

## **Don Kemper Interview**

317<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment

(Library of Congress: Veterans History Project; interviewed by Bernice M. Felder)

<https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2001001.13607/>

(MS Word transcript from audio)

00:00:02 Speaker 2

Don Kemper, one more Nebraska.

00:00:04 Speaker 1

OK. Mr. Kemper, where are you from?

00:00:09 Speaker 1

And where were you born?

00:00:11 Speaker 2

Bring a little town of Shickley, Nebraska.

00:00:14 Speaker 1

OK. What branch of the service did you serve?

00:00:18 Speaker 2

I was in the army infantry.

00:00:22 Speaker 1

And with battalion or division where you at?

00:00:26 Speaker 2

For the 80th Division, 317th Regiment, I believe the third battalion I was a Sergeant when I was discharged.

00:00:31 Speaker 1

And what was your highest rank there?

00:00:38 Speaker 1

OK.

00:00:40 Speaker 1

And were you drafted or did?

00:00:42 Speaker 2

I was drafted well, I was inducted 4-4-44.

00:00:45 Speaker 1

OK. And you were in World War 2, so where were you stationed during the war?

00:01:02 Speaker 2

Was in basic training down in Camp Wood TX. Now it's called Fort Hood.

And went overseas to Europe.

Because the Atlantic on a on an English ship, it was in England for a week, then crossed the English Channel on a French Moroccan ship.

Did you serve on ship primarily or entirely.

00:01:34 Speaker 2

No, I was in the army, but they transported us that way. The ocean and across the English Channel onto Omaha Beach, D + 60-70 days

00:01:50 Speaker 1

Were you ever a Prisoner there.

00:01:50

No. Just about, not quite.

00:01:57 Speaker 3

You tell us a little bit more about that. You said just about.

00:02:01 Speaker 2

Some of them were captured where we were. We were just a few kilometers from the German border, the Alsace Lorraine, and it was a very mixed up affair right there where some of them did get captured.

00:02:24 Speaker 1

Did you receive any injuries?

00:02:27 Speaker 2

Well. Yes I did, but of course she wasn't too severe.

And little history about that place where that took the situation took place. I belong to a local chapter and not very long ago, a fellow I had not seen before, sitting next to me and recognized my division and patch and he said he also was in that division.

Then he said he was in the 317th Infantry also.

And that got to me. I said, oh, were you that nerd that down from division, about 1/4 of them. Then he said he got it at Farbersweiler and I looked at him and I said were you by chance near that house

on the South side of town, right next to the woods? He said yes. I was down the basement and I said I was right outside the door.

00:03:28 Speaker 1

Did you receive any medals?

00:03:31 Speaker 2

Oh yes I am. I had a bunch of medals and not all they were anymore. I'm not sure.

00:03:39 Speaker 1

We do know you received the Purple Heart.

00:03:43 Speaker 1

Any others?

00:03:48 Speaker 2

Oh yes, there was an ETO with three battle campaign stars and of course, the good conduct.

00:03:56 Speaker 2

And what was the other one I?

00:04:03 Speaker 2

Bronze Star, the Combat Infantry Badge and I can't recall the rest of it.

00:04:12 Speaker 3

I had several others by the time I was discharged, but I don't recall what they were anymore.

00:04:19 Speaker 3

Tell us a little bit about what you did as an infantryman?

00:04:29 Speaker 2

Yes, I thought of the.

00:04:31 Speaker 2

The distinct advantage to being the infantry, but I found out that they weren't entrants in there. I thought I would be ahead of a lot of the others, but they found they were entrants, yes.

00:04:41 Speaker 1

You said you were master Sergeant also in the Air Force.

00:04:44 Speaker 2

Right. Well, when I came back, I was in the Army Reserve for a while. And then the signal corps. And then that was disbanded. That was disbanded and they came over and talked to several of us about going into the Air Force reserve, which we did.

00:05:07 Speaker 2

How many years were you in the reserve?

00:05:14 Speaker 2

They had a total military longevity about 41 years.

00:05:26 Speaker 2

That's awesome, yes.

00:05:28 Speaker 3

Is there any other memorable experience that you'd like to Share with us?

00:05:33 Speaker 2

Oh yes, I never envisioned when I went in that I would experience the experience that I had altogether.

And look back at it. I can say that I slept in a hole in the ground. I slept in barns, every kind of place you can imagine, but also slept in the Duchess of Luxembourg's castle when we were. When? After we got out of the hospital. And route back up to the front and which was then in the Battle of the Bulge.

They had a stopover place, using her castle in Luxembourg, so several of us were able to stay there overnight night or two anyway.

00:06:22 Speaker 1

Did you leave a wife at home?

00:06:25 Speaker 2

No, I wasn't married. No, no.

00:06:29 Speaker 1

So you got married later, OK?

00:06:32 Speaker 2

Back here.

00:06:33 Speaker 3

So what do you think about the event here today? The Veterans History Project today, what do you think about it?

00:06:41 Speaker 2

This is fabulous.

00:06:43 Speaker 2

They have set this up in a magnanimous order here. It's really, really something to see and something that I know others will really remember that have been here.

00:07:00 Speaker 3

Did you have anything else you wanted to?

00:07:01 Speaker 3

Share with us.

00:07:04 Speaker 2

I can't think of anything, but I appreciate the call.