

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

**Dean R. Kreek
Oregon, Missouri
July 21, 2010**

**Pearl Harbor Survivor
USS *Nevada*
May 1, 1943 to USS *New Mexico***

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is July 21, 2010. I am interviewing Dean R. Kreek by telephone. His phone number is 660-446-3463. His address is: 701 West Linden Street, Oregon, Missouri, 64473. This interview is in support of the National Museum of Pacific War, Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II

Mr. Misenhimer

Dean, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II. Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the Museum. "Agreement read." Is that okay with you?

Mr. Kreek

That's fine with me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the next thing I would like to do is to get an alternative contact. We have found out that sometimes several years down the road we try to get back in contact with a veteran and he has moved or something. Do you have a son or daughter or someone that we could contact if we needed to find you?

Mr. Kreek

Yes, my son. Arnold Kreek. 707 West Missouri Street, Oregon, Missouri 64473.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a phone number for him?

Mr. Kreek

660-446-2640.

Mr. Misenhimer

Okay, Dean now if you will read to me what you have written, that will be fine.

Mr. Kreek

I am Dean Richard Kreek. I was born to Richard and Carrie Kreek on a farm on the west edge of Oregon, Missouri on July 10, 1922. My mother was a homemaker and gardener and my father was a farmer and street commissioner. I had a brother, Francis Kreek, ten years younger than I. This was during the Depression that we had clean overalls like everyone else and luckily we never missed a meal. I graduated

from Oregon High School May 15, 1940 and joined the Navy July 31, 1940 for six years. We had twelve weeks of military training at Great Lakes, Illinois. At the end of our training we were given a paper asking for our choice of fields for further training. I requested torpedo school first and music school second. I played trumpet and I had taken my horn with me. The next day I was told to report to the bandmaster, George Batty for an audition. He recommended me for the Fleet School of Music at San Diego, California and after seven months of training I was ordered to the USS *Nevada* battleship at Pearl Harbor. I went aboard April 17, 1941 and I reported to the bandmaster. I was surprised to see that it was George Batty He had received his orders for sea duty shortly after he recommended me for music school. The band played for putting up the flag and for detachment of Marines for running the flag up at 0800. On December 7, 1941 we were sent topside as usual about 7:45. Shortly after we noticed planes diving on Ford Island, a seaplane base. Then I saw a torpedo plane flying slowly toward the USS *Oklahoma* and drop its torpedo. At 0800 we played Colors with Oden McMillan, Musician First Class directing. Our Chief, George Batty had broken his heel shortly before this. At soon as we finished Colors, we were ordered to our battle stations. Mine was the forward battle dressing station just behind the number one turret on the third deck. We were the only battleship to get underway so we drew a lot of action. We drew one torpedo, one armor piercing bomb, and four shrapnel bombs. In our compartment we had about eight men. We doubled as stretcher bearers. We had been out to sea target practicing with our main battery and 14 inch guns just a few days before this. When we got the torpedo and armor piercing bomb the ship shook and sounded like the main guns firing. A short time later the Chief-in-charge ordered us topside into the smoke from the fires started by the bomb. When we got topside the attack was over and we were ordered to carry wounded down from the boat deck to the main deck aft. We made two trips and then we were ordered to get mattresses from the sleeping quarters and take them to the bomb hole and throw them in. The yard tug was shooting water into the hole and we were ordered to throw the mattresses into the hole. We were told that they hoped this would make steam and put the fire out. Everyone stayed aboard ship that night and the next day the band was sent to Richardson Recreation Center. They broke up the band several days later and another man and I were ordered to the USS *Nokomis*, a yard tug, number 142. We stayed aboard there and I was a deckhand for 3 ½ months. Then the band came back together and was

ordered to Camp Andrews Recreation Center at Nanakuli Beach. We stayed there for quite a while and then we were ordered to Kaneohe Naval Air Station. We were there for quite a while and then we were ordered to a spot in Honolulu and it was here that I heard that they needed a trumpet player on the USS *New Mexico*. I made a request and was ordered aboard the USS *New Mexico* on May 1, 1943. On the 10th we left for the Aleutian Islands. As we were on our way up to the Aleutians, my brother, who was a gunner's mate on the USS *Detroit*, a light cruiser, they were on their way back from there. My brother was in the Navy for two years and our paths never crossed. On the 16th we anchored off of Adak. On the 22nd of July the American and Canadian troops landed on Kiska. On August 28 we left the Aleutians for Bremerton, Washington Naval Shipyard. We stayed there for a couple of weeks and then on to Long Island, California for one week and then back to Pearl Harbor arriving October 25th. Then on November 10th we left for Makin Island in the Gilberts. And there we shelled Makin Island before the Army landed. December 5th we got back to Pearl Harbor and on December 8th another man and I received orders for shore duty at Pensacola Naval Air Station. Pensacola had about seven outlying airfields. After we arrived we went on a 30 day leave. After we got back from our 30 day leave we were ordered to Barin Navy Air Field at Foley, Alabama. We went to Fairhope, Alabama on the weekends for R&R. I met Mary Anna Arnold in 1944 and we were married in 1948. In November of 1945 several of us were transferred to the School of Music in Washington, D.C. They put us in Unit Band Number 144. We were the first band on the newly commissioned carrier USS *Kearsarge* (CV-33) in the spring of 1946. On July 30, 1946 I was discharged from the United States Navy. Aloha. The Navy runs in the Kreek and Arnold family blood. My nephew, Lewis Arnold, is a Commander in the Navy and my grandson, Patrick Kreek is going to Flight Officer Training School on August 22nd, which upon completion, he will be commissioned an Ensign in the United State Navy. Aloha.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up and ask you some questions. When you left the *Nevada*, what did you go on?

Mr. Kreek

The USS *Nokomis* (YT-142) which was a yard tug.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went on the *New Mexico* on May 1, 1943?

Mr. Kreek

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you went up to the Aleutians?

Mr. Kreek

Yes, on November 10, 1943.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do up there in the Aleutians? What did your ship do?

Mr. Kreek

We bombarded Kiska Island. I guess that's where I lost my notes. We bombarded Kiska and the Canadian and American troops landed.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was your battle station on the *New Mexico*?

Mr. Kreek

I don't know what it was on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Under general quarters, where did you go?

Mr. Kreek

That's what I say, I don't even remember where I went.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long were you on the *New Mexico*?

Mr. Kreek

I was on the *Nevada* about eight months and on the *New Mexico* about eight months.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you go on shore duty? What date?

Mr. Kreek

On December 9 we went aboard the carrier USS *Princeton* for transportation. We got to Pensacola on the 20th.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year was that?

Mr. Kreek

1943. Then we got a 30 day leave.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you were on the *New Mexico* from May until December?

Mr. Kreek

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you left the Aleutians where did you go on the *New Mexico*?

Mr. Kreek

We went back to Bremerton Navy Yard then on down to San Diego, California.

Mr. Misenhimer

And then where?

Mr. Kreek

Back to Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got back there was there still a lot of damage there?

Mr. Kreek

Yes, quite a bit. We went from there to Makin Island in the Gilberts.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do in the Gilberts?

Mr. Kreek

The ship bombarded Makin Island.

Mr. Misenhimer

The invasion of Makin, okay. Now back to December 7, 1941, did you see the *Arizona* get hit?

Mr. Kreek

No. We were right astern of the *Arizona* but we had gone to our battle stations.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was below deck?

Mr. Kreek

Yes, the third deck.

Mr. Misenhimer

When the *Arizona* blew up, did you hear it?

Mr. Kreek

Well, that might have been some of the shaking that the ship did, I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

When your ship got underway, how far did it go? What happened?

Mr. Kreek

We went out past the naval hospital and then since we had all that damage They grounded the ship. They grounded it in the channel at Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Misenhimer

I think they were concerned that it might sink in the channel and block the channel, is that right?

Mr. Kreek

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you stay on the *Nevada* or did you get off of it right straight?

Mr. Kreek

We stayed on that night and then we got off the next day.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let's go back, when you first went in, where did you go for boot camp?

Mr. Kreek

Great Lakes Naval Training Station.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that boot camp?

Mr. Kreek

It was tough.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Kreek

Some but not bad. This was just about the time before the draft started. President Roosevelt had been gearing up the armed services for several years. They were building up the Army and the Navy. They wanted the best. They were pretty tough.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you feel the most frightened?

Mr. Kreek

I guess during the attack.

Mr. Misenhimer

On December 7?

Mr. Kreek

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there many people on your ship killed or wounded?

Mr. Kreek

50 were killed. I don't know how many were wounded.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else from that particular day that you remember?

Mr. Kreek

No, I think not.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the *New Mexico*, you bombarded the Aleutian Islands and the Gilberts; did you all bombard anywhere else?

Mr. Kreek

No. That was the end of it at the Gilberts. We came back to Pearl from there.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were with other ships, right?

Mr. Kreek

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some of those ships, do you recall?

Mr. Kreek

No, I sure don't.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you bombard anywhere else besides the Aleutians and Makin?

Mr. Kreek

No, that was all.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you think of the officers that you had over you?

Mr. Kreek

Very good. I will tell you a funny story. We had an Admiral's Inspection and I always shined my shoes; spit shined them real good, they were really shining. The Admiral stopped and said, "How did you shine those shoes, Sailor?" I said, "Spit shine, Sir." (laugh)

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there any other funny incidents?

Mr. Kreek

No, that is about all that I remember.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were at Pearl Harbor, did you get to go ashore there on liberty?

Mr. Kreek

Yes, quite often but not for long. I went to the YMCA and got banana splits. That was my main outing.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was Honolulu as a place to have liberty? Was it pretty good?

Mr. Kreek

I guess it was. Like I say, I went to the YMCA and that's the only place that I went so I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get home with any souvenirs from World War II?

Mr. Kreek

No I didn't.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anywhere?

Mr. Kreek

No, not where I was.

Mr. Misenhimer

Not even Pearl Harbor or anywhere?

Mr. Kreek

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Kreek

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Not good or bad either way?

Mr. Kreek

(Laugh) No. I never saw them. They did a lot of good wherever they were but they weren't in Honolulu as far as I know at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were on the ships, could you get your mail with any regularity?

Mr. Kreek

You bet, yes. That's another story Richard. After we were sent ashore we were given post cards to send to our parents. It had about three things that you could mark. If you did anything else they threw your card away. But it took my folks two weeks before they knew if I was dead or alive. Things were a lot different in those days, weren't they?

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh yes. Did you ever hear Tokyo Rose on the radio?

Mr. Kreek

No. I never had a radio.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever cross the equator?

Mr. Kreek

Yes I did.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of ceremony did you have when you crossed it?

Mr. Kreek

My brother crossed it and got beat up pretty well and got a certificate. Our shipped crossed and we never got a certificate and didn't have any ceremony of any kind. We were on our way to the Gilberts and we were in a hurry and they didn't you know; no foolishness allowed.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever get into any typhoons?

Mr. Kreek

No. Some rough seas, but no typhoons.

Mr. Misenhimer

On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Kreek

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you?

Mr. Kreek

In 1945 I would have been at Barin Air Field.

Mr. Misenhimer

What reaction did people have when they heard that?

Mr. Kreek

I really don't know. I'm sure they were unhappy, but I don't know.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then on May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered, did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Kreek

No. We never heard anything about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

No celebration, huh?

Mr. Kreek

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then when they dropped the first atomic bomb, did you hear about that?

Mr. Kreek

Yes we heard about it. We were all in favor of it. President Truman had a big decision to make and he made the right one.

Mr. Misenhimer

When Japan did surrender, did you have a celebration then?

Mr. Kreek

No. (laugh) Everybody was happy but nobody celebrated.

Mr. Misenhimer

Back to the *Nevada*, in your letter to the VFW magazine you mentioned that you were fairly close to where the bombs and the torpedo hit, is that right?

Mr. Kreek

That's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

About how far were you from those?

Mr. Kreek

Richard, do you have any idea how far it is from the main turret to the bow of the ship?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mr. Kreek

Not too far. The torpedo and the bomb were about half way between the turret and the bow. Turret number one. They came down from the turret and came out on the third deck. That was one way of getting out of the turret. You know we were awful close to the bomb and the torpedo but I don't know how many feet. I have no way of judging.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, but you were pretty close though.

Mr. Kreek

Yes, I would say so. With all of those watertight compartments, I guess it absorbed the shock. Like I say, we got the smoke from the bomb. That was all.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the highest rank you got to?

Mr. Kreek

Musician Second Class. I never tried to advance myself. I was moving around so much. I just didn't have the chance.

Mr. Misenhimer

What instrument did you play?

Mr. Kreek

The trumpet.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got out of the service, did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Kreek

Not a bit. Like I said, my father was a farmer and I just came back to the farm and started farming. I farmed about 10 or 13 years and then went into construction. Concrete paving and curb and gutter work. I was foreman for 8 years for a big construction company in St. Jo. I still farmed on the side.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is your brother still living?

Mr. Kreek

No. He died about four years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions?

Mr. Kreek

Yes. We had one but I didn't go. I went to the USS *Nevada* in St. Louis but I didn't go back to anymore after that. They have them all over the country.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was that for the *Nevada*?

Mr. Kreek

Yes that was for the *Nevada*.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you got out, did you use your GI Bill for anything?

Mr. Kreek

Yes, I went to farming class.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you buy a home or anything with it?

Mr. Kreek

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were in boot camp at Great Lakes, did you ever hear of anything called the Great Lakes Shuffle?

Mr. Kreek

(Laugh) No, I never did. I never heard that.

Mr. Misenhimer

I've talked to several people and they would make them put steel wool under the sole of their shoe and make them go over the floor to clean the floors.

Mr. Kreek

(Laugh) I never heard that one.

Mr. Misenhimer

(Laugh) Yes, they called it the Great Lakes Shuffle.

Mr. Kreek

That would make sense.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have a lot of inspections when you were in boot camp?

Mr. Kreek

No.

Mr. Misenhimer

This was before the war, they were probably a little easier, but I don't know.

Mr. Kreek

(Laugh) Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anything else that you recall from your time World War II?

Mr. Kreek

No, I think I've about covered it. I wish I would have got my notes right.

Mr. Misenhimer

Those were a big help. When you were in the Gilberts, were you ever attacked by Japanese airplanes or anything?

Mr. Kreek

No. They didn't have any planes around there.

Mr. Misenhimer

No kamikazes back in those days?

Mr. Kreek

No. That was just the beginning of the chain. They really didn't have much on it.

Mr. Misenhimer

On the *Nevada*, what were your accommodations like? What did you sleep in? Where did you stay?

Mr. Kreek

We slept on the second deck. We had those steel framed cots. The *Arizona* had to sleep in hammocks but we had the steel framed bed that we slept in.

Mr. Misenhimer

They had kind of a canvas in the frame.

Mr. Kreek

I think so.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was the food on the *Nevada*?

Mr. Kreek

Excellent.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get three meals a day?

Mr. Kreek

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were bombarding and on battle stations, did they have to bring the food to you, or how did that work?

Mr. Kreek

No. We always made it to our meals. Of course, we missed one after the Pearl Harbor attack I'm sure, but we ate after that.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you were growing up during the Depression, was that a pretty tough time?

Mr. Kreek

Not for us. We had a big garden.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have chickens and pigs and things like that?

Mr. Kreek

Yes. We had cattle, hogs, chickens. We covered everything.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you had plenty of food.

Mr. Kreek

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Just not much cash.

Mr. Kreek

(Laugh) That was it, yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

What crops did your father grow?

Mr. Kreek

Alfafa and corn.

Mr. Misenhimer

What part of Missouri is Oregon located?

Mr. Kreek

Northwest corner.

Mr. Misenhimer

There were Marines on the *New Mexico*, right?

Mr. Kreek

I suppose but I don't remember. On the *Nevada*, we had a detachment of Marines.

Mr. Misenhimer

Of all the different assignments that you had in the Navy, what would you consider your best assignment?

Mr. Kreek

That's a tough one. I really can't answer that. I had a good go all the way through.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you stay in music after you got out of the service?

Mr. Kreek

No, I quit.

Mr. Misenhimer

When is the last time you played the trumpet?

Mr. Kreek

Four to six years or so. I kept up bugling. Instead of playing the trumpet, I kept enough lip to sound taps. I sounded taps for our American Legion for over 60 years.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you still do that?

Mr. Kreek

No. I had myasthenia gravis and I had to give it up. Now my son fills in for me.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you do that for funerals for veterans, is that what you do?

Mr. Kreek

Yes, that's right.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's a good service that people do. That's great.

Mr. Kreek

Yes. We do pretty well in Missouri on that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Dean, it has been real nice to talk to you today.

Mr. Kreek

I wish I would have done a little better, but that is what everybody says, I suspect.

Mr. Misenhimer

You did fine. In fact you were better organized than most of the people I interview.

Mr. Kreek

(Laugh) Good.

Mr. Misenhimer

Thanks again for your service to our country. We'll be in touch later.

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