National Museum of the Pacific War

Nimitz Education and Research Center

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

Mr. Adolph Krchnak
Date of Interview: May 23, 2015

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Interviewer: Mike Zambrano

Mr. Zambrano: This is Mike Zambrano, and today is May 23, 2015. I am sitting here with Mr. and Mrs., ah--

Mr. Krchnak: Krchnak.

Mr. Zambrano: Krchnak, Adolph Krchnak to be specific.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: Let's see. We are at the Pleasant Hill Library at 211 East Cannon in Round Rock, Texas.

Mr. Krchnak: Austin.

Mr. Zambrano: Austin, I'm sorry. Austin, Texas, oh boy. This interview is in support of the Nimitz Education and Research Center Archives for the National Museum of the Pacific War, Texas Historical Commission for the preservation of historical information related to this site. And Ma'am, before I start, what's your first name?

Mrs. Krchnak: Marian.

Mr. Zambrano: Marian, okay, just so I have everybody's name.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, so the first question I always ask is, where were you born?

Mr. Krchnak: Sealy, Texas.

Mr. Zambrano: Sealy, Texas. And when were you born?

Mr. Krchnak: 8/16/26.

Mr. Zambrano: 8/16/26. What were your parents' names?

Mr. Krchnak: I was junior, Adolph, and Caroline. (Unclear), she was--the same part of Czechoslovakia (laughs), her parents and my parents, my Dad's parents came from.

Mr. Zambrano: Really.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, they were separated; they didn't know each other back there, the two names. The funny thing about it, I didn't find this out until my Uncle Frank on my Mother's side passed away. We helped them to stop to visit when we were coming through Sealy. We were living in Austin already. Well, maybe it was still Taylor, I don't know.

Mrs. Krchnak: I'm not sure.

Mr. Krchnak: My Uncle Frank died and they were having a get-together at the house after the funeral, and we drove up. I says, "Oh, good. Aunt Polly will have some good kolaches (laughs)." They were rummaging through two suitcases that he wound up with after his parents died. I think Uncle Martin had one of them and then he must have turned it over to Uncle Frank. But I don't know just exactly how--I was off working everywhere and I didn't know them. And in those documents--in those suitcases--were the birth certificates of the older brothers and sisters that were born in

Czechoslovakia. They were all in Austria. They were under the Austrian command at that time and there was a dividing--my Grandfather, the Krchnaks, lived outside of the area where the Austrians controlled, and the Austrian Empire went all the way through Czechoslovakia into the southern part of Poland. Stories I heard when I was a little kid, they were mean devils (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Really? How were they mean?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, strict, tax-collecting, man, you know. They took ten percent of your chickens and your cows if you didn't have money. It was the bad stories you heard, about like the Nazis, you know, the same thing (chuckles).

Mr. Zambrano: It sounds like you're pretty familiar with your family history.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, yeah. Back then we had no TV so we played domino and we'd visit. My Grandfather, he corresponded with the old homestead in Moravia in Czechoslovakia. I don't remember the name of the town anymore, and they corresponded. Then Hitler sent his henchmen; there were one million and a half Germans living along the border of Czechoslovakia on the north and west side. We used to listen on the shortwave radio, I was just a kid, and Hitler would be ranting and raving that those Germans are being mistreated by the Czechs. They staged disturbances, just like the Arabs are doing now with the suicide bombs, you know. They didn't use suicide bombs then; they just--and it gave Hitler

the excuse to go out there and teach them Czechs a lesson, and the correspondence stopped. There was no more letters from Czechoslovakia, and that was back in 1937, '38. It was a long time ago; I don't remember the exact time. Grandpa ranted and lamented the fact that he could--he doesn't know who whoever was left back there--my Grandpa was only 70 years old when he left Czechoslovakia in 1876.

Mr. Zambrano: He left in 1876?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah well, his Dad, his family. They came over in 1876 and settled in Fayette County.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Mr. Krchnak: I was followed by six vicious girls.

Mrs. Krchnak: (Unclear) on tape. (All laugh).

Mr. Krchnak: Let the world know (laughs). I was the oldest in the family. My brother is the same age as her, 13 years--12 years younger. Twelve years younger. I helped him through university; he graduated with a Math degree out of University of Houston and applied to--NASA was looking for physicists, astrophysicists, mathematicians, and all of that, all over the world. And he applied, and he got the job. But NASA, officially they didn't open the doors and put anybody to work until about a year after that. So he taught mathematics at Alvin Junior College for two years--a year, I think--before he was accepted by NASA. Once he got in NASA, we don't talk about

that; you still don't talk about that today. That was--all I can say about it is he was in a group of way over 100 or 200 men, all of them with degrees: Greeks, Indians, whatever have you, and they had them there and their job was to make the flight plan, the trajectory up to the moon, land a man on the moon, and bring him back to earth. That was their job, and they did it. Other than that, I'm not going to tell you.

Mr. Zambrano: What was his name again?

Mr. Krchnak: Max. Well, we called him Max. His given name, Mother named him Vladimir or something like that, and he never used that name. He used Ladgie, L-a-d-g-i-e, which--a slang word for Vladimir was Ladje, in Czech.

Mr. Zambrano: What did your father do for a living?

Mr. Krchnak: He was a farmer and a carpenter, construction worker, and he wound up doing cabinet work, the finishing work, the finisher. He did all the cabinet work, all the doors, on most of the clinics, high schools, elementary schools that were built 30-40 miles around Sealy after the war. In the '30s, he would plow the fields; I was still too young but I was already beginning in the mid-'30s. I did the farming and he brought in the paycheck. He would leave on a Monday morning at 3:30 in the morning, saddle up his horse, ride into town five miles, and my Uncle had a place where he could keep--my Uncle had a milk cow and a place to graze her. It just

had to walk two lots, half a block, get into the field and that's where the horse stayed. My Dad worked with a--they repaired barns, fences, put roofs on houses and barns, all the way through the '30s. Their work schedule was, they would be on the job waiting for the sun to come up and as soon as it was light enough so you could see a nail, driving nails in a shingle roof, at daylight. They didn't stop until it got too dark to drive nails. A five and a half day workweek, those hours, and he came home with seven dollars.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! And this was in the '30s?

Mr. Krchnak: It was in the '30s.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh my goodness! (Unclear).

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, from 1933, when I began to remember, 1933, all the way through to almost when they started the draft, was '39, '38, I don't remember. But he had to go and he was 44 years old when that happened. He was born in '98, and 44 would make it what year? Forty-four.

Mr. Zambrano: Ah, 42?

Mr. Krchnak: Forty-two, so he must have been younger. Maybe he was 42--41, 42. Anyway, he had to get a deferment, and he got that deferment because he was working for--by that time he was working for a contractor out of Houston, Brown and Root or Stern, Rogers, one of them. He flipped back and forth between them. All they did

was build refineries. They built--that was considered war effort so if you were in a necessary for the war effort, you got def--I had cousins got deferment, working with the oil companies.

Mr. Zambrano: It sounds like, because of the farm, that you all ate pretty well throughout the Depression?

Mr. Krchnak: We never hurt for food. The only thing we hurt for was fresh meat, beef or anything like that, which we all craved. In the summertime, we had no refrigeration, so we butchered--into September or early October; is it going to be cold enough to butcher? Hogs, we butchered hogs. Well, when dad, he stayed away from home for about two years, two and a half years. They built that refinery down here in Bishop, Alice, Alice, Texas, and he stayed down there. In fact, when I was drafted into the Army, I hitchhiked, before I reported, two or three days before I reported in Houston for my induction, I hitchhiked down to where he was staying, spent the night with him and--I think he lived in Bishop; I'm not sure--and said goodbye. I had to get up early in the morning and make sure I hitchhiked enough rides to get home, and he took me to the bus station, put me on a bus and paid my way to Rosenberg, Texas.

Mr. Zambrano: What was in Rosenberg?

Mr. Krchnak: That was the intersection with Highway 36 that went north. I hitchhiked from Rosenberg to Sealy, and the next day I had to report in Houston for my induction, and that was done by bus.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you live your entire life, before you went off to World War II, did you live it in Sealy?

Mr. Krchnak: No, in 1930 Dad thought he could get a better farm. We were still living on my grandfather's farm, and so Dad was ready to get a farm of his own and there was a priest by the name of Quetom, Q-v-e-t-o-n or Q-u -- Queton. There's some of them people lived in Taylor with that name. He inherited--this priest inherited a farm in, I guess Brazoria County? Damon Hill; you know where Damon Hill is? You ever hear of Damon Hill?

Mr. Zambrano: No, I've never heard of that.

Mr. Krchnak: Damon Mound. Damon Mound is a salt dome between Meadville and West Columbia, of Texas. It's like a 50-foot or--I don't know how tall it is. Let's say 50 or 100 feet. It's a big--you can see it everywhere because it's all flatland prairies there. When they discovered oil, they found that if they drilled around the salt dome on the edges, they would hit oil. If you drilled in the top, you'd be hitting oil because was salt all the way down. (Chuckles). Our farm was in eyeball sight from our farm where we lived, and we lived about four miles, I would guess, four miles north of West Columbia and there was a road and across the road were farms and

the back of those farms bordered on the Brazos River. In 1932, we got wiped out by a hurricane. We lost everything. All our chickens; I don't know if we salvaged a hog or two, I don't know. And the cows, some of them drowned; the calves drowned. Horses made it; I think they all made it, and we moved back to Sealy. I stayed there in the Sealy area until I got drafted into the Army.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Tell me a little bit about when you do get drafted. Well, I guess you have. You're drafted; you go visit your father before you go off.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, before I go off, yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I almost forgot. Do you remember where you were, what you might have been doing when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked

Mr. Krchnak: By that time, we had a radio. It was operated--I think my mother bought it in '37 or '38, and a clock was never--she couldn't depend on the clock, and she was always pregnant with somebody, and she bought a radio that worked off of a six-volt battery. My Dad built a rack to carry on the side of a John Deere tractor, and installed a generator and a rack. He bought a split pulley to--we had to dismantle, disassemble the whole danged tractor to install the belt, so he bought a--one of them split belts--I forgot what they called them. I used them, too, later in my business. A split pulley, two pieces of pulley, screwed them together, and then you put that belt

on then, and while we were operating, we could work in the field with the tractor. Our battery was charged; we had two batteries, plus the car battery, and we could play the radio. If it was raining and we couldn't run the tractor, well, we just went without radio (chuckles). There was no electricity other than that battery, so for some reason, mama on Sunday morning, when the bombs went off in Pearl Harbor, we heard about it. No, we didn't hear; our battery was dead. Our neighbor said, "Did you hear? The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?" We didn't but it was news to us, and we thought something like that was going to happen anyhow. We got dressed and went on to church and then the priest told us at the Mass.

Mr. Zambrano: What was the reaction of the people around you?

Mr. Krchnak: They were ready to go kill Japs.

Mrs. Krchnak: When did Pearl Harbor--?

Mr. Krchnak: Ah, December 7th, forty, forty-one? Okay.

Mrs. Krchnak: So you were still at home.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, I wasn't drafted--I didn't turn 18 until '44.

Mr. Zambrano: So you were 18 when you went off?

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, there was a way to get into the Army a year earlier, but it wasn't the Army, it was the Navy, and I had a cousin that did that, and he was stuck on the USS Franklin.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh…

Mr. Krchnak: Y'all got it there. I went to look at it. He was in the engine room. He was in the engine room and they made, I think, two trips during the war. Of course, he was a year older, then he went in at 17 to get off that farm they were living in, in Engleton, Texas. He joined; they wouldn't let him sign the papers to get in the Army so he went and joined the Navy. Seventeen. He was in the engine room when they got bombed by the Japanese pretty bad. They had to come back up around Spokane or somewhere; I don't know, somewheres up there, and he came home to visit. He came to visit with me, and we talked and everything, and told me all about that, how life on the ships and everything. My folks were against me doing that. I wanted to, but in '43, '44, my Dad was doing all this construction work. There was no money on the farm. Mama and Dad sold the cattle; we had 30, 33 head of cattle. They sold all the cattle and they bought a little 10 acre place, with a house on it, and for about a year before I was drafted, I remember we lived in that. We were off the farm and living in that house, and I was able to go to school--I went to school every other year.

Mr. Zambrano: Every other year?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. I started my high school--well, high school. I started my high school and I went to school to register, because Dad was off working, so I had to do the farm work. I went back to school about seven weeks later. It was already past the six weeks exam. I was

called into the principal's office and he said, "You might as well go home. You're too far behind. You'll never catch up." So I went to school the next year, my freshman year. Then there was another year that I missed like that; I didn't pass because I didn't take the tests and I was out there pushing the John Deere tractor.

Mr. Zambrano: But, you ended up graduating from high school?

Mr. Krchnak: After--I got discharged in '46, in--the papers are in here somewhere, I don't remember the day. It was before they had their exams, and the principal went into the office and he said, "We'll give you credit for being in the Army. What schools did you go through?" Well, I went through the parachute school; he gave me credit. And the night school, four weeks of night school, I got a credit. And I think we snuck in another credit or two and I had to take five courses. He recommended that you could take six, but that was a full six classes a day. If you pass five of them, we'll give you a diploma. Well, in '47 I got my diploma.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! (Mr. Krchnak laughs). That's a different way to get your high school diploma. I don't think I've ever heard a story like that before.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, there was a Navy guy, Lowell Lewis, did the same thing. We graduated together, and we were in the school, and his parents, his parents had an accident in the late 30s, and they lost both their arms. His mother and his father, and he was like me, same age,

you see? So, he went in the Navy, and got discharged about the same time I did, or maybe before, and he needed a year to get his high school education. You couldn't go to college, and neither one of us had enough credits or Army time to pay us to go to college, so I took my high school on that and I still had my time left, but the junior college was in Brenham, Texas. I went up there; they told me, "Sealy?" They got my transcript and I wasn't smart enough to go to college, and I decided I was just going to go to work. I worked for about a year, year and a half, and the Korean War started. I buddied up with a guy who became my brother-in-law later, working for my uncle in the tractor shop. He was turning 18, and I was telling him because of my experience, all my knowledge, I was telling him, "Don't go in as a draftee. Go in the regular Army. You're a step above them draftees." We got off of work one afternoon and he had to go (unclear) and I kept telling him all this about, the draft was for two years with five years of reserve. Seven years; it was in 1947, '48. If you go in the regular Army, you can go for three years, do your duty, and you're out. But we didn't know that President Truman was going to extend our enlistment to four years (laughs). So both of us served four years. Yeah, he did his time in Korea, bad, too.

Mr. Zambrano Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. He had--he didn't get wounded or anything but by that time I was stationed in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. I had a cushy job. He was a dee-dee-dah-dee operator. He went through school in Camp Gordon, Georgia. He was one of the Army's--he was in the top three or four dee-dee-dah-dee boys.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, Morse Code?

Mr. Krchnak: Morse Code. He was assigned--I've forgotten what corps--he was assigned to the corps in Korea and they just worked at division levels. Sometimes regimental levels, his unit was the 229th Signal, Signal Infantry or something. I've forgotten what it was called.

Mr. Zambrano: Is it December 1944 that you're drafted?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, December.

Mr. Zambrano: And are you inducted in the same month?

Mr. Krchnak: Absolutely. That was the induction--the papers are in here.

Mr. Zambrano: Did any of your friends, well what friends did you have that might have been drafted at the same time?

Mr. Krchnak: Ooh. Yeah, but they--once I was 18 and I found out that the Army's not going to let me finish that year of high school, in '44, well it would have been spring of '45. They was going to draft--well all of the buddies that I had got drafted in February and March and I went in in December because I volunteered for enlistment. I just wanted to get it over with.

Mr. Zambrano: So you volunteered; you weren't drafted?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, well, it was a draft, but I volunteered for enlistment.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Krchnak: Because of the draft (laughs). There were guys that had that option. You know, they were all three of--by the time they were drafted I was already finished with my basic training and off at parachute school.

Mr. Zambrano: Can you tell me a little bit about basic training?

Mr. Krchnak: Ooh. We never wore shoes much on the farm, and even that year after we left school, we were still all barefooted. You were allowed to go to school barefooted but on cold days, we would wear shoes. I was inducted and sent to San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston, to get processed, and they fitted us with uniforms, clothes, and issued us all our equipment and fitted us for shoes. They fitted me for size 11 ½. I got to Camp Fannon, Texas after three or four, five days, a week, I don't know. Railroaded us to Tyler, Texas, Kilgore, Gladewater, I don't know, one of those towns. We got off and the Army picked us up and hauled us into Camp Fannon and we started our training. There was a lot of walking and marching and all that, and before I knew it, the shoes were too big. My callouses wore off; were beginning to wear off. So I stuck socks, I stuck a sock in the front of each shoe. That made it better. About three or four days later, the blisters got bigger on my heels and the side of my feet there, on the left side

and right side of each foot. I stuck another sock in there, so I had two socks stuck in the front of my shoes. I never knew that I could talk to a sergeant or someone or show him my feet. So we were marching down the road a long time; it was like a half a day march. And about ten o'clock, ten-thirty, he says, "How come you're lagging, you can't keep up?" I was, you know, my feet. He says, "Pull off your shoes." I pulled off my--he took one look at me, he had a thing and he called a jeep. Didn't send me to the infirmary; sent me to the quartermaster to fit me with shoes, blisters and all. From that day on, whenever that happened, I wore a 9 ½ and I'm still wearing a 9 ½ today (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Boy, they really mis-sized you.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. We used to joke about it, I did, you know, when you're talking, telling stories. When they say about face, you make an about face, but your shoes are still facing the (both laughing). It was a joke we had.

Mr. Zambrano: How long did this go on, with the wrong size boot?

Mr. Krchnak: You know, I don't know if it was two weeks or three weeks or four weeks. I don't know! I was in desperate shape; I thought maybe they might discharge me or something, because we had a guy, two weeks in basic training but he had some kind of a problem. The doctor, medical, they sent him home. But my feet blistered, but I never thought the shoes were that bad. I knew they were big but I

didn't know what to do about it. You know, you're off the farm, you ain't got no sense.

Mr. Zambrano: What else do you remember about basic training, for example, how did you do with the rifle?

Mr. Krchnak: I was pretty good. In that whole group of guys that were in that camp, and we were all together, started in early December and we graduated in March. We started basic training, must have been mid-December then. I would say seven, eight days, nine days after San Antonio. Of course, we spent about a week in San Antonio, I think. Eight, I don't know, ten days; I have no idea of those times. When we got on the--I was always stopped. There was another guy in another company, from Oklahoma, an Indian fellow; he and I became friends actually. In the qualifying stages, on the 500 yard range, bull's eye every time. Prone position, sitting position, kneeling position, then standing. Me, I hit seven times bull's eye; the other guy hit eight. He was just that one percentage, half a percentage fine better and there was nothing I could do to beat him (laughs). Sometimes we tied, you know, then we'd have a shoot off and the second or third round after that, he'd beat me (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Had you ever fired a rifle before?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. I, well, a .22. We had a .22 and Dad had a Long Tom, what we called a Long Tom shotgun, single shot, 12-gauge. The first time, my Dad showed me how to shoot it many times, and one day

they were going shopping and there were three prairie chickens in our field. He says, "While Mama and I are in town, why don't you go out there and see if you can get us a prairie chicken?" So, man, I got that old shotgun out and the damn prairie chicken flew up right in front of me. I must have been on the nest or something. Then I whipped that gun up; I didn't get it against my shoulder. The gun went off, the stock went under my armpit, and I wound up with a cut nose and lip. You know the old hammer had come down (laughs). A looking sad thing, Mom and Dad got me. Dad just grinned; he didn't say nothing (both laugh). But I never let that happen to me again. I was real good with a--grandpa had a double shot, hammerless 16-gauge, a Spanish made gun. I killed many a bird with that. I was good at quail and dove. We did that. But on the other ranges, other guns, they introduced us to the B.A.R. rifle, Browning Automatic Rifle, 20 rounds. I was good with it; I didn't like it. It was too heavy. You had to have a guy that carried the--

Mr. Zambrano: The ammunition?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, the rifle, plus the ammunition and you usually had two guys. Pack mules. I was good with it but the best gun that I liked was the Thompson submachine gun.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, yeah? Why?

Mr. Krchnak: It threw a 45-inch slug, and this sergeant gave us a demonstration. I followed his demonstration and when your target's sitting in front of you, you aim to put the first bullet right here. If you could get all rounds across that target, the gun always went up, no matter how you tried to hold it, it just did that. It just crawled up there. Of course, the bullets were going: boom, boom, boom, boom, boom! I could put all 20 rounds into that target, almost every time. The Indian fellow, that guy I told you, he did it every time! (Laughs). He was just that half a percentage point better. But we respected each other.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you remember his name?

Mr. Krchnak: I wish I could. I went off to parachute school; he went off to sniper school. I was scheduled to go to sniper school but I volunteered for the paratroopers, and I think they needed parachutists better than they--you could still become a sniper, even later, you know. I got to the Philippines and they sent us out to join our outfit, the 11th Airborne, and we were marching toward the front line. We had about an hour and a half, two hours to go to get there, you know, and relieve the guys on the front line. They turned us around and marched us back to the truck. Hell, we didn't know what was happening. They got another infantry outfit to replace the guys on the front line and they moved us in stages all the way to Okinawa by air. So that's how close I got to the front

line, just an hour and a half or two hour march walk. We heard the guns go off at night, especially the artillery and the mortars, booming, when we slept. On Okinawa, we just trained. They asked for volunteers to make low level jumps, and out of the guys that volunteered--I volunteered but I wasn't--third or fourth day down. By the time, in fact they stopped that thing about a day or so before my name came up to make that jump. They had 75-plus percent casualties, and they figured if they keep that up, and we were jumping like 250-300 feet. You're loaded with ammunition and everything, and you just don't have time.

Mr. Zambrano: That's not very high up.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, 400 feet was safe, or above 400 feet. They didn't want the shooter, the Japanese--we heard that the Japanese were going to be, everybody, grandmothers, babies and everybody's going to be armed with shotguns and they're going to pick us off as we'd land.

Mr. Zambrano: This was on Okinawa?

Mr. Krchnak: No, Japan.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, in Japan. Oh, okay.

Mr. Krchnak: We sat in Okinawa, and again, we didn't know it. We sat on Okinawa; they dropped the atomic bomb and I don't think I knew the atomic bomb was dropped until we got to Japan, or maybe the last day. They never told us nothing.

Mr. Zambrano: You just heard it along the way that the atomic bomb was dropped.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. I don't remember if I heard it before we left Okinawa or only after we got to Japan. I think by that time, we knew.

Mr. Zambrano: Just backing up a little bit to Camp Fannon, where you did your basic training. Is there anything else you remember about basic training?

Mr. Krchnak: Ooh, yeah, Christmas. My first Christmas away from home. Damn, I was the saddest guy you ever saw. Everybody got passes. People from as far as Ohio came to be with their guys, you know. And I was assigned to all them Yankees, me and a guy, what was his name? His last name was Krowiak; he was from the Polish community south of Karnes City, Karnes County. That community was established in the 1840s, during time when Texas was a republic, the Polish. You need to go down there and see the Panamaria, name of the community, the old church. It's interesting, and they made a bed and breakfast out of--I think, I don't remember; I think it's the school that they had there, the sisters or something. It's a bed and breakfast now. The church is there; I got pictures of it at the house. I'm a good fisherman and I go down to Port Aransas a lot, used to anyhow, for fishing, and we always drove through there. For me, it's interesting. But I looked for him after the war; I can't find him. Nobody in that area there knows that name. Some guy, "Oh, yeah, I don't know what happened to him" was the story I got.

Mr. Zambrano: What was his name again?

Mr. Krchnak: Krowiak, K-r-o-w-i-a-k, Krowiak.

Mr. Zambrano: So, you said that all these families are coming to visit soldiers during that--

Mr. Krchnak: So, after it was all done, there was only me and one or two other guys in the whole barracks. I decided I'm going to go talk to the company commander. I went up to talk to the company commander and he asked me where my folks live. He says, "How you going to get home?" I says, "I'm going to hitchhike." (Laughs). Hell, it ain't, what 100--how many miles is it from Sealy the back way through Brenham, Texas?

Mr. Zambrano: Gosh, I wouldn't know (laughs).

Mr. Krchnak: I didn't know the roads then, but I know them now, how to do it. He said, "Well, no, you're not going to make it in time, and we'll have to send you to jail and court martial you and everything else." He says, "You got any money?" I says, "No." He reached in his pocket and threw fifty cents on the table, and he said, "Here, go to the PX and have yourself a beer. That'll help you sleep." First beer I ever drank. I had two glasses of beer and I was so sleepy, I couldn't hardly walk back to the barracks. Ten cents a glass, so I wound up 30 cents to the good. (Both laugh).

Mr. Zambrano: Ten cents a glass; you couldn't buy a beer for ten cents these days.

Mr. Krchnak: That was PX beer, but it was beer. I think it was 3.2 percent. They had a low level on it during the war. Nobody liked it, the guys that knew. I didn't know. My grandpa was a beer maker, but all we had was just sips, you know, when there was a celebration, reunion, a wedding or something. Grandpa had--he was good for setting things like that up, crowds of people. Us kids, we'd sneak around and saw an empty glass, there was a swallow of beer left in the glass and the guy wasn't looking, whoop! (Laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: I think kids are always looking to do that at parties.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, we did that. My uncles, the teenagers and up into the early 20s, they were out there playing baseball. You wouldn't know what they used for bases.

Mr. Zambrano: What?

Mr. Krchnak: Dried cow turds. (Laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: I hope they weren't sliding into the bases.

Mr. Krchnak: They were, and my Uncle Frank and my Uncle Cyril, when a cow 20 feet away dropped a fresh load, they'd make everybody, nobody was looking, they'd go up, they'd pick it up and put the dry cow turd on top of it to hide it, and here comes that guy into second base and wham! (Both laugh). It was great fun; those were fun days.

Mr. Zambrano: Farm jokes, I guess.

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: When you're done with basic training, what do you go to next? Do you go to parachute school from basic training?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: And you volunteered during basic training?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. Yeah, I was in basic training. I was in basic training three or four weeks. Hell, my first paycheck was twenty-one dollars!

Mr. Zambrano: Was that a lot of money to you?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, it was, but I didn't get--I don't know how much--when I was inducted I decided I'm going to buy a War Bond, and the War Bond was $18.25? I don't remember. You buy an $18.25 or 50 cent War Bond and you cash it in ten years later, get $25.00, something like that; you got interest. So, you got to remember that I was inducted--my pay was short anyway, four or five days, December 4th or 5th or something on there, the day I was inducted. It's in here somewhere, I think, if I can find it. (Looking through some files). So my first pay was damn little, but you got to remember that this was December 24, I think, I was talking to the company commander. I had no money. I didn't even get a paycheck yet. Oh, this is the discharge, but the writing is so bad, I can't--

Mr. Zambrano: It's a copy.

Mr. Krchnak: I don't know; there's so many papers here.

Mr. Zambrano: I need to refer to my phone every now and then because I tried to print out some additional questions yesterday, but my printer at home didn't work. I know the first question I put on here was: Why did you decided to join the paratroopers?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, the money.

Mr. Zambrano: How much extra money was it?

Mr. Krchnak: Fifty bucks a month.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! Was your basic training cut short, or did you finish it and then go to paratroop school?

Mr. Krchnak: We finished it. The Battle of the Bulge started really bad, when we were in basic--about the middle of December, I think. I don't remember the day the battle, when the Germans made their push. They accelerated our basic training so that it wasn't 90 days long; it was only going to be six weeks long. We got up an hour earlier in the morning and we didn't go to bed until 8:30, 9:00 at night. Did all that training plus all the videos we had to watch and what to do and what not, bayonet fighting and all that, so that we'd have basic knowledge when we'd go push them Germans back. But we went on for about three or four weeks like that and we were getting close, you know, to being sent to Germany. During that time, I volunteered for the paratroopers, not to keep from going to Germany, but it was for the money and I had a cousin in the 101st Airborne. He volunteered to get into the Army a year before the

war started. They were asking for volunteers to help the British and whatnot. The German Luftwaffe was bombing England and everything. He volunteered when he was 17 or 18 years old, but he was five or six years older than me. He wound up with the 101st; when we got into the war, they invaded, they landed somewheres on the west coast of Africa. I used to know that town; they had a big naval station there to land those guys, and they went across the north coast of Africa, south of Spain into Tunisia and Libya, and that's where they had the big battles. He was in on that.

Mr. Zambrano: He was (unclear) North Africa.

Mr. Krchnak: North Africa and from there they went to Sicily. He got wounded in Sicily. The bullet went through the calves, just grazed them. It wasn't bad; I don't think it.--the bullet left like a knife mark across his--and he healed up from that and they went into France, jumped behind the lines on D-Day, and for that one he had to go to England. The bullet went through his buttocks, pretty bad. Didn't hit the bone, but went through the buttocks and he recovered in London in the military hospital, and he was back with his unit. Now, this part of the story, I don't know if it's true or not. But to hear him tell it, he was standing about 10, 20 feet away from the colonel that told the Germans, "Nuts!" when the Germans told him to surrender in the Bulge. I used to know that colonel's name; I don't remember it now.

Mr. Zambrano: Um, it starts with an "M" I think.

Mr. Krchnak: I think you're right.

Mrs. Krchnak: I used to know it, too. (Laughs). I've forgotten.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, that made world news, that "Nuts" to the Germans.

Mrs. Krchnak: Yeah, there were movies about him later.

Mr. Krchnak: He's dead now; in the end he couldn't talk. He just laid there like a vegetable, I heard.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, that's too bad.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: So, you decided to go to parachute school. I assume back then it was--was it at Fort Benning back then?

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah, that was the parachute school. The other one was the 82nd Airborne at Bragg, North Carolina. Fort Bragg. I never went to Fort Bragg. When I was stationed at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, I went to Fort Bragg on a special duty assignment. There was a guy that deserted, went AWOL from Fort Monmouth, and he got picked up, ran out of money and he got picked up in Laredo, Texas. They got him to Fort Bragg, North Carolina; I don't know how they got him there. Since he was stationed originally at Fort Monmouth, I was assigned the duty to go down there and pick him up and bring him back. So I rode a train down there, reported and picked him up. We got to be pretty friendly on the train going back; we'd talk and visit. He says, "You know, you're the first

guy I could talk to." He asked me questions and we answered them, and I made a report to his company commander, and he didn't get as much time as he thought he would. After his thing, he came and looked me up, and says, "Thank you for that, they straightened me out." And I don't remember his name, you know, things like that you do. I did that twice in my career, picked up prisoners.

Mr. Zambrano: This was after the war?

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah. This was at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey.

Mr. Zambrano: What year was that?

Mr. Krchnak: I was at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey from December--no, around the end of September when I went into the Signal School, enrolled. We enlisted, after the war, because of my Franklin, who was younger than me and I was telling him to enlist in the regular Army. That was in 1948, when the draft restarted for the Korean War. Franklin--I went to Fort Monmouth; Franklin had to take basic training first, which he took at Fort Ord, California. From there, he went to Camp Campbell?

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, yeah. That would be Kentucky.

Mr. Krchnak: No. It wasn't Kentucky. Maybe it was Bragg, I don't know. It was called the Southeastern Signal School for the Army. They needed communications people so bad that they had the Fort Monmouth, which was called The Signal School, and then they

had one in one of the Carolinas. I don't know; it might have been Bragg. I don't know. They established another one on the west coast, at San Luis Obispo; I don't remember the name of the place. San Luis Obispo. And I had a friend, we were stationed at Fort Benning--I mean Fort Monmouth--who got married and I was his best man at the wedding. He was sent there as an instructor to start the school in '50, '51, somewheres along in there. I stayed at Fort Monmouth and I started doing these TDY things, picking up prisoners and we went to Turkey and we taught the Turks how to use that equipment.

Mr. Zambrano: Can you tell me a little bit about what parachute school was like?

Mr. Krchnak: Tough. All physical. Pushups, side straddle hops and that was for two weeks. The third week we went physical training, run every--one hour run every day, I mean run, not jog. For a whole week, four hours a day, and then the other four hours was learning how to pack your chute and what to do when you jumped in and all that. The last week, all we had to do was a little physical training, two or three hours a day, made our jump, every day we made a jump, and we had to go back and pick up our parachute, take it with us and go to the hangar and repack them. We did that, except on one day; on Thursday I jumped out of that plane and there was a pretty strong wind. It blew me and another guy into the same tree. We were controlling our chute but we couldn't miss the tree. He says,

"You go right and I'll go left." I landed in the left side of the tree, and I was complaining to the field organizer, the sergeant, how I'm going to get that parachute. He says, "Don't worry about it; your parachute will be packed at the hangar tomorrow morning. You just pick it up." Friday morning I made my jump and the damn parachute was full of leaves. (Both laugh). Leaves flying everywhere! I don't know how they packed that parachute; there wasn't hardly enough room in there for the parachute, but the dang leaves were in there too.

Mr. Zambrano: You said before that normally you would pack your own parachute?

Mr. Krchnak: The first five jumps. The first five jumps, and in foreign countries, they usually, when you made a jump, you usually abandoned the parachute when you were under fire or something. They had people that would go around and collect them, the wounded, the dead and the parachutes and recover as much of the stuff as they could. That's what my cousin told me. Cyril, he's the one that did the--I never made a combat jump.

Mr. Zambrano: How many jumps did make--you said you made five jumps?

Mr. Krchnak: Seven. Well, there's seven for the training, and that's when I found out how smart I was. We got our diploma for the parachute school and they said, "From now on, you joined the group of the

elite. You know that you're 21.6 percent crazy to start with." (Both laugh).

Mr. Zambrano: What type of plane did you jump out of?

Mr. Krchnak: (Unclear) I think they were C-46s and they also were using C-47s. The planes that I jumped out of, I think, was a C-46, but it happened, but it was one of those two planes.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. What about--were they all day jumps? I think you mentioned something about night jumps.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, day. Well, I went back to Benning for the Ranger training, three weeks. Those were night jumps. We made them at night, and we didn't have to pack our chute the next day; they did it for us.

Mr. Zambrano: At one point, you left Fort Benning after parachute school and then came back?

Mr. Krchnak: Home leave.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, for home leave. How long were you at home for leave?

Mr. Krchnak: I think it was 18 or 19 days, I think. There was such a thing as air hitchhiking.

Mr. Zambrano: Air hitchhiking.

Mr. Krchnak: You went to the airport and you reported in, and they had all these guys training to be navigators and pilots, just flying from place to place, all over the country.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, yeah?

Mr. Krchnak: And all you had to do was report over there and luck. There was a group flying out of Orlando, Florida, they landed down there in Georgia to refuel, and loaded me on, I caught them, and dropped me off at Ellington Air Force Base. He landed, taxied to the side of the runway and opened the door and I jumped out, and he says, "There's the barb wire fence; you just crawl through the barb wire fence and hitch a ride into Houston.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, boy (laughs).

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, that's the way things were back then. I caught a bus; he went up there somewhere and made a turnaround and went back to Houston, downtown, where you jumped off that bus, city bus, and you got on the bus that went out west, as far as he would go. You would talk to them; they told me which number it was, and I think it was Addicks, Texas, I don't know, where he turned around and went back to Houston. I got off in Addicks and thumbed it into Sealy.

Mr. Zambrano: How long did all that take you?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, all in one day, from--I don't know, I don't remember the name of the town where this airfield was, the training field, in Georgia. I think it was still in Georgia; it might have been across the river in Mississippi, I don't know. I don't remember that part of it.

Mr. Zambrano: I bet your parents--your family was happy to see you.

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah. They didn't know I was coming. I showed up with my--it wasn't the 11th Airborne patch; you had a little round patch. I got one at the house, just a parachute on it, on your cap. The paratroopers, you had them eight-inch boots, or ten-inch boots, and you had a rubber band and you tucked your--

Mr. Zambrano: You bloused your pants.

Mr. Krchnak: You bloused your pants; I thought that was the cat's meow back then. (Both laugh).

Mr. Zambrano: Well, it's a good looking uniform.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. Oh, yeah. My daughter got me one of them; I got a little statue at the house in a glass box. The parachute bundle on your front, in case your main chute doesn't open, you pulled that handle; I never had to pull it. I know people that pulled it, and then they washed out of school.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, because, well they were making double sure they had--the one guy said, "I was just making sure I had a parachute on top of me" and he had two parachutes and the parachutes were fighting. We were seeing him come down; he actually almost hurt himself. He just lived; he didn't break his leg or anything but he sprained some ankles. I don't remember what it was, but he washed out. They didn't want guys like that.

Mr. Zambrano: Right. I can see, because that could get kind of dangerous. I mean, you need that spare in case the main doesn't open.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: So, you come back from leave and you go back to Fort Benning, you said, and then you start like Ranger school?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, it was what they called the night training. We had to make two night jumps and we just--it's just like basic training all over again with other stuff. A lot of hand-to-hand combat, we learned how to sneak up on a guy and grab--like you see in the movies today, and this and that. But back then, you didn't choke him--well, you did in training but they didn't want you to choke him to put him to sleep; they wanted you to crack his neck, when you got into combat, you know.

Mr. Zambrano: What month and year is this? I'm just trying to keep track of the timeline.

Mr. Krchnak: That would have been April, May, in there somewhere, my time off, back to the thing, and we--excuse me. I didn't bring my water. (To Mrs. Krchnak): You want to go get it for me? I got to have some water.

Mr. Zambrano: How long were you at this Ranger training?

Mr. Krchnak: Three weeks.

Mr. Zambrano: Three weeks.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, I'm not sure; I don't remember if it was two weeks or three weeks. All I remember for sure we made two night jumps. But I think the training was three weeks, or somewhere between two weeks and three weeks. They loaded us on a train after that, straight to Fort Ord, California, across the desert. First time I got off that train was somewheres in Arizona. They let us get off the train for 15-20 minutes to walk, up and down the train. They only told us we could go so many cars away, because once they sounded the whistle we had to be back in the car. The next time we got off that train was in Fort Ord, California. We saw some movies and the checked us all out, loaded us on the train and hauled us to one of the warehouses in the--in San Francisco and loaded us. I don't know how many days it took them to--we spent one night, I think, in the warehouse, one of the shipping warehouses in San Francisco; I don't remember where. Then at the same time, they were loading them up on a ship, marching us up, and assigned us a bunk in the ship, and we went to Pearl Harbor. We anchored in Pearl Harbor around all them ships that the Japanese sank, and for two days, barges come alongside, brought us water and fuel and stuff, and we headed for the--I didn't know it at the time, but the next place we anchored was at Eniwetok. We were like three, four, five miles offshore. We could see Eniwetok on the horizon. Oh, no, no, not Eniwetok.

Mr. Zambrano: Kwajalein?

Mr. Krchnak: Kwajalein, Kwajalein. Again, the barges came alongside with the water and they supplied us. When we left Pearl Harbor, we had an escort ship in front of us. I don't know what it's called, sub chaser or something, and he zig-zagged in front of us, we were sailing on behind him at eight or ten knots an hour and he was much faster; he could zig-zag. When we left Kwajalein, we had three of them, one zig-zagging in front of us and one on each side doing that--going two or three miles behind us and just speeding--escorting. They didn't want them Japs to sink us; we were high-priced material back then, you know? We left Kwajalein and we traveled along to the south of the Philippines somewheres, and came up into Manila. But Manila was only opened--before, everything was don off of anchors offshore, but they managed to clear enough of it by the time we got there in '44 - '45, and that was, I think, in June.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Krchnak: Sometimes in June.

Mr. Zambrano: By that point, Manila--I'm sorry.

Mr. Krchnak: Manila was liberated. They were still fighting, I think it was on the south side of Manila, where the mountain and the jungles were, and that's where the front line was. And that's where I was headed to join my outfit. We spent eight, I guess about a week, maybe more, at that repo depot in Manila, that was surrounded, this repo

depot was surrounded by two barbed wire fences, eight or ten feet high, I would think, about three feet apart. On the outside of that second fence was jungle, where we were. Us rookies were--we had a 100 yard march; 100 or 200, I don't remember. Alongside that fence, you met your thing and that guy was walking that perimeter and you were walking this perimeter, four hours.

Mr. Zambrano: Guard duty?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, guard duty. With loaded guns. And the instructions were: you never point your gun towards the base, unless the Japs invaded. But if you hear a noise, dog or cat or human being or monkey or whatever it is, you don't ask questions, you don't say "Halt!," you just open up with your rifle. All night long, there would be somebody letting off five or--some guys probably did it just because they were scared and wanted to do it, macho guys. But there was a lot of fire; almost every night we were in that camp, somewhere you could wake up. Everybody jumped up; your instructions were to jump up and grab your gun and be ready, and wait for further orders, you see. That happened almost every night. I don't know if they did that on purpose or get us ready for the front lines (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: It could've been nerves, too. (Unclear, both talking together).

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah, a lot of nerves, yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: Just backing up a little bit; when you're crossing over on these ships, what's it like on those ships?

Mr. Krchnak: It was real nice going there, quiet, nobody got seasick. We played a lot of canasta, pinochle. I learned how to play pinochle. Hearts, you know the game hearts?

Mr. Zambrano: I've heard of it, yes.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, the black widow, the widow of spades. Hearts, and the guys that had money, they gambled until they lost it, and then in the end, you go over the whole dang ship, you couldn't find a poker game or blackjack game. They were all done (chuckles). One or two guys had all the money; the rest of them, they weren't gambling, you know?

Mr. Zambrano: They weren't going to let it slip between their fingers.

Mr. Krchnak: Right. Well, the smart ones; the crooked ones or something. That was it. That was it. Every now and then they would show--you could go see a movie. I think it was in the mess hall, I think.

Mr. Zambrano: Were these--they weren't all paratroopers who were coming over on the same ship, were they?

Mr. Krchnak: I don't think so, but there was a hell of a lot of us, that went to the 11th Airborne. I guess some were probably infantry and Marines.

Mr. Zambrano: What would you describe the general attitude of the paratrooper?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, we felt like we could handle three Marines. Marines can handle three GIs, but a paratrooper can handle three Marines

(laughs). That was the attitude. We don't go--there was some guy, the bullies, you know. You would be standing in the chow line, and you would feel a tap on your shoulder; you turn around and another guy would be--his fist was flying right for your face. I never ducked, and I had a couple of guys that got within an inch of my face. I just looked them in the eye, and I was never bothered.

Mr. Zambrano: Why would they do that?

Mr. Krchnak: Bullies. Bullies. They got to show that they're better than you. Under all circumstances. There ain't no in-between, just like this fight with the ISIS and the thing, and our Republicans--McCain, the president ain't doing no good job, you know. I heard a campaign speech the other day, just three or four days ago. He ran in the--two years ago, a guy named Santorum?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I remember him.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, do you watch MSNBC or CNN?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I flip around the stations.

Mr. Krchnak: A little bit? Santorum got up and made a speech. I listened to part of it. His speech said that we've got to get rid of Obama; he's a dishrag, washrag. What we need to do instead of just these drone things, knocking out every now and then or supporting the Kurds or something in there. We need to go over there and saturate bomb them like we did in World War II, back into the sixth and seventh

century, or the fifth and sixth, just bomb them into oblivion. I don't know; would you do that?

Mr. Zambrano: I don't know. Seems like a lot of bluster, really, especially when you're running for president.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, they think that they're going to get back into that White House with that type of method, that speech. I don't know; is it going to work? I don't know.

Mr. Zambrano: Unclear. Both speaking together.

Mr. Krchnak: I'm talking to you; I don't even know if you're a Republican or a Democrat, or Independent or liberal or what.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I think of myself as a Texan.

Mr. Krchnak: A Texan?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah. Sure.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, you know, that's the way I went into basic training, and other than one or two guys, this guy the Polack from Karnes City, everybody was from Ohio.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. And then when I got to Indiana, in that part of the world, you know, it was hell living with them Yankees. (Both laugh). You know, you're a Texan; you're not a rebel or nothing, but you're a Texan; you're different.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, there is a difference. Let's see, when you--obviously when you get to the Philippines, you joined the 11th Airborne. Do you remember your specific unit?

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah. It was--well, I didn't really join my unit until we got to Okinawa.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, we were going there to join them and you know we were still replacements. It was Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 188th Parachute Regiment.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. Let's see, because I was looking on the website, 188th. Do you recognize, well, Colonel Robert Soule? Does that name sound familiar?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, later on, I remember a LaFlamme.

Mr. Zambrano: LaFlamme?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, Colonel LaFlamme from Louisiana.

Mr. Zambrano: You don't remember his first name, do you?

Mr. Krchnak: No.

Mr. Zambrano: 188th Parachute Infantry Regiment.

Mr. Krchnak: Right.

Mr. Zambrano: You said Headquarters Headquarters Company.

Mr. Krchnak: Headquarters and Headquarters. After that, there was Company "A", Company "B" and Company "C". That created the First Battalion. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, First

Battalion. And then you had the Second Battalion and the Third Battalion, which made the 188th Regiment.

Mr. Zambrano: The regiment, okay. Let's go back to the Philippines a little bit. You were mentioning about how you were being marched up to the front but then you all got called back and you weren't sure why?

Mr. Krchnak: Not really. We all kind of wondered what happened and the funny part of it was, they hauled, the truck hauled us to Clark Field.

Mr. Zambrano: Clark Field, okay.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, that's somewheres--I think it's somewheres north of Manila but I'm not 100 percent sure. We slept under the airplane, under the wing, on the ground. The weather happened to be nice. We didn't have to pitch tents or anything; we just slept out in the open, under the wings of the airplane, a planeload of us. I don't know--we didn't know nobody. We were all replacements, you see. There might have been some 11th Airborne guys there, too; I don't know, at that point. And we flew into Okinawa, and we slept under the wings of that airplane on Okinawa, on the edge of the bluff. Where the runway was built, there was a row of hills back there. The runway was built and when the airplanes flew off that runway, at the end of that runway, some wheels were still on the ground. The airplane still hadn't cleared; the wheels hadn't left. It was a bluff and there was a canyon, a valley, with another row of

hills up ahead, 10 or 12 miles away, and one night, one of them bombers didn't make it. We saw the flash; in fact, I didn't see it happen but a buddy of mine, he says, "Hey, look at that flash!" And another guy said, "That plane must have not made it, because his wheels were still on the ground when he flew off that runway." They had 12 miles to gain altitude and keep climbing and go on their bombing run. At that time, all there was left to bomb was Japan. I saw many planes; we were there under the wings of that airplane for three, four, five days, I have no idea, but we were there several nights.

Mr. Zambrano: Up on Okinawa.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. And then they moved us back over that range of hills we saw, or somewheres, back away from the ocean, and that's where we bivouacked. That's where they were asking us to volunteer for them low-level jumps. We were practicing to invade. By that time, we knew were going in Japan; we still didn't know that peace was signed or nothing like that. I don't remember at this point whether we were ahead of the bomb or after the bomb. All I know is that one day, we get the call and they hauled us out to the airplane, and we were all flabbergasted and shocked. The airplanes were nice, shiny, silver-color C-54s. Everybody was looking, "How we gonna jump out of that?" We had our parachutes on, we marched on, and we flew into Japan, Atsugi, and

my plane landed about 10 o'clock. I had a card in my wallet but it's all disappeared.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, you told me about that.

Mr. Krchnak: Signed by General MacArthur. August 31--not the 31st, August 30th, we started the invasion on August 30th, three divisions, the 11th, the 1st Marine, and the 1st Cav. I don't remember if it was the 1st Marine or the 3rd Marine. It was one of them two Marines. Instead of jumping, we landed on the ground and walked off the airplane with our parachutes on (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: You didn't get a chance to use them.

Mr. Krchnak: No, we didn't! There was a guy there with a roster and a clipboard and he said, "Your name?" And I told him, and he says, "You see that pillbox over there?" Quarter of a mile or half a mile, I don't remember. He says, "That's your assignment." He X-ed it, and the next guy off the plane, he did the same thing to that bunch of guys. So a squad of us went over there and took over that pillbox. There was nobody there. The big gun was there, and they told us to dismantle that gun. Take the breech lock out of it; do anything you can so that gun can't fire. Pretty soon, the telephone rang, and we all looked at each other; what do we do? So I picked it up; I said, "Hello." And there was a girl, Japanese voice, saying, "Mushi, mushi (unclear)." They pulled the Japanese out of there, you know. She might have been wanting to talk to her husband, or

I don't know, or passed some instructions, but the Japanese were gone. They were all gone. And we disabled--and we just kept leapfrogging each other. As the planes were landing, just increasing the perimeter into the Japanese territory around Atsugi. After two days, they loaded two truckloads of us, two or three, I don't remember. They had these trucks there, and they asked for volunteers, "Can anybody drive this Japanese truck?" We had some guys there from Kansas, and Nebraska and Ohio, that used steam, how to work steam tractors on the farms. We didn't do that here in Texas. I said, "Well, I can drive it, but how do you stop that thing?" These vehicles worked on charcoal fumes.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. You had charcoal and you had to take a blowtorch to heat that charcoal to start a fire and it would keep that charcoal going, and once you got them fumes up high enough, you poured a little benzene or high-level gasoline into the carburetor, and you cranked it and if it ran, you had it going. If it didn't, you waited a half a minute or so and got these fumes going what was the right level and you gave it another crank. We took off; it was about eight--they moved us at night, they didn't want--and, I didn't know where we were going but the company commander knew. We were sent out to a naval gun the Japanese had imbedded in the mountain, the barrel of the gun facing out over the bay or the ocean where the

ships were. Our only job, well it was also a warehouse. There was a stack of infantry Japanese rifles, I would say two or three hundred feet long. That was the butts of the rifle, and another row of rifles, the barrels pointed at each other, just laying there on a stack, and then there was an aisle, and they had machine guns like that. They had rows of samurai swords. The Japanese infantry, they taught with samurai swords, their basic training. There was also special-type rifles for the officers to wear. They had some Czech rifles there that were supposed to be real good, but none of us could get ahold of--the officers got all them (laughs). Well, I came home with a Japanese rifle, a samurai sword and a bayonet.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: Do you still have all those?

Mr. Krchnak: I sold them to my dentist two years ago? Three years ago?

Mrs. Krchnak: Two years in March.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. We had to spend a lot of money on her eyeballs and my eyeballs, and teeth work, her teeth work, and this was before I had my eyeballs fixed. I couldn't see the front end, squint down the sight: I couldn't see the sight on the front of the barrel, so I got rid of all my rifles. I had a Winchester '73, what was that, '93, the model guns?

Mr. Zambrano: Seventy-six, maybe?

Mr. Krchnak: No, no. Later model. Lever action. Well, maybe it was ’76 or ’73. These were the commemorative guns. Back after World War II, they were usually commemorating some battle with the Indians or the railroad. Well, I bought the golden spike. It was gold-plated, not the barrel or anything, but the thing was gold-plated with--you know what the golden spike signifies?

Mr. Zambrano: Right.

Mr. Krchnak: Where the two railroads crossed, transcontinental railroads.

Mr. Zambrano: (Unclear).

Mr. Krchnak: Where they met. I don’t know if it was in Montana or Idaho; I don’t know where they met. But that’s where they drove that golden spike, and I had that rifle. Never been shot.

Mrs. Krchnak: Still in the box.

Mr. Krchnak: It was still in the box. The box was the kind of thing, and I sold it to this dental surgeon, that does the implants. If you ever need implant work, he’s good.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay.

Mr. Krchnak: What was--you know where that clinic is.

Mrs. Krchnak: Mm-hmm. Dr. Gordon.

Mr. Krchnak: I know, but your doctor; he was the owner of that clinic.

Mrs. Krchnak: Yeah, I can’t remember.

Mr. Krchnak: The guy that was married to a--his mother was Bohemian or something. They’re up there off of Burnet Road, going south.

Mrs. Krchnak: Around 40th Street.

Mr. Krchnak: Somewheres around 40th, 42nd Street. It's south of 45th Street, not too far.

Mr. Zambrano: You know, it's funny that you mention that. In your time during World War II, did you ever have to see a doctor or a dentist at that time?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, I had to go to the infirmary at that repo depot in Manila.

Mr. Zambrano: Why?

Mr. Krchnak: The nights were cold over there. I thought it was a jungle; it was, but the nights were cold, and they used coal to--well, at Camp Wood outside Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, they also used those burners, coal burners, big old pot-bellied things that we would use wood here in Texas. They used coal. Every so many days, on the outside of the barracks was a 55-gallon drum, and that's where the ashes were put every day as they cleaned that thing to start the next fire for the next night. Only used them at night to warm up the barracks. I got put on that detail to empty--there were three of us, or four. You know them big wheeled carts with a flatbed in the middle and a place where you hook a horse to in the front? Well, we weren't using horses; we used men. Them carts were big enough to load three 55-gallon drums of that ash on that cart, and that dang wheel is so big that the thing was about this high or so off the ground, maybe higher.

Mr. Zambrano: Like three or four feet?

Mr. Krchnak: I would say yeah, about that high. That would make it about three and a half, four feet high. I got paired up with a guy that's two feet shorter than me. (Mr. Zambrano laughs). He on one side of that barrel and I on the other side had to pick that barrel up and not throw it in there; we had to hoist it up. You had to do it in such a way that you got your hand off the bottom before you let it go. Either I was too slow or he was too quick or something; it took the skin off my two fingers here, from that knuckle to that knuckle and that knuckle to that knuckle on that hand.

Mr. Zambrano: Your left hand.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. Just took the skin right off. They told me--pointed out where the dispensary was; go down there and get myself fixed. That guy took a look at it, and he took some hydrogen peroxide, just poured it on there, but nothing happened. I never felt nothing. Well, you feel it, but then he took plain ordinary rubbing alcohol and poured it on there and (laughs). I went sky-high, but I'm a paratrooper; I can take it. They wrapped me up and I healed up, but I never got that detail again.

Mr. Zambrano: It was hot as you were lifting it up? Is that why your skin came off like that?

Mr. Krchnak: No. Well, a 55-gallon drum is heavy. And then I'm paired up with this guy that's a foot and a half to two feet shorter than me.

But we're both strong as bulls, you know. We just mistimed it. I did. I never had to do such a thing in my whole life. I never had no training for that kind of work.

Mr. Zambrano: I don't know if there's any training for that.

Mr. Krchnak: Just plain old brutal, physical labor.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you ever actually go into Manila when you were in the Philippines?

Mr. Krchnak: The only way they would allow us to go to Manila was, not the time. There was like a bayou or something, and all the houses were built, like in Louisiana, on stilts. We walked through there and we had to carry our rifles because the Japanese could be anywhere. They didn't want us to put a round into the barrel, just a clip in the gun and then you had to load it, carbine or the M-1. We marched around there and they had these houses and kids and people were waving at us. But they were up high, and they had no shame. They needed to go, they just dropped their ass over the edge of the thing and just dropped down on the floor, and they've got to walk around through it. I thought, what a bad way to live, you know. But I never saw anything of Manila. We weren't allowed. The Japanese were everywhere, you know (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: What did you think of the Filipino people, at least other than what you told me?

Mr. Krchnak: We never got to talk to any of them, meet any of them, in the Philippines. Like I said, I just remember the time in the repo depot and the--I think we took two or three walks around. I guess they paraded us around; I don't know why.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you ever see any Japanese prisoners of war?

Mr. Krchnak: Dead ones. When we got to Okinawa, the Marines assaulted that beach on the front, and were parked on the back side of that ridge where we bivouacked, waiting to go to Japan. That whole ridge thing was honeycombed with tunnels and five or six-man things, and machine guns, still there, machine guns still there with ammunition, pointing out. Some of them had a little slot, like you saw them German pillboxes? Well, they were the same kind of thing there in Japan. When we got there, all those Japanese, they used flamethrowers to get them out of there. They didn't get them out. They just disabled it. They went ashore and in most all caves where they had five and six-man crews; they buried our guys. They had little white crosses all over that battlefield, battleground, where that Japanese machine gun was, clusters of these white crosses. The Japanese, there was a big box and they just dumped the bodies into the big box, and we had strict instructions not to touch them, because you never know which one of them is booby-trapped. The Japanese would throw--they would do it. They were dead; they'd hid a bomb under the bottom body and with--you

removed the weight, it triggers the bomb. So I went into three or four of those caves and I saw enough. It was all I wanted to see. Some of them guys, they were in there after stuff, and there were two lieutenants and a first sergeant. They should have known better; they'd been there a long time. They were looking for artifacts, and they were lucky. They found some. We never knew it but they did, and they went into this one cave and we were sitting down to eat our lunch. We weren't--that's when I found about the K-1 Ration. You know the C-Ration? You know the K-Ration?

Mr. Zambrano: Yep.

Mr. Krchnak: Okay. In the Philippines, we were eating C-Rations, mostly from Australia. You ever eat any Australian-packed mutton and stuff?

Mr. Zambrano: No. How was that?

Mr. Krchnak: Like eating a raw persimmon (laughs). At least, that's what I felt like. It'd suck your mouth together, the grease. You couldn't get it hot enough, you know, fire enough. Some of it was good, the spaghetti and stuff, the American stuff, it was good, but that Australian stuff, it was terrible. But we ate it; we had to. When we got to Okinawa, they gave us K-Rations. One little box last you a week, it was, I think. You had your breakfast and your lunch in your dinner in three little squares in a part of that box, and that was every day. I think it was a week, but I'm not sure exactly how

long that K-Ration that they used. We all liked that, and there were even two cigarettes or something?

Mr. Zambrano: Cigarette packs?

Mr. Krchnak: Not the pack but just a little thing, cigarette a day or two cigarettes a day. Of course, I traded them off for candy; I didn't smoke, and things like that. So we all liked the K-Ration over there.

Mr. Zambrano: As I was reading before we did our interview, why is the 11th Airborne referred as to "The Angels?"

Mr. Krchnak: Well, you're a flier. You float down out of the sky, all paratroopers, you know. They go into bars and they brag. We got somewheres in the Philippines, we were kind of, you know, the military were segregated from the black to the--back then. The airborne guys, the regular Army guys, the guys that were there before me, they went through Leyte and Mindanao on the fights, fighting the Japanese, coming up through the jungle everywhere. They hated when they got to a town, the black guys got all the girls.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, and the story was like this. The Japanese people would ask, "How come you're black and how come you're white?" You know, in a bar, these soldiers, you'd kind of mingle a little bit but not too much. But it's sociable, you know. The black guy says,

"Oh, they raised us that way so that we would be the night fighters." (Both laugh).

Mr. Zambrano: This was in Japan, or the Philippines?

Mr. Krchnak: In the Philippines.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, the Philippines.

Mr. Krchnak: But I never got to see a bar or nothing. I'm just repeating stories that I heard over a campfire in Okinawa and Japan, you know (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Let's see. What would you wear? What would you wear; what would you carry with you most of the time?

Mr. Krchnak: Your duffle bag, whatever the Army gave you. Most of the time during the day, we would be in fatigues. They wanted us to have a uniform whenever there was a parade on Saturday morning or something. Show our finery off, you know. In Japan, the first three or four months we were there, they would organize us in, usually like two squads, never less than two squads, for about the first month or two, just to show us off to the Japanese people, out in the country, away. There were places there where they still hadn't seen an American. After a while, it was cut down to a squad and then after a while, a few weeks later or a month later or something, you were allowed to go out in groups of three or five, but always have your gun loaded. Up until about three or four

months after the war our guns were loaded, and after that we didn't have to load them anymore.

Mr. Zambrano: What did you think about Japan, when you got there?

Mr. Krchnak: I was intrigued. It was a different way, completely different way of life. I used it more for an education than anything. I got along with them. There were guys that hated the Japs, just like guys that hate the colored; go across the street just to bash heads. At Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, I paired up with a couple of guys, New Jersey guys, they were both from New Jersey, in the Signal Corps. They would go out barhopping just to look for queers, and bash them. You know, talk to queers, you'd bash them (laughs). I never heard of such a thing, that was the craziest thing. I disowned myself from them damn quick. We went out to Red Bank – not Red Bank, Long Branch. We had a couple of beers; nothing was happening, so we went back, but I didn't know they did that before. I just learned that by being with them. We stopped for a couple of beers; we got off the bus at the west gate, but instead of riding all the way to the west gate, there was a little town there. There was a bar there, your last chance to have a beer before you got on base. So we had a couple of beers, and it was only a block and a half walk from there to the main gate, what we called the main gate. Across the road from main gate, there were parking lots everywhere. So these guys, I heard them talking but I didn't

understand what they were mumbling to each other. One guy said, "Well, I'll take this corner and go down that way across the parking lot. You take this corner and go across there." And I didn't know what they--they went through that parking lot snapping antennas.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: I was with them; I didn't do it. Next day the police are checking, talking to everybody, "Do you know who did it? You got any idea? Can you point us in the lead?" I kept my mouth shut; I didn't know what to do. To this day I worry about it. I couldn't do a thing like that.

Mr. Zambrano: And this was at Fort Monmouth?

Mr. Krchnak: It was at Fort Monmouth. That's the way these guys are.

Mr. Zambrano: Just looking for trouble.

Mr. Krchnak: Looking--yeah. They're either looking for--if they don't have blacks to pick on, they're picking up--to this day, they're doing the--we never used the word homosexual, they're queer. A woman was a lesbian. You knew by looking at her she was lesbian, because she had that haircut like a man.

Mrs. Krchnak: (Laughs). Which is not true.

Mr. Krchnak: Not it's not. I knew that wasn't true, because (laughs) I had aunts that had babies and raised a big family that had their hair cut like a

man. I often wondered why they did that but you know, it's so hard especially women with long hair, you know?

Mr. Zambrano: What else do you recollect about Japan? How long were you there?

Mr. Krchnak: We went in in August and I left in October the following year, or September. The papers are in here somewhere. Exactly, I think it was September, near the end of September or October when I left there.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. And you would just basically go on these patrols, just to kind of make it look good?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. Well, we went on a--they finally organized to where you had--I told you a paratrooper has to jump once every 90 days to qualify, keep his jump pay up. Here it was, almost a year. For most of the guys in the division it was like two, two and a half years before they made a jump. But they kept getting their money because of war conditions, you know. So we went there; we all knew we were going over there to make our jump. We were marching, and the last day before we got to the spot where the training was supposed to be held, we stopped for a break and on both sides of the road were tangerine orchards. We all wanted them tangerines; they were ripe, you know, in late September, October. The company commander, battalion commander, LaFlamme, they had a conference with the company commanders,

and they made a deal with the landowners that owned those orchards to supply six tangerines per soldier. I put three in this fatigues pocket, you know, and three in that one, got back to my knapsack and we all started peeling tangerines and eating them, and the guy in our outfit, I'll never forget that guy; I forget everybody else's name but not his: Doude. His name is D-o-u-d-e. I don't remember his first name. He had the rank of corporal. He's been demoted in the Army prior to my knowing him, several times. He was on his way back up again. He's been in the regular Army for about 12 years or more. (Mr. Zambrano laughs). We called him grandpa. We were all just past our 19th birthday, you know, and he says, "What are you peeling them tangerines for? The taste is in the peeling." You know what that peeling was covered with?

Mr. Zambrano: What?

Mr. Krchnak: Atomic radiation. I got a bad thyroid ever since then because of it. We ate them tangerines; the guys that ate the skins, about 300 of us or something like that. Well some of them got it just from their fingers touching other food and eating it that way. But some of them got that radiation so bad that their whole body was covered with splotches of red, about that size. Really. It's like hell, uncomfortable. You couldn't carry your backpack, so they got an empty two and a half ton truck with big sides and a trailer, and

carried all our backpacks while we marched. About, I don't know, 25 or 50 or 100 of them, of these guys, couldn't even walk the next day. They had it everywhere, down their crotch and--real bad where the medics deemed that he wasn't fit to walk. So they hauled them off to a hospital or clinic or somewhere. The rest of us went on to training, to make our jump, what we thought. It wasn't a jump; it was five-day long parachute school. Actually, it was like 10, 11 days. We got there; they were indoctrinating us and showing us the gliders and everything, and they we had to make five glider rides. I don't know if I have that piece of paper in here. Somewheres in all this paperwork, I got one of these certificates that I qualified as a gliderman.

Mr. Zambrano: Can I see it?

Mr. Krchnak: I don't know where they are. I separated this at the house. This is my--I need my glasses. I got my eyes fixed; I can drive, shoot a rifle, but I can't read. Gotta have glasses. This is the day I got discharged from Fort Monmouth.

Mr. Zambrano: This is 1952, so--

Mr. Krchnak: That's after--well, I spent a total of seven and a half years in the Army in two different parts. Coupled together, because in the time together, I did the National Guard. My discharge--

Mr. Zambrano: So it says here--

Mr. Krchnak: This is a discharge from the 11th Airborne Division; I can see it there. I think that's my discharge. Separation, record of separation.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, that was your initial--

Mrs. Krchnak: One of them has 1946.

Mr. Krchnak: This is a copy; one of these is a copy of that.

Mr. Zambrano: So, you got out of the Army in 1952?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. All right. The day before I got this discharge, they sent me into a lieutenant colonel's office. I don't remember his name, but I never got anything in writing; it was just word, so you'll have to take my word for it. While I was in the Army at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, I had a lot of spare time being attached to this unit and that unit. My company commander was in Washington, DC, the group of us. We were used as a base for people that they needed for TDY. I did this pick up prisoners twice; I was scheduled to go to Spain, but because of my middle name conflict on my passport, I couldn't get the passport issued. I mean on my birth certificate. So I missed a trip to Spain because of that. I also missed a trip to set up; they set up a route. You've heard of the Cold War and Berlin was surrounded by Russians and we had to--what did they call that, keep Berlin alive with supplies?

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, the Berlin Airlift?

Mr. Krchnak: The Berlin Airlift. Well, they got us at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey to set up a detachment and it was right down our alley. I was one of those guys to set up a direct communication landline link, using our equipment, from La Havre in France, southern France on the Atlantic Ocean, La Havre? From there across France into Germany to the front lines where the supplies were hauled by truck, or to the airfield, and then they were flown over the Russians into Berlin. I missed it; those guys had to have a diplomatic passport because those guys had to travel, you know, and they couldn't do it in the Army. You had the Army uniform on but you still had to have--and then I finally got to go to Turkey. We got my birth certificate all squared up, all the paperwork. I lost my middle name and I became an Adolph (both laugh). My grandfather was named Frank.

Mr. Zambrano: So I'll make a note here, the Berlin Airlift.

Mrs. Krchnak: It's on his second tour.

Mr. Krchnak: That was my second tour. This is my--I don't know what this second page is (shuffling through paperwork). Oh, okay. Here it is. You can read it there. That's the discharge paper, and that was in 1946.

Mr. Zambrano: 1946. Okay, so this one, honorable discharge, the initial here, Adolph F. Krchnak.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, that was my first enlistment, yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, First Company, First Battalion, 188th Parachute Regiment, 11th Airborne Division. Okay, so you're discharged on the--oh, here's a corporal.

Mr. Krchnak: Sixteenth of November, '46.

Mr. Zambrano: At Fort Sam Houston.

Mr. Krchnak: Okay, but that was the final day of my enlistment. I was let go on furlough, home leave, before that, and that's the reason I could get into my high school in time with all these credits I told you to get my diploma in 1947. And this is the same thing, another copy of that same thing. This must be the official copy because it's stamped.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, I would think so.

Mr. Krchnak: That must be just a photostatic copy there. And here is that birth certificate I'm telling you about.

Mr. Zambrano: Actually, they're a little bit different here, this--

Mr. Krchnak: I don't know.

Mr. Zambrano: Because here it says DD-214.

Mr. Krchnak: That's right, the DD-214.

Mr. Zambrano: And this is a WDAGO form. So this is the same as, I think, this one right here.

Mr. Krchnak: Could be, could be. Because I was making photostatic copies. Every time you did something you had to--this is the paperwork we used to drop my middle name (laughs), to get my diplomatic

passport. We forgot to bring the diplomatic--I'm proud of that thing! I think we still have it; I'm not sure.

Mrs. Krchnak: I'm not sure.

Mr. Zambrano: You went to so much trouble to get it, so you want to hold onto it.

Mrs. Krchnak: Well, I have a whole folder of passports because he used to travel all over the world.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mrs. Krchnak: After all this.

Mr. Zambrano: I just want to take a look at your DD-214 here real quick. Oh, okay, so it sounds like--were you in the Army from '44 to '52, or was there a tiny break there?

Mr. Krchnak: There was a break there when I went to high school, but the reason it looks complete like that is because I had been in the National Guard between '46 and '48.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. Ah, all right. Which National Guard unit?

Mr. Krchnak: I have no idea.

Mr. Zambrano: But it wasn't here in Texas?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was out of San Antonio. That's where they talked me into it when I was getting my separation in San Antonio.

Mr. Zambrano: How did they like talking people into (unclear)?

Mr. Krchnak: (Laughs). When I was in Sealy, that's where I was home in high school, there was a guy that came down from Houston, and my

uncle owned an airplane, an Air Coupe. I'm lacking two flights in that Air Coupe of being a licensed Air Coupe pilot.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. I never finished because I ran out of money (chuckles).

Mr. Zambrano: Here, you mentioned this a little bit earlier, I guess at Fort Monmouth you were--were you a teletype repairman?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. It was called single channel teletype repair.

Mr. Zambrano: Before we get way too ahead, back to World War II. Do you remember where you were when you heard the atomic bomb was dropped?

Mr. Krchnak: We were sitting on Okinawa, waiting to invade Japan.

Mr. Zambrano: And what did you think about that, you know, I mean you hear a lot of veterans say, you know, that they were thinking of taking a lot of losses. (Unclear, both speaking together).

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's how come we were training. This training started on Okinawa for us. Low level jumps; we were trying like 285 feet, below 300. I never made one--I volunteered for them but I never did one because they had so many casualties in the two or three days before. Every day, 80 – 90 percent casualties, you know, at that level. So they discontinued it. I guess that must be when they dropped that atomic bomb. I don't know. They were so--Japan was suing for peace--giving up, and

MacArthur went out there and signed that peace on that battleship or aircraft carrier or something?

Mr. Zambrano: A battleship, yes. Do you remember--well, I guess you were still on Okinawa when you heard that the war was over? Yeah, I guess so, yeah.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, but we didn't really know. Nobody knew the war was over until after we were in Japan and we found it like the Japanese said, no shots fired. By the way, this reminds me. When we were--I was telling you about them trucks, we had to learn how to--they were looking for volunteers to drive that truck. Nobody even knew, not even the officers knew how to start one of them trucks, and there were no Japanese there to help us. We had these guys from Kansas and Missouri and Iowa and Nebraska, Ohio, that worked that type of equipment on the farms, the big farms, the wheat farms, you know, raised big crops. They knew how to start that truck, with a blowtorch. You had to have a blowtorch.

Mr. Zambrano: You know, it sounds like a really bizarre kind of vehicle.

Mr. Krchnak: Well that was the technology the Japanese had. They had no gasoline; that's the reason they were going down to Indonesia, the oil exploration was just getting started back in those days.

Mr. Zambrano: I'm just writing the unit that you were in here; I always try to get--

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. By the way, our company commander, not commander, our company clerk, when we got to Japan, we were in there about two,

three weeks, and the company clerk, been with the company a few years, and they were taking the older guys, the longest time you had in the service, the war was over, sending them home, replacements coming, sending them home. So, about the third or fourth week after we were by the name of that camp where we were assigned to was Camp Schimmelpfennig.

Mr. Zambrano: Schimmelpfennig?

Mr. Krchnak: It's between Sendai--Sendai was the headquarters of the 11th Airborne Division. There was nothing in Sendai, so they had the whole division scattered out in the country. The 188th Regiment was stationed at Camp Schimmelpfennig.

Mr. Zambrano: Schimmelpfennig, okay.

Mr. Krchnak: That's the way we--it was serviced by an electric trolley, which was about 12 or 15 mile trip into Sendai.

Mr. Zambrano: Really?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, and we were there, and our company clerk was sent home, so the sergeant in the morning says, "I need a volunteer today." So everybody wanted to know what it was, and the job was the company clerk. They were looking for volunteers; they just didn't assign you. So nobody volunteered, so, "Has anybody ever seen a typewriter?" And I said--the year before, I was in high school. I was fif-sixteen, I don't know, seventeen years old. I was in high school, and I took a course on typing, and I failed it. (Mr.

Zambrano laughs). You had to be able to type 25 words a minute and I only made 18 or 16 or something like that. After a whole year, one hour a day typing, I couldn't--my fingers just didn't have it, you know? I failed it, so I told the company sergeant, "I took a course in typewriting, but I"--and I never finished the sentence. He says, "You're in. You're my company clerk."

Mr. Zambrano: I guess that's all he needed to hear.

Mr. Krchnak: (Laughing) I knew how to load the paper in the typewriter. That's all it needed. I made a lot of mistakes, but it was all overlooked. I made up the duty roster, the KP roster, the guard roster, things like that. That's all you had to do; pin it on the bulletin board, take it off the bulletin board. Now and then there was a letter to type for the company commander. You know, they'd write it out for you and they wanted it typed out with their name, just for their signature. I did that for about a year, in Japan. I don't remember. It was good training; it broadened my horizons. You always want to learn to broaden your horizons (chuckles).

Mr. Zambrano: True, true. Was that the last job you had in Japan before you were shipped home?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, other than doing all of that, we all took that glider training. There's a certificate somewhere for that glider training, but I think it's at the house.

Mr. Zambrano: Tell me a little bit about the glider training. I never spoke with anyone who's been in a glider.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, the front of the glider opens up and you just--back in those days, they were big enough to load basically a squad of soldiers in, or a Jeep and a trailer, back it in there, lash it down, and two or three guys with it. You don't have to be a pilot of an airplane to--all you got to do is fly when you--the thing is attached to a nylon line to your tractor plane in front, and it's, what was it, titanium? What's that strong steel?

Mr. Zambrano: Titanium's pretty strong.

Mr. Krchnak: Titanium plunger, it was about that long, and it was notched, a square notch in the middle. That pin came in there and you locked it. When you got up to the airspeed, one of the--the copilot was usually one of the guys, parachutists or jumpers, one of the ordinary people. They weren't even--I was that job. For five days I had a job.

Mr. Zambrano: You were the copilot?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, I was the copilot. Well, I was the driver of the Jeep; that was my job. The Jeep and trailer were loaded with spare gasoline and ammunition for the machine guns. By the way, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, that's the company with the machine guns. In Japan, because of the jungle and long periods of constant firing, they had water-cooled machine guns. They brought those

machine guns with them to Okinawa. In Okinawa, they took all those machine guns away from us, and for every water-cooled machine gun they took away from us, they gave us one water-cooled machine gun to four air-cooled machine guns, .30 caliber. There were two men and two ammo carriers for each machine gun, I think; I don't remember how that was. That was Headquarters and Headquarters Company. We were the firepower. Every squad in the whole thing had a machine gun, a B.A.R. rifle, and there weren't any M-1 rifles, because paratroopers don't have M-1 rifles. They're too heavy; they carry carbines.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay, I didn't know that.

Mr. Krchnak: .30 caliber, same caliber as the M-1 rifle, and you got an eight-round clip in the M-1 rifle. In the carbine, you had a 15-round clip of ammunition, went straight down. While they were in the Philippines, the 11th Airborne sponsored it, coupled with some Marine outfits and Ranger outfits, and they shaved the second clip off at an angle and they made the curve out of it like that. It was like that and like that, and it was spring-loaded and fed 30 rounds of ammunition into it. We had 30-round clips. Well, some guys had the old, original 15-round clips; some guys carried the other clips into Japan. Let's see, what else?

Mr. Zambrano: Did you ever have to fire your weapon at all?

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, yeah, we always went on training, but not in combat. I never did it. I was going to tell you the story about when we loaded those trucks up and we were going from the Atsugi Air Strip to dismantle the naval gun. Man, the naval gun shot a projectile that weighed more than a Volkswagen. It was over 2,000 pounds a round. You can imagine how big the breech lock is in that gun.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, huge.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. Well, those guns, they didn't have a round like a .30 caliber round. You loaded them from the front. You loaded them from the front, with sacks of gunpowder and the wadding, and then you rammed the charge in, all from the front.

Mr. Zambrano: Really? That sounds kind of old-fashioned.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, we're talking 65 years ago (laughs)! But the breech lock, it was at least 12 inches thick, and it was like five or six feet wide, and the upright was also that big. So here we were, in that cave, in that tunnel, with that big gun and we had to pull that breech lock out of that gun, and we had nothing. There were some block and tackles; I think there was one chain hoist or two chain hoists we found in that cave with all this other ammunition I was telling you. It was like a storage unit. That cave, that warehouse was big enough to house 2,000 men, in Japan. And they had all that in there. They had a mess hall and everything. I didn't even get to go through all of it, because you had certain specific duties and

you just did all this gun scrounging and everything on your own, you know. If you scrounged anything, we had to send it home within three weeks or you couldn't send it home no more.

Mr. Zambrano: Why was that?

Mr. Krchnak: Too much contraband going back home (laughs). Everybody was doing it, you know. I'm not a--oh, I got a Japanese rifle, a samurai sword and a bayonet. Oh, and I also got a Browning automatic shotgun, 1918 style. It would only shoot that real short shell. You can still get that shell, but they're on special order. You've got to go to your supplier, where you buy your ammunition. Well, you used to. I shot that gun all the way through the '50s and into the '60s and then when I left to go doodlebugging, after that when I went foreign with them doodlebuggers, I didn't have--I never used that gun. But it was a bird gun. You had to put a three-round plug in it. It would hold six shells plus the round in the chamber, and in Texas you're only allowed three. Back then, I don't know what it is today. I hadn't hunted in so long. So I had that Browning shotgun, and this dentist bought all of that equipment. I hated to let that shotgun go; it had that short barrel, 24-inch barrel. Man, it was a beautiful gun, beautiful quail gun, quail and dove.

Mr. Zambrano: When you leave Japan, are you still at Atsugi?

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, no, we were in Sendai.

Mr. Zambrano: You moved up to Sendai?

Mr. Krchnak: The headquarters of the 11th Airborne Division was Sendai, Japan.

Mr. Zambrano: Is that where you were the clerk?

Mr. Krchnak: The what?

Mr. Zambrano: Is that where you were the clerk?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, I was in that detachment called Camp Schimmelpfennig.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay, okay. Gotcha.

Mr. Krchnak: About five or six months after I left Japan, they had a brand new, spanking new divisional headquarters, barracks for every trooper, built in Sendai. But that was all under construction when I left Japan. We saw it there.

Mr. Zambrano: When you left Japan, did you take a ship back across the Pacific?

Mr. Krchnak: The Aleutian route. We left Yokohama, Japan and--because we were originally scheduled to land in Spokane, Washington. We got a half a day out from Spokane, Washington, and the company commander says--they were getting us ready on the ship, you're going to be disembarking tomorrow, you know? They changed that order; it'll be another day or two we sailed into San Francisco again.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Krchnak: And everybody went hog wild. They were back in the states, and everybody went to town. I didn't; I got lucky on that trip.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, yeah?

Mr. Krchnak: (Chuckles). Galloping dominoes and poker, and I made more money on that trip than I have in my whole Army career (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Wow! How much did you make?

Mr. Krchnak: I have no idea. I was so scared I was going to be--that's the reason I didn't leave my duffel bag. There were guys on that ship knew I won and I didn't--when everybody else went to town, I stayed by my duffel bag in the warehouse. I caught the next train out for Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Mr. Zambrano: And then at Fort Sam Houston, you're discharged formally?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. It's in here somewhere.

Mr. Zambrano: So what did you do when you got out of the service?

Mr. Krchnak: I went back to finish my high school.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, that's right.

Mrs. Krchnak: Oh, yeah, that's between the two, yeah.

Mr. Zambrano: And then what?

Mr. Krchnak: I finished my high school and I took a job with a pipeline construction crew. It was Brown and Root, and they were laying a 10-inch Magnolia line, was for Magnolia Oil Company, Petroleum Company, and it went all the way, I think, to Port Arthur. I'm not sure. I wasn't on the line crew; I was on the crew--the line crew laid the line, river bank, moved around the other side of the river, and to the next river, bayou or bay or whatever. We were the crew that connected the two ends together through the river bottom.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay.

Mr. Krchnak: And the way we did that, if the crossing was 1,500 feet long, we would build a line, extra protected because of the gravel and the water and the sediments of the river. We had to dig a little tunnel, channel; it wasn't a tunnel, it was like a ditch in the bottom of the river, to get it below the bed of the river so you didn't want logs and stuff hitting that pipeline. It was almost always embedded, that pipeline, the oil carrier, was embedded inside another pipe. Like say, you had a ten-inch line, so you would have a 14-inch casing, but we would build, bent little half-inch, out of 3/8 inch or half-inch steel, little eyeballs and you'd weld it to the top of the pipe like that to make it--and that whole thing was then filled with grease.

Mr. Zambrano: Grease?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. We had to heat that grease to it was a liquid. We had to do the pipe, slope it all the way, and have air vents. When the oil, grease got there, the welder would plug that up and we'd go on to the next one. We would get all 1,500 feet or two miles or whatever the length was, built on land and then we had to get enough bulldozer, dragline power with one-inch cables, to drag it. Sometimes it took three bulldozers with three-inch lines, the thing was so heavy, to pull that thing through the river, under the river and out. If you were crossing a government stream, the Trinity

River is designated as a government stream, all the way to Dallas, Texas. For 150 years or more, they've got dreams of digging out 12-foot deep channel all the way to Dallas, Texas so they could barge stuff up there. And they were going to get on it real big after World War II, '40s and '50s, and then it just kind of died, you never heard about it. I've never heard about it since then, but that's still a government stream. You want to lay anything across that river, you've got to go six foot into the bottom of the river, underneath the bottom of the river, to lay anything in there. And that's what we did on the Trinity River.

Mr. Zambrano: Interesting. And this whole time you're with the National Guard?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. But I never knew it (laughs). They never called a meeting or anything. They were so busy with the war and everything. That's the way it was. However, when I was in Sealy, and I told you my uncle owned the plane, there was a guy came to me. You know the Boy Scouts of America, you know they have Air Scouts?

Mr. Zambrano: Yes.

Mr. Krchnak: Okay, I was the scout leader for that duration of that time between the two services, in Sealy. We got to do interesting stuff. The guy from Houston would lead us around, but I was his leader in Sealy.

Mr. Zambrano: When you say the time was between services, did you get recalled for Korea?

Mrs. Krchnak: He volunteered.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, see, we volunteered. We didn't want that two--well, my buddy, it wasn't me. I didn't have to go; I was through. But my buddy worked for my uncle. We got off at work at 12 o'clock, one o'clock or something like that, and we drove down to Rosenberg, Texas from Sealy, and we had two beers. We had a hamburger and two beers, and we decided to walk--I've never done that before in my life--walk the downtown district of Rosenberg. You always drove through it; you never saw nothing. We walked there and there was an Army recruiting station. I said, "Franklin, here's your spot." Because he was going to go and register for draft September 1. On August 30, it was our last day, you see, to enlist. He says, "I'll do it if you do it." So on the spur of the moment…

Mr. Zambrano: What year was that?

Mr. Krchnak: 1948. Oh, after that pipeline I worked with. We worked that whole summer on that pipeline, Willie Krupala and myself. We quit about the middle of August. We quit about the middle of August; we drove down to Chicago and I went through Coyne Electrical School. That's what got me into Fort Monmouth when I reenlisted.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, the teletype repair?

Mr. Krchnak: I had a basic electricity, 90-day or 120-day wonder course. Drove to Chicago and I did it (laughs). But it helped me at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Got me into the school at Fort

Monmouth, New Jersey because I knew enough about the basics. I answered some of the questions. It got me into the school, and I graduated and I was assigned as an instructor, plus with my prior experience, we were issued a military occupational specialty number, once you graduated.

Mr. Zambrano: M.O.S., yes.

Mr. Krchnak: That M.O.S. kept me out of Korea. There was no way they were going to send anybody with our knowledge and our experience anywhere near where China, Russia or Korea could get ahold of you. The closest we could get assigned to would be Hawaii, that would have been at the top embassy level, at an embassy. Argentina was a good spot to go, and many of the capitals in Europe were also special things to go, but not with this particular M.O.S. Only one or two guys would be, and they also had to have FBI training and CIA training and all that kind of mess, which I never did get.

Mr. Zambrano: What was the M.O.S. number? I think it might be--

Mr. Krchnak: It'll probably be on one of those papers. Oh, while I was at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, also a job we did at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, we underground all the power cables. We just took the high lines down, moved the wires underground and--

Mr. Zambrano: Where they should be, I think (all laugh).

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, because of hurricanes. That's the reason they did that.

Mr. Zambrano: That would make good sense. Oh, 1792? Yeah, 1792 was the M.O.S.

Mr. Krchnak: I have no idea.

Mr. Zambrano: So what did you do when you finally got out of the Army? What did you end up working as, or doing?

Mr. Krchnak: I wound up working for the Gulf Oil Company, Seismograph Department. You know what seismograph is?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Krchnak: Okay. Doodlebugger.

Mr. Zambrano: Doodlebugger. Is that an official oil term for it?

Mr. Krchnak: Well, yeah. Seismometers are the things that grab the seismic wave, the earthquake wave, which is a seismic wave. That signal is fed into an instrument, an amplifier. It amplifies it; it sends the signal to a galvanometer. A galvanometer is another self-contained little unit that works on electromagnetism like an electric motor, and it's got a mirror attached to the wire. You put a big, bright light bulb shining in the mirrors and you have between 24 and 36, depending on how many extrasensory devices you have on there. We'll feed that onto a ream of paper. Normally it's ten inches wide, photographic paper, and the camera then, you have to have a constant-driven motor, usually 400 RPM. So you're getting the signal, you amplify it, all 24 channels of it, plus the time brake, plus the air brake, things like that. You feed that onto these

galvanometers, and you can position these galvanometers equally, say like ¼ inch intervals across a space of ten inches. Once you've got everything set, you tell the shooter to shoot the charge, you start the camera, shoot, and by that time, a half a second or a second of paper has rolled through, the shot goes off and everything is recorded. You get a recording three to four feet long. The geophysicists then take--geophysicists and geologists, mostly geophysicists guys that went through geophysical school, physics coupled with geology--study that and the convert that to a graph paper and it tells you where the first hard sediment layer is and the next one, up to five miles deep. Down to basement, if you can get that deep.

Mr. Zambrano: How long did you work for the Gulf Company?

Mr. Krchnak: Four years.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you stay in the same industry?

Mr. Krchnak: I stayed in the same industry until 1967. They were sending me--I was in London; we were married. I lived out of a duffel bag and a suitcase all my life, even after I met her because once I got married, there'd be some guy on a ship or a crew in some Timbuktu part of the world quit or a thing and they needed a replacement, and I was always Johnny-on-the-spot. (Mr. Zambrano chuckles). Yeah, this is that commendation letter. I don't know; that's one of them.

Mr. Zambrano: Did you ever use the GI Bill for like, that one school you mentioned?

Mr. Krchnak: High school, they paid me $65.00 a month to go to high school, get my diploma, and they paid me $65.00 a month to go to that Coyne Electrical School.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay, all right. You did get something out of it.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. That was another commendation; I don't remember what that was.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, it's a commendation for the installation of the underground power system, and this is (unclear).

Mr. Krchnak: And I got that letters from four or five of them different people. I think it's all the same thing. Okay, this is my graduation from the Signal School.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, okay. Signal School, Fort Monmouth.

Mr. Krchnak: And this is the certificate where they told me that I was 21.6 per cent crazy (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: So the Signal School is dated, oh 21st of June, 1949, and the Parachute School is, let's see, "This is to certify that Private Adolph F. Krchnak, Jr., has satisfactorily completed the prescribed course in parachute packing, ground training and jumping from a plane in flight. He is therefore rated, from this date, 11 May 1945,

Mr. Krchnak: 21.6 per cent crazy (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: as a qualified parachutist." I have one, actually. I went to Jump School.

Mr. Krchnak: Did you?

Mr. Zambrano: Yes, (unclear) blue thing around it, but--

Mr. Krchnak: This was before they had blue ink (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: I just wanted to make sure I record this because I saw it on your DD-214. You received the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Ribbon, the--

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, but I don't know where they are.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, no, that's okay. As long as it's on your record, you can order them from the government. They'll send them to you.

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, okay. My daughter will want to know that. She's always interested in things like that.

Mrs. Krchnak: She even bought him a brick in Fredericksburg, where they have them at--

Mr. Zambrano: Yes, I know. Let's see, the other one is the Army Occupation Ribbon, the Victory Ribbon and the Overseas Bars.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, I don't even know what I got. And when I was with GSI, I don't remember this, but they sent me some kind of a motor training school, International Harvester, because I had to drive the big trucks. And I took many correspondence courses.

Mr. Zambrano: While you were in the service or afterwards?

Mr. Krchnak: In the service and when I was doodlebugging. Two years out on a job, and when I came home on home leave, I would have nothing to do. I built that radio from scratch. I bought a kit--

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, interesting.

Mr. Krchnak: --and I put it on, and I sold it two years ago. It was sitting there on a shelf in the utility room on our old house when we lived out north on Stonebridge, and I started cleaning out a lot of stuff and I sold it. This is all the works for it, which I don't have anymore. I guess the rest of--oh, that's a photostatic copy of the training.

Mr. Zambrano: Let me ask you this, because we've gone through a lot of questions. Your time during the Second World War, is there anything about it that really stands out to you?

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, I was going to tell you twice already, and both times I got distracted. Going back to that truck in Japan where we were loading up to go to dismantle that naval gun, I was sitting at the back of the truck in this corner. That was the side of the road. At the front of the--it was like a half-side flat-bed truck, equal to a 6 x 6 U.S. Army. At the front was a rail and the guys were all standing across the front, and by the time I got on the truck the only spot left was there. I was sitting there, and one of the guys that was up in the corner, standing room only, at the front there, came back to me and wanted to trade seats with me. And I said, "What the hell? I think I like that; I get to see." Can't see nothing; it's in the dark,

but at least you see what's in the headlights on the road. We didn't know where we were going. The leaders knew but us rookies, the dogfaces, didn't. He was a guy that went up through the Philippines, a year and a half, he told me. He never killed a Jap and he's going to get him one. Words he used! I didn't put it together, okay? So, yeah, I can see the front and everything. I jumped up and went up there and I traded places with him. Next morning, the Japanese police found a dead man on the side of the road, the back of his head bashed in with a stick or bat. Well, he used the butt of his rifle. Nobody knew it. They were all around him; if they knew, they didn't say. The, what did they call those people? C.I.D.? Criminal Investigation Division?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Krchnak: C.I.D. in the Army. They came and talked to me and asked me where I was sitting. I told him, and they says, "Were you sitting there the whole trip?" I said, "No. Some guy," but I didn't say the whole story to him. I said, "Some guy on the front said that he wanted to sit there; would I trade places with him?" And we got a piece of paper and I showed him a diagram, the C.I.D. guy, and hell, I was just barely 19 years old and I didn't really, didn't know, but I put it together later. That Japanese guy was killed and what that guy told me when--thing, he did it. To this day I don't know if

they caught him or not. But they probably did. And I don't know if he was ever punished or prosecuted.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow, he must have been.

Mr. Krchnak: You know, and I sometimes worried about that, but I didn't do it, so I really didn't much care.

Mr. Zambrano: He must have been so intent on killing a Japanese.

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, he--that was the thing. The old guys that were there, "How many did you kill in your tour?" That's the way they talked when they were drinking beer. You never heard those stories unless you were out there hoisting them. Just like these two guys I told you with them broken antennas.

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah.

Mr. Krchnak: And this was before we went to Turkey. These two guys also went to Turkey.

Mr. Zambrano: This is when you're--

Mr. Krchnak: At Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, on these TDY missions. But that's the kind of guys the Army's full of.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, let's home there aren't too many of them.

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, and when I was getting my discharge from Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, the guy was filling out those papers and he sent me into another room to talk to the colonel. I took the--you've heard of the Ten in One courses in the Army?

Mr. Zambrano: Hmm-mm, no. Ten in one, how does that work?

Mr. Krchnak: There's about, I don't know, from one to ten, different parts. You got ten, say lessons. Each lesson or each course is composed of anywhere from one to ten parts. It's like a correspondence course. They send you all this literature, pamphlets and stuff. You read them and from that you fill out this questionnaire and send it in. Then you get another one in the mail. Well, I had all this time to kill at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, so I was doing that. I sent my last one in, I think before I went to Turkey. I don't remember. My discharge came up, and I never thought nothing about them, that Ten in One course. The colonel called me in; he had my paperwork in front of me. He says, "I see you completed the Ten in One course." I said, "Yes, sir." "Are you going to make the Army your career? I see you're getting your discharge, you going--"(Mr. Zambrano laughs). "You going to make--you going to reenlist?" I says, "I'm going to think about that. I got 90 days or 30 days." He says, "Well, I'll give you an offer. When you reenlist in the Army, don't go to a recruiting station. You make your way back here to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, knock on my door, and I said I want to reenlist. The day you do that, we're going to pin warrant officer bars on your shoulders." I was that close to making--you're not a commanding officer; you're an administrative officer. Warehousing and kitchens and supplies and

whatever. The highest rank you can attain as a warrant officer is major.

Mr. Zambrano: So what happened?

Mr. Krchnak: I decided--the Army is so full of alcoholics--I even had--at the NCO Club at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, they have a locker you can rent for a couple of dollars a month or a dollar a month, depending on how big a locker. It's usually big enough to store one or two fifths of whiskey, wine, rum or whatever your thing is. We had a group, 10, 12, 15 of us would meet at that NCO Club and most of us had them bottles and we'd drink each other's whiskey 'til they were out and then you'd fill it up. It just--I couldn't handle whiskey. My thyroid, I got that thyroid from that--and I didn't know what my problem was. The Army didn't know what my problem was. I didn't put my thyroid together to that tangerine I ate until after Chernobyl exploded. All the time I'm with the doodlebugging companies working all over the world, I'm subscribing to the Time magazine and the Newsweek. Shipped to me every month. They were shipped to Dallas, Texas and whenever Dallas sent stuff out to that crew in that part of the world, my package of magazines were always there. Everybody on the crew liked it; we all read them, but that's the way I kept up with everything. There's a lot--there's a medical section, there's a technology section, in all magazines, you know, and every time I

was, like in Rio or my time off, if there was a, what's the name of that--Bostonian? No. What's that big technology magazine?

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I'm not sure. There's so many now.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, I know, but back then. They had them all over the world, all the big airports. And I always picked those up and read them, you know. I know guys that wouldn't buy anything but that. They would ready my Newsweek and Time magazine but then they'd criticize me because the other magazine had it explained better. They with a college degree and I don't understand college (laughs). College stuff.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, I meant to ask you this earlier but I forgot. Maybe you didn't, but the whole time you were in the service for World War II, did you ever get to see a USO show?

Mr. Krchnak: USO. Yeah. But I never thought much about them.

Mr. Zambrano: You went to them, but--did you go to one?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah. If they didn't have anything to do with cowboys and Indians (laughs), I wasn't interested. My nature. To this day, how many movies have you and I ever made, other than watching the TV at home?

Mrs. Krchnak: When we were first married, we used to go now and then, but that was it. The first thing I had to do when I came to this country was go to a drive-in movie.

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, she had to see a drive-in movie.

Mrs. Krchnak: Because I had never been to one.

Mr. Krchnak: Where did we go? I don't remember.

Mrs. Krchnak: It was somewhere in Dallas.

Mr. Krchnak: Oh, that's right; I remember now. Oh, I went through a 90-day school right after we got married. We got married in Bahrain.

Mr. Zambrano: Wow, what year?

Mr. Krchnak: '64.

Mr. Zambrano: I was born in '64 (laughs).

Mr. Krchnak: And the following year, the following year, in '65 I guess it was, the company was converting from analog--these are all analog and the stuff I learned at Fort Monmouth, was all--the company was converting from analog equipment to digital. They had to take us old guys, Joke Wisibary from Oklahoma, Larry Watt from Canada, Calgary, a bunch of them. I knew them all. We were all sent to, from all different parts of the world, we all congregated in Dallas for a 90-day crash course in digital. So I could then operate the digital instruments. When we left Dallas, they sent out the first or second set of instruments they ever built, the 10,000s. The equipment arrived from the factory; we set it up there in the warehouse in Dallas, Texas, hooked up all the cables. Me and Lee Sure--

Mrs. Krchnak: Lee Thompson.

Mr. Krchnak: Pete Thompson, right. Lee Sure and some of the other instrument engineers that Dallas had on the payroll, we put that set of instruments together, read the technology. They made sure I knew how to run a set of test records. You always had to run four, five, six test records every morning on your equipment to--for the geophysicists to check that your instruments are working fine. They knew when something was wrong, when the records didn't show it that you didn't spot. But I was good. I never had one of them long conferences, "You'd better clean up or else." They never had to tell me that. So I became a digital expert (laughs).

Mr. Zambrano: Just two more questions I've got for you.

Mr. Krchnak: Okay.

Mr. Zambrano: What rank were you when you got out of the service?

Mr. Krchnak: I don't know what the paper says.

Mr. Zambrano: It said sergeant; is that right?

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, but I was two stripes.

Mr. Zambrano: Corporal.

Mr. Krchnak: Tech sergeants. No, the under. You had three up and two down. One more, I'd have been a master.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. All right.

Mr. Krchnak: I was a--technically, they called it a tech sergeant, T-E-C.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. When you were in Japan--wait, is that a tech sergeant, because there's usually a number associated to it, a tech sergeant four or five.

Mr. Krchnak: No, no. In Japan, a corporal was two stripes, a sergeant was three stripes. Then you had a staff sergeant one, tech sergeant two and a master sergeant three. Three up and three down; I don't know what it is today. It's changed.

Mr. Zambrano: Let's see what it says here. Because this is your discharge here as corporal in '46.

Mr. Krchnak: It was probably a company clerk. That's about all they ever attained, corporal.

Mr. Zambrano: What was the other one here?

Mr. Krchnak: I think it was--it says sergeant on it?

Mr. Zambrano: Yeah, sergeant for 1952.

Mr. Krchnak: But it was supposed to say tech sergeant, because I was a tech sergeant.

Mr. Zambrano: Let's see what the DD-214--where is that?

Mr. Krchnak: I don't know.

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, here it is.

Mrs. Krchnak: Here's one, yeah.

Mr. Krchnak: I might have taken that colonel up on that thing, but if I'd have done that, you and I would have never met. (Laughs).

Mrs. Krchnak: Oh, well!

Mr. Zambrano: You wouldn't want that!

Mrs. Krchnak: Nope!

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, yeah. It says sergeant and it's got a "T" on it.

Mr. Krchnak: Tech sergeant.

Mr. Zambrano: Okay. All right.

Mr. Krchnak: Yeah, tech sergeant.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I guess I've just got two questions left. When you were in Japan, did you see any destruction at all?

Mr. Krchnak: Ooh, terrible. That's the reason I wouldn't go--every GI, when you first got to Japan, the Army wanted you to go down and see what the damage that the atomic bomb did. But during the time we were at--one of the things we did at Atsugi, we went and destroyed that naval gun. After that, either the same guys we were before or another group of guys, I don't know, mixed them up, they sent two or three truckloads of us into the part of Yokohama, Japan that was hit. What did they call that raid? They had four sticks of planes. A stick is a--to where they dropped a wall of incendiary bombs. I don't remember if it was one mile long or two miles long; I think it was one mile. They burned a square mile area. So this one stick went that way, the other stick went that way and the other stick went that way, and they killed everything; nobody could escape. In that area of Japan, we weren't allowed to take pictures of it. Later on, I bought a black and white from somebody that did,

snuck a picture. The only thing that was left standing in that whole area was--and we had to go in there, investigate, do nothing, and make our report, which the sergeants and the officers did. We reported to them verbally and they wrote up the things and sent it up. The only thing you would be--I don't have a pencil. That's a pen, not a pencil--

Mr. Zambrano: Oh, then maybe you don't want to use that.

Mr. Krchnak: No, no, that's okay. It doesn't matter. This is a--you got this area that's like that.

Mr. Zambrano: Like a big square.

Mr. Krchnak: Like a big square. And if you read the history books, that was done before the atomic bombs were dropped. And the reason they did that, they determined that Japan really had no huge factories. They had the small individual garage-type workshops where they did the belts for the machine, loaded the 250-round ammo belts, and that was shipped out to the soldiers in individual things. Army intelligence all figured out that that's all in this part of Tokyo and Yokohama, where this area was. The best way to--and then of course, they sent other bombs in there--but the main force was to build this wall of fire. They wanted those people dead. They wanted to kill that industry of Japan. When we went in there, when there was a road and the road was asphalt, but the curbs were concrete and if the driveway up to the house was concrete, the top

half of that concrete was burned off, ash. You could scrub it, kick your feet in it, but the concrete was there. The asphalt was gone. If there were light poles that were wood and there weren't many wooden light poles in Japan, but if they were wood, they were gone. If they were metal, power lines, poles, they were all melted and twisted, laying everywhere. We had to pick our way through there with these trucks, unload everybody off the truck and physically move something, you know, brute force, just like the Egyptians built the pyramids, you know, brute force. You knew there was a house there. There might have been a foundation for that house sitting there like that. The steps leading up to the front door were there, the steps leading out of the house into the back yard were there, and somewheres in the middle, because all of these were little individual businesses, they almost all had a metal safe. Somewheres in this square where this house was, there would be a little, tiny safe. Some of them pretty big, but small ones like my grandfather--I remember my grandfather had one of them safes. He had a dairy farm, so he, you know. He kept his letters that he wrote to Europe and everywhere there. That safe would be standing as the thing burned, it would be standing upright, laying on its back, on its front, on its side, whatever, but it was there and every block, everywhere, that's all you saw was these steps going up to the house. You knew that there was a

house there, steps leading out, and from the other--everywhere, light poles laying everywhere. That whole area was like that. It made an impression on you.

Mr. Zambrano: I imagine.

Mr. Krchnak: All right. When we got--then later, they loaded us on a train and shipped us to Sendai, like two weeks later. I don't know how long it took us to dismantle that gun, two, three days maybe. Then this happened. We even did something else and I don't remember what it was, but it was mild compared to this and that gun. That gun, that was my baby; man, I'll never forget that, and this area I will never--got to Japan and the main part, business district of Japan--

Mr. Zambrano: Japan or Tokyo?

Mr. Krchnak: Sendai.

Mr. Zambrano: Sendai, okay.

Mr. Krchnak: Sendai, I'm sorry. Sendai. Say, I don't know how big the area, downtown district, industrial district of Sendai was, mile, two square miles, three square miles, mile and a half or whatever. That area of Sendai was also in the same condition. There would only be, say you take a, what you're thinking is about a two or three square, four square mile area, there would be a building left standing here gutted or whole, you never knew. Three blocks over would be another building, and like that. I don't think there were

five, six building standing in all of Sendai when we got there, the original.

Mr. Zambrano: So it's mass destruction.

Mr. Krchnak: And the whole division had to go outside of Sendai, like we, the First Battalion. I don't know if we had one battalion or two battalions, how big that Camp Schimmelpfennig was. Other areas, 10, 20, 15 miles out in all directions from Sendai, that's where the 11th Airborne was. In Sendai, they were building division headquarters, 11th Airborne. The sign was there; I remember seeing it when I left. But that's the destruction I saw in Japan. I'll never forget it. It was hair raising, how many bombs that did that.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, you know--

Mr. Krchnak: War is horrible. And now, this ISIS thing, that scares the shit out of me. Excuse me.

Mr. Zambrano: That's okay.

Mr. Krchnak: That scares the devil out of me.

Mr. Zambrano: Well, I think that's pretty much all the questions I have for you. We covered a lot of territory.

Mr. Krchnak: We sure did. We sure did.

Mr. Zambrano: Let me thank you for your service.

Mr. Krchnak: Well, thank you, too.