

**THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

**Nimitz Education and Research Center  
Fredericksburg, Texas**

**An Interview With**

**Garland A. Picou**

**Lufkin, Texas**

**December 19, 2017**

**Headquarters Company**

**8<sup>th</sup> Regiment**

**4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division**

**German Occupation**

Mr. Misenhimer:

My name is Richard Misenhimer, today is December 19, 2017. I am interviewing Mr. Garland A. Picou by telephone. His phone number is 936-238-3695. His address is 2606 Woodstock Drive, Lufkin, Texas, 75904. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, the Nimitz Education and Research Center, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Garland, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II.

Mr. Picou:

Well I appreciate the interest, I don't think I deserve any of this.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh everybody deserves it, everybody that was in the service deserves it. Now the first thing I need to do is read to you this agreement with the museum to make sure this is okay with you.

*"Agreement Read."*

Is that okay with you?

Mr. Picou:

Yes it is.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the next thing I need to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that sometimes several years down the road try to get back in contact with a veteran, he's moved or something. So do you have a son or a daughter or someone we could contact if we needed to find you?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah, I have a daughter, Regena, Minshew.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Do you have a phone number for her?

Mr. Picou:

936-875-2475.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Hopefully we'll never need that but you never know. What is your birthdate?

Mr. Picou:

10/19/32.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now where were you born?

Mr. Picou:

Port Arthur, Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Picou:

Yes I do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many brothers did you have?

Mr. Picou:

One brother, deceased.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was he in World War II?

Mr. Picou:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

He was younger than you?

Mr. Picou:

And one sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what were your mother's and father's first names?

Mr. Picou:

My father's name was Vorres, V as in Victor, V-o-r-r-e-s.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay and your mother's first name?

Mr. Picou.

My mother's name was Regina. Just the same name as my sister.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you grew up during the depression, how did the depression affect you and your family?

Mr. Picou:

I just remember eating a lot of potato soup. My father worked at oil refinery and work was hard to come by. He would get some work in. But actually I never felt we was in any need. We did fine.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now on December 7, 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Picou:

Yes I do.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How did you hear it and what was your reaction?

Mr. Picou:

I remember hearing FDR radio announcement.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then when you heard that how did you think that would affect you?

Mr. Picou:

I didn't, I was pretty young then actually. But I remember my parents being really upset, in fact the whole community.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You were what, about nine or ten years old?

Mr. Picou:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go to high school?

Mr. Picou:

Where did I go, in Port Arthur at a Catholic high school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what year did you graduate there?

Mr. Picou:

1950.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, so then when did you go into the service?

Mr. Picou:

In '54.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh okay, so you were not in during World War II?

Mr. Picou:

Well I was in Occupation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

In Germany, okay.

Mr. Picou:

I was classified as a World War II vet because I was involved in the occupation of Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What branch did you go into, the Army?

Mr. Picou:

Army.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you volunteer or were you drafted?

Mr. Picou:

I was drafted.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any choice of the branch?

Mr. Picou:

No.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then where did you go for your basic training?

Mr. Picou:

Fort Bliss.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how was that basic training?

Mr. Picou:

It was awful, awful hot in August.

Mr. Misenhimer:

You went in in August? What date did you actually enter the service?

Mr. Picou:

August, I got married on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August and went in about three days later.

Mr. Misenhimer:

So somewhere around the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup>?

Mr. Picou:

Something like that.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now what unit were you with there for basic training in Fort Bliss?

Mr. Picou:

I really don't remember. On a ten minute break you get eight minutes sleep.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were your drill instructors pretty tough on you?

Mr. Picou:

Well, I don't remember that. The training was pretty tough because as I say it was hot and all in the desert in El Paso. But I think it was kind of what I expected, wasn't nothing unusual to me.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now your first eight weeks was infantry, is that correct?

Mr. Picou:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what was the second eight weeks?

Mr. Picou:

Medics, medics at Fort Hood.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now you were at Fort Bliss for eight weeks or sixteen weeks?

Mr. Picou:

Eight weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Eight weeks only at Fort Bliss and then to Fort Hood?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How was that training at Fort Hood, what all did you do there?

Mr. Picou:

As I say, I had already graduated from college and had been accepted into physical therapy school and was drafted so they stuck me into, didn't have any openings in my training field, education wise. So the medic training that I got in the military was pretty elementary for me because I'd been exposed to a lot of it. It was basic first aid, you know battlefield type of thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now the Korean War was going on at that time, is that correct?

Mr. Picou:

It was, yes, yes. In fact of all my group in basic training, I think only two of us didn't go to Korea, everybody else went.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what all did you do in that medic training, I didn't catch that.

Mr. Picou:

It was basic, I'll tell you I would call it first aid training.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And how long was that school?

Mr. Picou:

Eight weeks.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Picou:

I was shipped to Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were you assigned to an outfit before you went to Germany?

Mr. Picou:

Yes I was, I did. Yeah, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Headquarters Company.



Mr. Misenhimer:

And how did you travel to Germany?

Mr. Picou:

I flew over.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you go straight to Germany or did you go to England first?

Mr. Picou:

Went straight to Germany, in Frankfurt.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Picou:

I went to my organization at Frieberg, Germany and was assigned to Headquarters Company.

And typical Army I was trained as a medic, I was put in communication.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And then what happened?

Mr. Picou:

I was a communication operator, I was eventually in charge of the teletype operation.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Had you had any training on that?

Mr. Picou:

No, well I could type.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what all did you do there?

Mr. Picou:

Send and receive communication from Division Headquarters and basically about it, with teletype, printed messages. Interesting, this may not be the time to say this, but an interesting experience true enough though. We would go on maneuvers on the Czechoslovakian border, at

Vilocren and that was the cold war just getting started then. And at the same time we were on maneuvers at the Czech border the Russians were on maneuvers right across the border, we could see them. And when a teletype message come on there would be a little warning bell, one bell was just routine, two bells you know and up, number five bells were actually enemy contact. And one night I was on duty and I heard, ding, ding, ding, I heard five bells. Right there we could see the Russians, we thought, "Oh, oh, it's breaking loose." So I alerted my company commander and he in turn alerted the division. And everybody was loading up. And it was discovered there was a guy sent a trick message out to us, a joke message.

It could have been big.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did the person who sent that message get in trouble?

Mr. Picou:

I'm sure, I never heard but he's probably still in jail (*laughter*).

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened?

Mr. Picou:

Well my wife was able to come and join me in Germany, she came over. Transportation was not good and she took a freighter who carried passengers, twelve passengers across. And I picked her up in Bremerhaven.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did the Army pay for her to go over or did you guys pay for it?

Mr. Picou:

No, no, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Who paid for it?

Mr. Picou:

We did, my wife and I did.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Then what happened?

Mr. Picou:

Well actually the truth of the matter, it was a pretty nice tour, Germany was a pretty pleasant time. You know I had a college education but world experience and all and I consider education wise spending two years in Europe equivalent to my college education as far as education.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And you were there how long?

Mr. Picou:

Two years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How long were you in the service total?

Mr. Picou:

Two.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay, you were drafted for two years?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah. I got out about a month early or something like that. I don't know exactly but I got out a little early. Our 4<sup>th</sup> Division was rotated back to the States. And an interesting side note to that was my position in the company, the organization replaced us in Germany was the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored I think. Anyway the man who replaced me was Elvis Presley.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh is that right?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get to meet him?

Mr. Picou:

Just in passing, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Didn't get a chance to visit with him or anything?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened there in Germany?

Mr. Picou:

Oh you know we went through normal maneuvers, going on bivouac for two or three times a year. It really was a very, it was good duty. One thing that was kind of interesting, as I say that when we got there occupation was still on. For example all the water systems and the towns that they're housing military had to coordinated and cleared you know. And the Germans didn't like that at all. And they had these primitive water purification systems that looked like an oblong pyramid and it was made of sticks. And the water was filtered through that, no chemicals. Anyway when those kind of things took place, but as soon as, the day after occupation was ended they took all the coordination systems down and went down to primitive. We couldn't drink anything but beer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have much interaction with the German civilians?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah there was not very many men, very few men there, mostly women. Because most of the men were killed.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were the German people friendly?

Mr. Picou:

Reserved. Some were very friendly but others were very reserved.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Were any of them actually anti-American?

Mr. Picou:

A little bit. For example every year when they had the Fasching parade, some of the folks would indicate anti-Americanism. I remember one of the floats had a mannequin of Uncle Sam and one of Stalin and the sign said, "Which is worse?" That kind of thing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you get a chance to go on leave when you were over there?

Mr. Picou:

Oh yes. Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Where are some places you went?

Mr. Picou:

My wife and I, we toured most of Europe -- Italy, France, Switzerland, pretty much everywhere.

That was really a blessing.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you a have car?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah, I bought a 1950 Dodge there from a Sergeant who had it. That was an experience driving that thing, a car in the narrow streets of Europe.

Mr. Misenhimer:

I understand on the Autobahn there was no speed limit, they drove pretty fast on that.

Mr. Picou:

No speed limit.

Mr. Misenhimer:

A hundred miles an hour was slow.

Mr. Picou:

*(Laughing)* Yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened over there?

Mr. Picou:

It was such a routine life you know, my company commander was Captain Miner, he was from Fort Worth. One thing to do, you know a lot of the officers or some of the officers in the Army had been battlefield commissioned from Korea and 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Well while we were there the Army was paring down personnel and requiring officers either had them promoted to the next rank or have them dropped down to Sergeant. And my company commander was battlefield commissioned and he knows that I had a college degree and so he asked me to come and tutor him to take the examination. So we spent many a night in the library. And so I got him through the examination so he kept his commission.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What's some other things that happened there in Germany?

Mr. Picou:

It got pretty uneventful. My wife and I, we enjoyed the trip, traveling. I'm Roman Catholic and she was too and we toured, particularly we enjoyed Italy and the Vatican. That was really something. One of the things that was interesting, on a religious vein. We were on the Czechoslovakia border one time on maneuvers. And across in Czechoslovakia was a woman there and she was, our chaplain asked us Catholic boys who wants to go visit this woman who had a reputation of having what's called a stigmata. Every year during Eastertime she'd experience the same wounds as Christ. So about six or eight of us, we went across the Czech border, I don't know how that got approval because that was under Russia. Anyway, we visited this woman and went to this house and there was this really healthy looking woman, chubby woman lying in bed. And this was right after Easter. She still had the open sores on her hands and feet and side. She was Therese Neumann, she subsequently has been canonized by the

Catholic Church. She died after I saw her.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now in the occupation over there did you actually work with a lot of the German people or just mainly with the American people?

Mr. Picou:

Oh no, I didn't work with any German people except we were able to hire German cooks and they did our KP duty for us.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And who paid for that?

Mr. Picou:

All of us kicked into it, it was withheld from our check.

Mr. Misenhimer:

And what rank did you have when you were over there?

Mr. Picou:

SPC 2.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That's what, E4, E5, or what E3?

Mr. Picou:

Specialist 2.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What paygrade is that?

Mr. Picou:

That'd be Corporal.

Mr. Misenhimer:

E4.

Mr. Picou:

My company commander called, he called me one day, "Garland," he said, "I'd like to alert you

because we only got one opening for Sergeant for Spec.” And he said that, “You’re going home and this one guys gonna be, why don’t we just give him the rank.” And I said, “That’s fine I’m going anyway so.” Otherwise I’d have left as a Sergeant.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Was there any time over there you ever felt threatened or anything?

Mr. Picou:

No, not at all, not at all. As I say, on occasion you’d have a feeling of being not appreciated by the German men. They, you know they still had their feelings. There was still quite a bit of war damage in the towns, in Frieburg some, and Frankfurt bomb damage still there.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you get home from over there with any souvenirs?

Mr. Picou:

Oh yeah. Beer mugs and that kind of stuff. You know we had beer mugs, my wife she bought some china. Didn’t have any, as enlisted man you had a lot money to buy souvenirs with.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now did you get extra pay for being overseas?

Mr. Picou:

You know what, I never thought of that. I think I probably did. It wasn’t much, maybe \$25 a month.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

Mr. Picou:

No. But I had, some of my friends did. It wasn’t a good experience.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What kind of experiences did they have, what happened?

Mr. Picou:

One’s father died and the Red Cross arranged for him to fly home for the funeral. But his



pay was docked, it was paid back to the Red Cross. Which I thought was bad.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you ever see any USO shows?

Mr. Picou:

Yes I did, one at Frankfurt, yes. Louie Armstrong.

Mr. Misenhimer:

That was pretty good wasn't it?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now when you got out did you have any trouble adjusting to civilian life?

Mr. Picou:

No, but just happy I was. No, not at all. I got out just in time to come back and start school, physical therapy in Houston. I was only out for about a month or so. That's where my professional life started, I trained for physical therapy. I worked one of the last polio epidemics in the United States, at Gonzales Warm Springs. Working with people in iron lungs and braces. I worked at the Gonzales Warm Springs Foundation after graduating from PT school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you use your G.I. Bill for anything?

Mr. Picou:

Yes, yeah I was able to go to school, PT school. I date myself, my license number for Texas is number eight. I was the 8<sup>th</sup> Physical Therapist licensed in the State of Texas.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Have you had any reunions of your outfit?

Mr. Picou:

Oh the Army you mean? No, no military reunions.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you keep up with anybody you were in the service with?

Mr. Picou:

Yes, one guy. He and his wife lived in Madisonville. Rice was their last name, Larry Rice

Mr. Misenhimer:

Of course Axis Sally wasn't on the radio then was she, she had already gone.

Mr. Picou:

No, no, no.

Mr. Misenhimer:

What else do you recall from your time in the service?

Mr. Picou:

Well basically it was a pleasant time. As I said earlier in a conversation, I considered it a very rewarding and useful experience in my life. Very little negative. At the time I was drafted I was just down hearted and low but I'm glad it was. I wouldn't trade it for anything. Well it, as I say I'm repeating myself, but my time in the Army, I wouldn't have thought when I was going in I wouldn't dream of this but it was a good time in my life. I had a funny experience, when you say you were missing the snow, as I told you earlier we bought this 1950 Dodge. And I was on maneuvers and my wife had the car and she went down, it was cold, cold winter you know, six below whatever, cold. And for some reason she put water in the radiator and busted the block. But you know in the States you just throw the motor away. I found a German machinist to repair that block and that'd go back to the States.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Did you bring the car back with you?

Mr. Picou:

Yep. The Army paid for my wife back and me and my car. And I drove that car all the way through P.T. school.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Now your civilian career was in physical therapy, is that correct?

Mr. Picou:

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Are you retired now?

Mr. Picou:

Yeah, about ten years. I got tired of messing with the government and paperwork. My wife passed away about six years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Oh I'm sorry to hear that.

Mr. Picou:

Well it's you know, that's life. It was tough at first, but it's gotten pretty well. I live in town here with three of my children. I can be in five minutes to go to any one of them.

Mr. Misenhimer:

How many years were you married?

Mr. Picou:

Fifty-six years.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Well Garland, that's all the questions I have unless you've thought of something else.

Mr. Picou:

Well maybe we can meet sometime and have a beer.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Yeah, maybe so okay. Garland, it's been nice to talk to you.

Mr. Picou:

Same here, maybe we'll meet up sometime.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Right and thank you for your service to our country.

Mr. Picou:

Okay, thank you.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Okay.

Mr. Picou:

See you later.

Mr. Misenhimer:

Bye.

Mr. Picou:

Bye.

*(End of interview.)*

Transcribed by:

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