let you go. Then when I out-processed, I also went to Fort Dix.

C: So, you went from Germany then to New Jersey, and you had to remain there how long?

K: I was only there one night. Then, the next evening they let us go. They just like give you a lump sum of money, whatever the Army owes you, and then you go. You just go to the bus stop or the airport, or wherever you are supposed to go. I did not get out of there too good because I ended up going to one bus stop, and I wanted to go to the airport in Philadelphia, and I ended up at the Greyhound bus station in Philadelphia, which is not a good place to be, especially at night. They had let us out really late. So, I got out of there and ended up taking a subway. But really, after they let you go, they really do not give you much to go on to get home. You just kind of have to go on your own. They just give you your money and good bye, you are out. That was in June, so I got home around June 30.

C: Did your family know when you were coming home?

K: I called them from New Jersey, other wise they probably would not have, but I was talking to them from Trenton, New Jersey. It is that AT&T thing again. You can call them from anywhere and you just owe a lot of money. So if there is ever another war, I think everybody should buy stock in AT&T. They made so much money. Just off of my family they got about \$1000 dollars, and how many troops are over there, you know, 120,000?

C: One thousand dollars in your phone calls just from over seas?

K: Yes. All combined between my mother calling me and the whole war. You can run up quite a bill.

C: That is a huge phone bill.

K: Yes, and that is just from me. I know there were other people who had family in Germany plus family in the United States. They were calling from Saudi Arabia to Germany and the United States, back and forth. So, obviously they had a calling card, and hopefully something a little more than that. So, I am going to invest in AT&T next time we are in a war. It was terrible, it was over a dollar a minute to talk to them.

C: When you got home, you did not have to call long distance any more then? The day you got home, what kind of feeling was that?

K It was just pretty much relief to see everybody Almost shocked to see everybody at that point, because I had not been home for almost a year and a half. Seeing people that I knew like that, my mom and dad and sister were at the airport. It was pretty weird because in a year and a half they got older and people look different. It was pretty much of a shock to see everybody.

C Was it a good shock for you?

K Mostly, yes. Just relieved to see everybody It is like I said before, you think a lot about if you are going to see them again. Before the war you write all that time, and you call all that time, and you get to see them after all that.

C: Was it hard to adjust being back at home, because you were out of the Army at this time?

K. It is still difficult to adjust because it is such a different place than being in the Army. It is also a different lifestyle because it is a different country. That is the biggest adjustment, besides being in the Army, being in Ohio. And being in Germany is a lot different That is probably the biggest adjustment. I got into being in Europe I was there for three and a half years, and it is a very nice place to live, especially if you are in the Army because then you do not have to put up with German government regulations, and all the things that a German citizen had to put up with You live there so you can go enjoy their country, travel, whatever speed you want on the Auto Bonn. Outdoor cafes and restaurants everywhere in every little town They have like fifteen pubs and dance clubs, all kinds of things to do in Germany So, that is the biggest adjustment probably

Ohio is a lot different You know, everything is relative, but I think relatively, there is a lot less to do in Ohio than there is in Germany. Germany's really activity oriented. Every Sunday people go for folk marches there They go walking through the woods, which is possible It does not happen very often. You can still walk through there because there is a law that says it is like your right of innocent passage, you can walk wherever you want. There are bike trails anywhere you want, so you can bike anywhere you want. You can drive as fast as you want. There are rivers everywhere There are the Rhine and the Mien Rivers, so you can take a boat and cruise, do all kinds of stuff That is the biggest adjustment. You do not see things like 224 They do not have stores like that. They have stores in the middle of the town, it looks like a town It is not just a spread of stores and stop lights It is not like that at all, so I think that is the biggest adjustment

C: Would you go back to Germany?

K: Definitely. Especially if someone in my family was over there No one, I do not

think anyone likes to be away from their family that much, to go clear across the ocean. It is a nicer lifestyle over there, a better everything. [It] depends on what you like to do. Anything you like to do is easier to do over there. You can drive to the beach, the Mediterranean, or drive to the Alps. The mountains are real close if you like to ski or climb, or do anything in the mountains. Lots of cities to go into, and there is no crime either. You do not go downtown and wonder if you are going to get stabbed or if a drive by shooting is going to occur on the street you are on. That makes it nice because you can go to any town or any city at night and just walk around. You do not see the Europeans stealing televisions or paintings of Paris. Everybody is just walking around. That is what they do, have coffee. You just enjoy the city, instead of avoid the city like most Americans probably do.

C: That is too bad

K: People do not go to the city on purpose around here. In Europe, you go to Paris, you go to Frankfurt, people like the cities. They have the museums, cathedrals, castles, stuff like that. Here the most historical thing is probably a log cabin. You look at a log cabin after you have looked at a cathedral in Cologne, your brain takes about two seconds to process a cabin, look at the walls. Well that is nice, but you can go to Cologne and look at the cathedral all day, just walk around. There are thousands of carvings in the huge cathedral. You can look at the outside all day and spend the next day inside. Every other, Notre Dame is the same way in Paris. I kind of got used to doing things like that. And then I come here and want to check out a historical site, you know, it is the mill down there in Mill Creek Park. Ooh, how impressive. It is kind of terrible, the things here seem kind of boring compared to the things over there, so now it is like you go around and you are just bored all the time. It is just better over there, it is a terrible way to go around thinking that it is better over there. Then, if you want to compare countries, Saudi Arabia, there is just no reason to go there. I would just assume be in Ohio than over there.

C: Ohio is pretty good?

K: Yes, Ohio is great compared to the desert. There is no problem there.

C: I want to ask you one more thing. When you think back on the war now, what are your feelings towards that time now? Are they different now than they were then, or do you have any reaction to it now that you have got to spend a couple months home and think about why you were there and what you had to do there?

K: I do not really think about it that much. I probably thought about it while I was there and that was it. Most of the time it does not even come into my head. The only time things from the war come into my head is when you are trying to fall

asleep or something. Or if you see something that reminds you of something you did in the war, which is not a lot because it is so much different here than it was over there. There are not a lot of things that I see and say, "Oh, that reminds me of when I was in the war." It is not hard for me not to think about it. That is like I said, not too many things remind me of it. It was pretty terrible before, during, and after. Unless I am talking about something just military, which I do not mind because that is what I did for four years. So, I do not mind talking about the military things about the war, but the rest of it I just do not think about. It is over, that is it. Same thing like the basic training. It was a bad eight weeks and even if I tried, I cannot remember a lot of things about basic training because I just like blank out in my head. When you are there, you are so out of it half the time anyway, that you might not even be paying attention of what is going on anyway. You just do not remember everything that is going on because you are so busy every day, so you just do not remember much. I do not think it affects the way I am now as much as I thought it might. I do not go around Boardman wondering if I am going to step on a land mine or anything like that. It does not screw up your head so much, I think, because it was a short war. It really did not have a big psychological impact on people. We went back to Germany and things resumed normal.

C: Would you ever join the Army again?

K: If I went back in, then I would go in as an officer. Since I have seen what they have to put up with, I am not sure I want to do that either. I probably would, but it is not very likely.

C: Is there anything else you would like to add? Anything we did not talk about?

K: Not that I can think of.

C: Well, thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

K: Thank you.

End of Interview