

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

National Guard History

Personal Experience

O. H. 424

KENNETH HOFMANN

Interviewed

by

David Arms

on

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: KENNETH HOFMANN
INTERVIEWER: David Arms
SUBJECT: Training, Organization and History of the
National Guard Reserve Program
DATE: May 10, 1976

A: This is an interview with Mr. Kenneth H. Hofmann for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on Monday the tenth of May, 1976, at approximately 10:15 a.m. in the morning.

Mr. Hofmann, could we just basically start this interview by you giving some information on your background; where you were born, brought up, and educated?

H: I've always lived in Youngstown. I was born in Youngstown. I went to Austintown Fitch High School and I also went to Youngstown State University for about two and a half years. I joined the Ohio National Guard in January of 1965. I've got eleven years in. I joined here as a nonprior service person.

A: Joining as a nonprior service person, what did you have to do at that time?

H: The program at that time is the same as it is now. We had to go to active duty, which half of the time was basic training at an Army installation. I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky. We were artillery at the time, so I went to Fort Worth, Texas, for my advanced training which was in twin forties. That was the extent of it. I was on active duty for about five months.

A: When you went through the training down there, was it a regular Army boot training?

H: Yes, your first task is regular basic training. Every-

body goes to that, Army Reserve, National Guards, draftees and enlistees into the Army. Usually, your company in basic training is made up of everybody. You might have twenty or thirty that have been drafted in and so forth. It's a big conglomeration of everybody.

A: How long did this last?

H: My basic training was eight weeks. Your first couple of weeks, you usually have a dead week in there. That's what they call zero week. That's your reception station. That's when you process into the Army at a reception station. Those go for no more than two weeks. Usually a week, week and a half. From there you go to basic training.

A: So this was at Fort Knox?

H: Mine was at Fort Knox, yes, but the fellows that come in now have been going to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. It's still the same program; that hasn't changed.

A: So from there you went to artillery training.

H: Right, at Fort Worth, Texas.

A: How long did this last?

H: That was probably two, two and a half months also.

A: What did they teach you there? Did they teach you how to shoot, how to clean, or maintenance?

H: Everything about the twin forties. We were an AW outfit and we had twin forties and they taught us everything. Everything from driver's training to maintenance and a number of things. Anything about the guns, they taught us.

A: When you finished that training there, what did you do?

H: I came back and picked up my monthly meeting at the National Guard. At that time I didn't work for the Guard; I had a civilian job. I came to my monthly meetings and summer camp just like anybody else.

A: What was your civilian job at the time?

H: At that time I worked for the hotels. I worked for Voyager Inn. Eventually, I became general manager for Voyager Inn, but at that time, I wasn't; I was assistant manager.

A: So when did you come to work for the Guard full-time?

H: I started working for the Guard full-time in August of 1969. I started here, as a matter of fact, on my birthday, the 28th of August, 1963, and I've been full-time ever since. I've stuck right with it.

A: Why did you join the Guard in the first place?

H: In the first place, like a lot of people, to get out of the draft. I didn't want to be drafted. Vietnam was just starting at that time. I'm not really proud of the fact, but that was the system. The other alternative, instead of being drafted and going to Vietnam was to get in the National Guard. Like I say, I'm really not proud of the fact that that happened, but that was the system. I don't really regret the fact that I joined the Guard. I like the Guard and I'll work hard for the Guard. I think it's a good system. Being that I did get in the Guard that way, I still don't resent it. I'm glad I joined the Guard. I really enjoy working for them. I think it's a good outfit.

A: Now you originally trained as anti-air warfare on the forties.

H: Right.

A: Have you changed your MOS since?

H: Yes, we were reorganized. In the National Guard, we got through reorganization quite often. It was about 1971 or 1972 when they changed this from artillery to military police. They changed our whole battalion, as a matter of fact, to military police. We were retrained through OJT. We didn't have to do any additional training. We we just retrained MP.

A: So the entire unit . . .

H: There MOS's were changed, yes. I've been MP ever since. I've stayed 95 Bravo ever since.

A: What is your function?

H: Right now, I'm unit first sergeant. I'm a 95 B 50, which is the first sergeant for a military police company. I've been the first sergeant now for a couple of years.

A: In your full-time capacity, what do you do for the Guard there?

H: Mainly recruits. Right now most of our time is taken up for just recruiting. Also we take care of administration in the company. Any type of administration from 201 files

to finance and even down to ordering the rations for the weekend drill. Also, we take care of the supplies for the company. There are two of us in the office. I'm the first sergeant who primarily takes care of the administration. The other man is the supply sergeant. We are still required to know both jobs. We have to keep our hands in both pies in other words. The unit supply system takes care of everything from getting weapons to ammunition to the men's personal gear and personal clothing.

A: What kind of training did you receive to do this type of job that you are doing here?

H: The full-time job?

A: Yes.

H: Through OJT. It's just like the civilian job. I was hired. You have to be hired into the Federal Civil Service System. The only thing here is through what we... when you speak of Federal Civil Service we are not competitive technicians. We are what they call accepted technicians. You are simply hired on the job and you learn the job through OJT. When something comes up you do it and if you are not sure how it is done, you ask one of the guys who worked in the armory. They are starting now however--since I've come on board--AST schools and whenever somebody comes on new . . . even the older fellows like myself, who have been here a few years are still eligible to go to school. As a matter of fact, we are supposed to go. I haven't gone yet, but I will be going.

A: Do you think that this is a big improvement over just coming on the job without background?

H: Yes. That's hard. Now, I came into this unit here which had not had as AST for some time, so there was a pile of stuff that had to be done. I'm talking about full-timewise. Plus, it would be nice if you could shut the door and not let anything new come into the system, but you can't do that. Everybody knows that stuff is going to be coming in the mail. So that does make it hard. But the system that they have now of going to school first, that's ideal. That has to be one, big help to a man.

A: How do you fill these types of jobs? Do you just go out and look for somebody that's in the Guard, usually? How does a job like your's get filled?

- H: Whenever a job opens, the agent general's department, the technician personnel officer issues announcements. They are written announcements and every facility in the Army National Guard in Ohio gets a copy of it. The first people that have preference on the job are federal technicians who are already in the program. If nobody applies for the job then anybody outside of the program, like myself when I came in off of the street, can apply. Then they will consider your application. If nobody else in the system applied, then they will hire you. The easiest way to know that there are job openings is to either check periodically with your armory or, in my case, I was in this unit. I was a member of this company and I knew that there was a job open here. I wanted to get out of the job I was in, so I applied for it and I got it.
- A: But you must be a member of the National Guard . . .
- H: To work for the Guard, you've got to belong to the Guard, that's right. In a way that's good and in a way that's bad. That's good because it makes people dedicated, like my unit here. I like to consider this as my unit. Not only do I work for them, but I also belong to it. So it gives you a certain amount of pride. The bad aspect of it is if for any reason you lose your military status, especially if it is medically, where you could still perform your job, but you can't belong to the National Guard, you'll lose your job. That is one of the fallacies. Maybe you are in an automobile accident and through no fault of your own . . . medically, maybe you've lost a hand or something, you can't belong to the Guard now. You lose your job. That is one of the aspects to it. If you belong to the Guard, you can work for them.
- A: You say you've worked for them for about five years full-time.
- H: Yes.
- A: Have you seen a change in the Guard as far as is it harder to recruit now? What is the attitude?
- H: Oh, yes. When I first started in the National Guard, we had waiting lists because we were right at the height of the Vietnam War and we were also right at the height, naturally of the draft. To get into the National Guard at that time it took you close to twelve months because your name went on a waiting list. If a man joined the Guard, he wasn't drafted. At that time, we didn't even have to recruit. People were coming in here in lines and we put their name on the list. The big change we had as soon as the Vietnam War was over, they started gearing down the draft and eventually they had abolished the draft. We took a nose-dive as far as recruiting goes. Instead of

- people coming here beating down the doors, were out beating down their doors. It's actually changed, from when I started here, 180 degrees. There is no more waiting lists in this unit. As a matter of fact, we lost our waiting lists in this unit. As a matter of fact, we lost our waiting list in about a matter of a week and a half. Soon as the draft went out, boy, that waiting list just died just like that.
- A: How about the participation of the people in the Guard too, did that drop off then?
- H: You mean about the interest and the dedication?
- A: Yes.
- H: Not really, no. The only one of the big aspects that I saw, which I really considered minor, some people don't, but I do and that was hair. They relaxed their rules on hair mainly to keep people. I'm talking about the length of hair. Some people feel as though a man can't function if he's got a long hair. Well, I think that's a lot of bunk. There was a lot of emphasis put on that. But as far as the people in the Guard and whether they had an obligation or they didn't, I didn't see any change in their function really. We have one man here that has over twenty-six years in the National Guard. No, they're dedicated people.
- A: Let me ask you some technical questions about the way the Guard operates. Do you still have mandatory participants in the Guard or does everybody volunteer?
- H: Well technically, the National Guard has always been a volunteer outfit. We don't draft into the Guard and we never have. Actually that's an inflated statement, because I'm going back to the Vietnam War again. For a man to get into the Guard he got a draft deferment. He wasn't drafted. So technically, if you want to split hairs, yes, we did draft into the Guard, but right on paper, no. So some of those people that came in at that time still do have a six year reserve obligation. They are still required to be here. There is a percentage, oh I say, maybe twenty to thirty percent of the people that have no obligation; I don't have an obligation. We are still here because we like the Guard and we like the part-time military. I think that's the main reason why a lot of people are here.
- A: How about somebody that had a reserve obligation and is required to attend, what happens to the individual if he doesn't attend?
- H: He's subject to involuntary order to active duty. I'll just give you a little bit of background. A drill weekend

for us is four drills. If a man misses five of those drills, in other words if he blows one weekend, he's in trouble because if he misses one more drill like the next Saturday morning, he is subject to involuntary order to active duty. Now that involves twenty-four months less any active duty time that he has had. Now his active duty time would be two weeks summer camp. That's considered active duty. His time that he spent for training--his initial active duty--is considered. So most of the orders that come through, they'll come through from anywhere from eighteen to nineteen months involuntary active duty. Now I just make a note here that that is a very poor way to go on active duty because when you get assigned to a unit and the company commander gets your copy of the orders and you are assigned to his unit, as a order to involuntary active duty, he knows that you goofed up in the National Guard right away. Right off the bat you are in trouble with your new unit. That a bad way to go on active duty. For your best bet and it's really not that hard and even if a man doesn't like the Guard and there is no sense in kidding ourselves, we do have people that way, who don't want to be here. It's so easy to come one weekend a month and go to two weeks summer camp. That's the easy way out. I've always looked at that as the easy way out than to get tied up with involuntary active duty, because that is a real bummer to put it mildly.

A: In your experience, have you processed a few of these?

H: I have, yes. As a technician I have, yes. I've had a couple of people who have actually got on to active duty. There again, I've had some that haven't. Usually the way that a man does not go on active duty is when he brings in letters from a doctor or whatever saying that he was incapacitated at the time or that he was sick or that he had personal problems or even mental strain, whatever. The ultimate authority to put the man on the active duty is the adjutant general's office in Columbus. He will take the unit commander's recommendations to put it in and he will also take the man's letters and his appeals and so forth. He will look at both of them and then he will make decisions. The man was obviously wrong in going AWOL, but maybe he had a good reason. Then they will deny the active duty and they will reinstate him in our full-time Guard capacity. I've had that happen to a couple of people. The only thing about that is that if the people would let us know, we could iron those problems out right here in the unit level and never have to get out of this house. A lot of them don't. A lot of them either think that they don't have to or that maybe we'll never take it that far. But we are required by regulation to do it and we have to, because if we don't we're as much at fault for not doing it as the man is for not coming here. It's just as simple as that, even more so because we are supposed

to be responsible.

A: Now take the fellow that does for some reason miss a drill or a weekend through no fault of his own, he's ill or something. How does he fulfill his obligation?

H: Well, the only thing that we ask is that if a man is sick, or sometime he runs into a family emergency--like Friday night or Saturday, maybe his wife falls down and hurts her back or whatever and he has to rush her to the hospital--he calls us on the telephone and tells us what happened. The unit commander will make the determination. Now if it's a serious thing, where the man is maybe down with the flu or his wife has been hurt or maybe his baby is sick, we'll take that into consideration. We'll put the man on leave for that weekend and he doesn't have to make the time up. Of course, the government is not going to pay him because he didn't perform, but that is not a chargeable miss. Now an AWOL is. That is where a man doesn't show up. He doesn't call and we try to call him and there is no answer on the telephone. That causes problems. When the man picks up the phone and calls us and tells us his problem, we can iron them out locally. Like I say, we don't charge those against the man. He doesn't get paid for it, but he doesn't get charged for them.

A: Is there a requirement that he attend a minimum number of drills or things during the year?

H: Not really, no. There are 48 drills a year of which he signs a contract to attend, 48 drills and at least fifteen days summer camp. If there is some type of an emergency or some type of problem, then the unit commander can excuse him from a drill weekend or something like that. He does not have to make those drills up. Now if he wants to make those up in an ET status, which is equivalent training status, for the pay or the training or whatever, he could do that. That is open as an option to him. But that is not mandatory. That is at his and the commander's discretion. He doesn't have to do it, but a lot of times they do it for the money.

A: What would you say are the majority of the reasons that somebody would be joining the Guard today?

H: Well, you would have to look at that two ways. One would be the nonprior service person. He has never been in before. He is going to have to go away to active duty. I feel as though a lot of them join just for that reason, to get the training. A guy comes in here and he was going to go to military police school which he could relate when comes back. He can use that training. A lot of them,

I feel as though the nonprior service person has a sense that he wants to fulfill his obligation. He feels as though he owes the country something. That's why a lot of them get in that have never been in before.

Your second category is your prior service people. I feel that he gets in number one, for the money, because he has got some rank and he's going to make some money. Number two is retirement. At the end of twenty years and at the age of sixty, he can draw his retirement which is substantial. I just had a man who stopped in to visit just before you came in and he had something like twenty-six years in and he's making almost \$300 a month retirement. So I think that's why a lot of your prior service people come in. Naturally, they have their selfish reasons, but they want to serve too. They've had their training. They don't have that much to do on the weekends and it gives them an opportunity to serve also, besides the money aspect.

A: On your two week summer camp, what is the usual activity in something like that? What takes place?

H: Up until last year we did what they called White Hat MP duty. Now, White Hat MP duty is actually going on a post. Two years ago we were at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and we worked with the Fort Knox MP's. I'm speaking about actually doing traffic control, writing tickets, going on domestic squabbles, and that sort of thing, break-ins, whatever a civilian policeman does. Last year and this year we are getting away from the White Hat duty because that is not our primary mission. Our primary mission is physical security. Now we can do White Hat. We are programmed to do White Hat as a secondary mission. Physical security is a simple mission and that is to protect special weapons either in a depot or in transit. In other words, if you are moving a special weapon from point A to point B, we protect it while it's being moved. We don't handle the weapon. We don't do anything like that. We provide the security for the weapon. When it gets to point B, it might be in a depot and we'll provide security for that weapon at the depot. That is what we are doing.

Last year we worked at the Savannah, Illinois Army Depot. It was strictly training, but it gave the guys a good idea how aggressors can try and break in and all that type of depot security. This year we are going to Camp Perry and we are going to work down at the Plumbrooke, NASA site. Again, this will be training. It will be a little bit different than we did last year because the Army is putting in what they call ARTEP, Army Reserve Training Evaluation Program.

It's different than what we have been doing. We've usually been doing classroom type training. An ARTEP is actually a hands on type thing. It's actually when you go out and do it. The ARTEP is a book. It gives you missions and gives you the solution on how to do the mission. By the end of this year, the ARTEP will be put in Armywise and everybody will be doing an ARTEP. What we are doing right now is what they call validating the test edition. In other words, what are the bugs in the ARTEP. What are the good points and what are the bad points. There are a couple of bad points, and there are some good points. When they validate at this summer camp, they will take the good points and put emphasis on them and undoubtedly take the bad ones out.

In other words, this year, the first week the people who live at Camp Perry, go down to Plumbrooke, which is about thirty miles away, where they will actually set up an exclusionary in a limited restricted area. That, in other words, is a depot. They will pick an area where their special weapon will be stored and they will practice how they provide security to that weapon. Now the second week then, all of the Army people will come in and after we've practiced and have gotten it down, they will validate the ARTEP and see if we reacted right or if we acted wrong, and where the bugs are in the ARTEP.

A: Do the people in the unit look forward to their two weeks?

H: I would say a lot of them do, yes. Now the guy that doesn't want to be here in the first place, he doesn't, but here again we have a very small percentage. This unit is lucky, we don't have a lot of that. But the majority of the guys, yes, I would say they like that camp. They look forward to them. As a matter of fact, they start planning for them. We go the twelfth of June and some of these guys have been planning and asking me questions since January. I would say that the majority of them do look forward to it. Of course there is a social aspect to it too; they have their parties, of course, after they get their training done.

A: Could you go into that a little bit? What kind of social activities take place?

H: Well, this gives a lot of the guys a chance to get away from home. This is an opportunity where they are out with a group of guys for two weeks. They can have their beer blasts and they can play cards way into the night. Then at the end of camp, we have a company party where everybody gets together. You would be surprised that, by the end of that camp, everybody pretty well mixes together. Everybody knows everybody and even the new people have been accepted. That's the social end of it.

Then they could go out and have a good time and do whatever they like. For example, a couple of years now, most of the guys are used to Perry, but when we went to Savannah and Fort Knox--Savannah, Illinois, is clear over on the Mississippi River, six hundred miles from here--a lot of people got a lot of chances to go see things that they probably wouldn't have seen. Fort Knox, of course, down near Louisville, there are a lot of things around Louisville that people don't see when they are here. So that gives them a good opportunity to go see this stuff. They enjoy that and they really look forward to it.

A: How does somebody advance in the National Guard? Do you have certain slots for certain ranks?

H: We might as well start off with a man that comes in as an E1. After he has been in the active duty for four months, he's automatically . . . that promotion is done strictly on paper; he's promoted to E2. After E2, then the promotions come by recommendation. In other words, the squad leader and the platoon sergeant put their heads together and they determine who they are going to promote. The platoon sergeant comes to me, the first sergeant, and then we go to the unit commander and say, "We've got these people who we want to promote." Unless he has some very strong objections, he listens to what we say because we work with the people. He does in a way, but not in the way we do. So if we have an E2 that we want to be made an E3, then we promote him. Now for example, in each platoon we have three assistant squad leader slots and they are E5's. If a man gets out, the slot opens, and we recommend a man to put in there. A slot has to be open in order to promote a man, even an E4. Take a military policeman, if he's sitting as an E3 and a man gets out that's an E4, then we'll recommend a slotting. But, yes, it's slotted by TOA. We have what they call Table of Organizational Allowance. That is the document that the government gives us which says that you can have twelve E6's and you can have twelve E5's and so forth. We have to stay within that limit. The only exception to that rule is what we call the Try One in the Guard Program. A man that has gotten out of the service as an E5 or E6--his 214 says that he's an E6--and all our slots are filled, we can still take that man on board and he can join. He sits in, for example, in an E3 slot until something opens. In other words, an E6 can fill an E3 slot on a Try One Program.

A: How did your family accept your participation in the Guard?

H: Well, really, I don't have any there because I'm single. I'm not married. I have no problems as far as family at all. It really doesn't even enter into it.

A: What do you see for a future of the Guards as a Reserve overall in this country?

H: The more and more I hear is that the active forces and the Pentagon are relying on the reserves and the National Guard and so forth, but yet the more you hear from Congress is that they want to cut the National Guard Reserve drastically. It really doesn't make sense to me. At this point, I don't know what is going to happen. I don't know if the Pentagon is going to win or Congress is going to win. It just seems like they are butting heads. I know the active forces are slipping. As a matter of fact, it has even been on the news lately where they feel as though they aren't up to snuff. They are putting the emphasis on the reserve components, but yet they want to cut it. I really don't know whether they are going to do it or not. I hope they don't. But I know just in the state of Ohio we are about two thousand men down, speaking about the Guard. We're about two thousand spaces down and they want to cut those spaces. We're not filling them so they are going to take them off of us and give them to another state Guard. In really answering your question, I don't know. It's just like a lot of people around here, we've just been in a quandary. We don't know if they are going to cut us or they are going to keep boosting us up. Again, I say, I hope they don't. I hope they don't cut us. But really, right now, it's at the point that you really don't know what they are going to do.

A: Is there something that I might have not brought out that you would like to bring out?

H: Well, not really. I think you've covered it. You've gone from the part-time aspect to the full-time. No, I thought you did really well.

A: Thank you very much for the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW