

**The National Museum of the Pacific War
(Admiral Nimitz Museum)**

**Center for Pacific War Studies
Fredericksburg, Texas**

Interview with
Kenneth R. Olin
35991585
Combat Medic
USA

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35991585
Combat Medic
USA

Medals earned:
Good Conduct Medal
Rifleman
State Side Medal
Victory Medal

Original Interview by
John B. Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter
completed
26 November, 2004

My name is John Tombaugh and Peg Van Meter and I are interviewing this gentleman for the Nimitz Museum.

John Tombaugh

Would you please give your name and address please?

Kenneth Olin

Kenneth R. Olin at 11982 State Road 10, Argos, Indiana.

John Tombaugh

What were your parents names and where were they born?

Kenneth Olin

Leverett R. and Mary M. Crowder Olin. My father was born in Montgomery County, Indiana and my mother was born in White County, Indiana.

John Tombaugh

Where did you go to school?

Kenneth Olin

I went to nine different schools until I graduated from Washington Clay in 1934. The first was Reeds School outside of Fulton, Indiana; then to Fulton School, Fulton, Indiana; then on to Columbia School in Rochester, Indiana; the next was South Bend, Indiana to Oliver School; and on to Studebaker School then Lincoln School; then to Nuner and then to Stuckey School and finally to Washington Clay and I was in the second graduating class from Washington Clay. I was the second youngest in my class; some of us still get together for breakfast but not too many are left.

John Tombaugh

So when did you go to college?

Kenneth Olin

I went to college when I was 17 years old, at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. I was away from home for the first time, I couldn't see any reason to go to classes. As a result I made the Dean's list which simply said that if I don't do better, don't come back. My dad decided I didn't want college so he got me a job with Roofing Company in South Bend, Indiana. I ran the hot kettle. I came home one day and said, "There's got to be a different way than this to make a living.

I went to Manchester College for 2 years. Then I started teaching Elementary school in Green Township, St. Joseph County, Indiana. I was there for four years and then I went back to Washington Clay and taught there for 10 years. That is where I was when they drafted me into the Army.

I later came back and finished my Degree in Secondary. I was teaching High School when I decided to become a principal. I

attended Indiana University part time. My first job as principal was at Aubbeenaubbee High School, Leiters Ford, Indiana. In 1965, I went to Plymouth, Indiana as Elementary Principal for 15 years and retired in 1980.

John Tombaugh

What date did you get married?

Kenneth Olin

I was married on December 21, 1940.

John Tombaugh

Your wife's full name?

Kenneth Olin

Mary Harriet (Hoel) Olin.

John Tombaugh

Do you have any children?

Kenneth Olin

Yes. Marjorie and Kenneth.

John Tombaugh

You said you were later drafted into the military?

Kenneth Olin

Every fall I would be classified as 2A, because I was teaching school. Then every spring I would be classified as 1A when school was out.

I worked part time at Studebaker's in the summer time as an up-graded mechanist. They needed people and I could run those machines.

I kept waiting for my draft call and it didn't come so I and started teaching. Things were going along pretty well; in 1945 the war was still on so we decided to have another child. We had waited because I was going to be drafted and nothing happened, and then suddenly when school was out they took me.

John Tombaugh

Where did you take your basic?

Kenneth Olin

Fort Lewis, Washington. I was trained as a Combat Medic. That was kind of interesting. When they drafted me I went to Indianapolis, Indiana, for the physical and so on. I had a little skin infection and they pulled me out and everybody else was gone. Suddenly they asked me what I wanted and I said two things: I don't want to be a Marine or Combat Medic. So I'm the last guy in the line and they said we need a Marine. The kid in front of me heard then asked if he could have it as he looked at me. I said: "Let him have it !" That is how I wound up as a Combat Medic.

I finished my basic at Ft. Lewis, Washington. By that time Germany had surrendered. We were getting ready to ship out, but they pulled me and a few others out of the unit and sent me to Brigham City, Utah. Bushnell General Hospital. I was to become a counselor. I hadn't finished my college at that time. I was suppose to stay there for a week or two and then go to Georgia. Instead they gave me an office and told me what to do. I spent my time with the amputees and psychiatric cases that were being discharged to Veterans Hospitals and home. I did all the paper work and tried to answer all their questions. It was very interesting but very discouraging. I was the counselor at the hospital for those young men.

John Tombaugh

What rank did you have?

Kenneth Olin

Cpl.; I was chief of the department and I had Sgt's., and a 1st Sgt. under me and everything else. I guess nobody else wanted the job.

John Tombaugh

Do you remember the POW's here in the United States?

Kenneth Olin

We had them when I was in service at Bushnell General Hospital. There was a detachment of German prisoners there and they took care of the grounds and so forth. In one of the stories I heard was of General "Hardtack" who was commander of the hospital.

The hospital was built on a old peach orchard, and he saw all those peach trees and he thought it would be a good idea for the POW's to pick and help can the peaches for the hospital. At the end of the year he had a plus in his balance and had to go to Washington, D.C. and explain how this had happened. After that they never touched a peach. They simply let them drop to the ground.

One of the POW's they called Hans was an 18 year old boy and I asked him how he felt when he came over here and he said they came to New York City and were told they were going to put them on a train to Utah. He got on the train in the morning and expected to be there by noon. They traveled and traveled and he thought that they would be there in the morning. They traveled four days and nights to get out there and he said; "If Germany would have realized how big the United States was they would have been more careful about going to war with them."

I have a feeling he stayed in America because he liked it and he got along with everybody.

John Tombaugh

Where were you discharged?

Kenneth Olin

Fort Douglas, Utah.

John Tombaugh

How did you come back to Indiana?

Kenneth Olin

By train.

John Tombaugh

Were you in the reserves?

Kenneth Olin

Yes, I was in for four years.

John Tombaugh

What changes did you see which were different when you came home?

Kenneth Olin

Well, people's attitude. There were women working out side the family and having two families incomes. There was no home life unlike the way it was before the war.

I earned my Principal license in 1951 and Superintendent license in 1953.

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9 hours