

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
**EMERY KRUEGER**  
Combat Engineer, U.S. Army, World War II  
2015

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1893

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**Krueger, Emery.,** (b.1923). Oral History Interview, 2015.

Approximate length: 1 hour 50 minutes

*Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.*

**Abstract:**

Emery Krueger, a Green Bay, Wisconsin native discusses his service during World War II as a combat engineer. Krueger briefly discusses his childhood growing up in Green Bay and the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. He talks about being drafted into the Army and being sent to Camp Swift, Texas for basic training. Krueger describes being trained to build and dismantle different types of bridges, performing maneuvers in Louisiana and Arizona, and the journey across to Europe. He recounts a story of volunteering to work in the kitchen on-board their ship and in return receiving steak for dinner. Krueger describes arriving in England, helping to build a hospital in preparation for D-Day, and landing at Omaha Beach after the initial invasion forces with bridge building equipment. He discusses building bridges in different parts of France and Belgium, and interactions with the local people. Krueger mentions the types of rations they received and activities they did in their downtime including playing cards, reading, and writing letters to home. Krueger describes bridging the Rhine River into Germany and his experiences working with German Prisoners of War after the end of the war. He talks about celebrating the end of the war before waiting in a Cigarette Camp in France for two months to be shipped back to the U.S. Krueger describes returning to civilian life in Green Bay and using his GI Bill to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He talks about keeping in touch with those he served with, and visiting England and France several decades later. In this interview Krueger also discusses the materials that he donated to the museum. He describes taking a Nazi Party banner from the Nuremberg Stadium in Germany and his impressions of the stadium itself. He talks about finding various items that had belonged to German soldiers including a belt buckle, cap, cloth patch, a pin. Lastly, Krueger also mentions his interactions with Russian soldiers, taking up smoking while in service, and receiving packages from home.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Emery Krueger (b.1923) was drafted into the Army in 1942. He served as a combat engineer with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in France, Belgium and Germany for two years. He was discharged in 1945.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2015

Transcribed by Patrick F. Gould and Charles N. Bellinger, 2015

Reviewed by Helen Gibb, 2016

Abstract written by Helen Gibb, 2016

## **Interview Transcript:**

Brooks: Today is Saturday, February 15, 2014. This is an interview with Emery Krueger who served with Patton's Third Army, during World War Two from January 1943 to December 1945. This interview is being conducted at Emery's home in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin and the interviewer is Ellen Brooks. So Emery, can you just start by telling me when and where you were born?

Krueger: I was born in Green Bay, January 20, 1923.

Brooks: Can you tell me a little bit about your upbringing, brothers, sisters—

Krueger: I had one sister. And this was during the Depression and things were rather difficult because jobs for my father, he worked at the paper mill. But, it was long hours and pay was not that great.

Brooks: What did your mom do?

Krueger: My mother was a stay at home mother. She loved to sew and knit and can and all of that sort of stuff. She was very good at it. She enjoyed it.

Brooks: So you had one sister?

Krueger: One sister.

Brooks: Was she older or younger?

Krueger: Older.

Brooks: Okay.

Krueger: She is ninety four. She's in Baraboo, in a home in Baraboo.

Brooks: And what was it like growing up? What was Green Bay like?

Krueger: Well, Green Bay was much smaller than it is now. We lived on Lawe Street in the beginning and then later we moved to Mason Street. Mason Street is a busy street now, but back then—well, when I was a little kid there wasn't too many automobiles. If you had an automobile—why you were sort of élite. We would play games, didn't have all of these toys and what have you. We would make up games and stuff like that. I can remember we would take and play these games at night. We would put a package out in the road and when an automobile would come and they would stop to look to see what was in the package, why, we would have a string attached to it and pull it away and we would all laugh and we were hiding in the bushes and stupid stuff like that.

Brooks: Sounds like a fun game.

Krueger: You'd make up things because you didn't have the funds really to buy all kinds of stuff. So you sort of made games up, and you just, you know, it was entertainment.

Brooks: What about school? Did you like school?

Krueger: Yeah, we—The Roosevelt School was just five houses away. It was gonna be nice. But then the city decided to remodel Roosevelt School so you had to go to Howe School which was twelve blocks away. So you walked to school in the morning. You walked home for lunch at noon and you walked back and home. You made about four miles every day. Kept you in shape [laughs].

Brooks: Did you like classes? Or, did you do athletics?

Krueger: I enjoyed school. I enjoyed science, and art. I enjoyed art very much. And in high school I participated in tracks. I was on the track team. I went to East High School. Graduated in '41. And then went to work for Kraft Foods. Kraft Cheese had a big factory in Green Bay at that time and then in later years they moved to Chicago. I worked for Kraft until I went into the service.

Brooks: Is there anything else remarkable about your childhood that we should talk about, before we—

Krueger: No, not really. Just ordinary. I lived—we moved into this neighborhood. It was—Peters on the corner had nine children. And [inaudible] next door to them had eight children. And Krauts, next door to them, had eight children. And we moved in there with my sister. And so, it was kind of—we were overwhelmed.

Brooks: Yeah, built-in friends.

Krueger: And there was a field across the street on the corner of Mason and Baird, and there was always a game going over there. I mean there was baseball, football, soccer, whatever. And there was never any lack of kids to play with. Some of these were older kids. It was a busy neighborhood.

Brooks: So you were eighteen when Pearl Harbor was attacked? Correct?

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: Eighteen, so can you tell me a little bit about that? Do you remember hearing about that?

Krueger: Yes, I think we were—I think we were listening to the—there was no television then, basically. So we were listening to the, I think the [Green Bay] Packer[s] football game, if I'm not mistaken. I think it was on—was it a Sunday? I don't remember.

Brooks: I think it was a Sunday.

Krueger: We were, I was home and we were listening to the football game, if I'm not mistaken. They broke into the game, and President Roosevelt told us told us the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Brooks: How did you feel?

Krueger: Well, all of us guys couldn't wait to go. But the parents were not that enthusiastic. So we had to wait until we got drafted. Which took a little time, but we got there eventually.

Brooks: Your parents wouldn't let you enlist?

Krueger: “No,” they said “your time will come, just, you know, just wait.”

Brooks: Right. And the same with most of your friends? Their parents told them that they had to wait?

Krueger: Yeah, and so we—I did try to get on the Merchant Marine, which really hurried up my draft because when I went down and told the draft board that I was going to join the Merchant Marine. Next week I got my draft notice.

Brooks: Cause they didn't want you to join the Merchant Marine?

Krueger: Yeah, they had to fill their quota so it was just one of those things that happens.

Brooks: You said that you couldn't wait to join. Do you remember why you felt that way?

Krueger: Well, it's—I guess that all of the guys felt that this Japanese thing and what they did and what have you, we didn't like it. Wanted to get revenge, would you say? And participate in the—get back at them.

Brooks: What were your expectations going in?

Krueger: I didn't really know where I would end up. It was exciting not knowing what was going to happen, where you were going to be, what kind of an outfit that you would get into. And so, we went down to Milwaukee and had the exam and everything and came back home, and I think we had a week in between being down in Milwaukee and the time we left. We left about five o'clock in the morning, I think, in downtown Green Bay by bus, and we went to Fort Sheridan [Illinois] and got processed in Fort Sheridan. And didn't know where we were

going, but first thing when you got there they learned you how to make your bed and everything [laughs]. Those little incidentals and you had KP and all of that sort of stuff. I think we stayed there about, about four days or something like that while you got your shots and stuff. And then we got on a train. We didn't know where we were going. Ended up at Camp Swift, Texas.

Brooks: Camp Swift?

Krueger: Yeah. And it—this was in the wintertime and luckily enough, we fell out there for exercises, and they—you know, Texas is warm so they stripped down to the waist. Well, there was two inches of snow on the ground. We said, “Well, we took it with us, you know?” Coming from Wisconsin. But there was quite a few of us that ended up from Green Bay. I think we had about fifteen or so or more from Green Bay that were in the same outfit. There was three companies: A, B, and H & S [Headquarters and Service]. We were actually a small unit. They called us, Third Army Special Troops and it was composed of—we had—there was about 380, I think, in the whole outfit, in three companies. So you only had, say, basically, maybe 120 or so troops in each company. And Company A and Company B were bridge outfits. We had—each had thirty two semis [trucks] plus other vehicles which we carried the bridge on. And—

Brooks: Can you just explain a little bit more what a bridge outfit does?

Krueger: Oh, well, you have to be able to build all and any of the army bridges. Like Bailey bridges, pontoon bridges, floating Bailey bridges, and, you know, any of those. So you train on all of them. And we carried a pontoon bridge with us. And—

Brooks: What is a pontoon bridge?

Krueger: It has the long boats which you, I think I they're about twenty, twenty five feet long and they're heavy aluminum or steel—I don't know what they were—I think they were steel at that time. You take and—these are tipped upside down on the flat top. And underneath it is the other pieces of the bridge and then you put a—say like your pontoons are like this—

Brooks: In a row?

Krueger: —across, yes, across and you build across the top of it with pontoons.

Brooks: Okay.

Krueger: It's strictly used for heavy vehicles, the tanks and all of that sort of stuff. And it's a matter of efficiency - being able to do it as fast as you can, as efficient as you can because, there's a time element. They're waiting for you. And so we would build across the Colorado River down there, and day in and day out was a process of—and then we would also—Smithville was about twenty five miles away from

Camp Swift. We would also have a forced march. They would walk to Smithville carrying full packs. And build the bridge, bivouac, take the bridge down, and walk back. It was the problems that we had.

Brooks: So, were you in pretty good shape before you got there?

Krueger: Well, yeah, and it didn't take too long to whip you into shape when you started the exercising and the walking, and the hiking, and the, you know, and the lifting. When you're lifting all of these heavy bolts and all of that sort of stuff. We had a crane, a portable crane, which was part of it, except for the pontoons and that for lifting and moving. I drove a four ton Diamond T [cargo truck] most of the percentage of the time. I hauled a D8 Caterpillar tractor. This was primarily to use to building the approaches to the bridge. So it was a—we each had an assistant- a cab driver and what have you.

Brooks: How did you get assigned to that company?

Krueger: They just did it automatic—just picked, you know. They were forming this company and with the draft choices they had they just—I think maybe sometimes they looked at your background and—but I don't know if there was any specific reason for putting us in that outfit but \_\_\_\_\_ [??] that from the Midwest we were tough [laughs].

Brooks: And what did you think about that? What did you think about building bridges?

Krueger: It was fun, at times. But when you had to do it over there, why it was kind of—the infantry would say, "We wouldn't change places with you for a million dollars," and we would say, "We wouldn't change places with you," because we went in there and we would get shells and—'cause the Germans in many cases had the site all zeroed in, but then when we got the thing done we could get out of there, unless they hit it and we had to go back and redo it. So it was in and out, and you wanted to do it as fast as you could.

Brooks: Did you get to stay with the fellows from Green Bay that you went in with?

Krueger: Yeah, we were pretty much together. Not in all the same company. Some were in A Company. Some were in H & S. Some were in B Company. B Company—A and B Company built the bridges and H & S had the assault boats. And they were headquarters and service and they had a lot of other personnel.

Brooks: So how long were you at Fort Swift?

Krueger: Pardon?

Brooks: How long were you at Fort Swift?

Krueger: We were—I'd say close to about nine months, something like that, ten months. Because we—in May was it, or June, June, we went to Louisiana maneuvers and we spent, I think it was June, July, and August in Louisiana in the god-forsaken swamp areas. I've never seen country like that. They—the government had to go in there and there was so many accidents. See, they had maneuvers and night problems and that, and if they simulated being strafed or what have you, they'd be going along and they'd dive into a ditch and strafing why, there were so many snakes. And so the government let wild pigs and boars loose in that whole area because they—a pig will eat a snake. They will dig it out of the ground and they will eat it and everything. And so, this was their way to try and control the snakes. And I used to write home to my folks and I'd say "Well, the mosquitoes are so damn big down here that we have tie ourselves to a tree or they will take you away with when they go." Between the mosquitoes, jiggers and armadillos, and we lived in pup tents. So you had to leave both ends of the pup tent open because these pigs would go in, and they'd go in one end and they would take the tent along with them because they all ran wild down there. But it was good because it would control the snakes a little bit.

Brooks: Were they poisonous snakes?

Krueger: Oh yeah.

Brooks: Yeah. That's dangerous.

Krueger: You had water moccasins, you had the whole bit.

Brooks: So this was your first time away from home probably, right? First time away from Wisconsin?

Krueger: I didn't realize that the country had this kind of territory. It was swampy and of course we were by the—I think it was the Sabine River or something. Down there we would still bridge all the time. This was our first experience with blackout and all-night driving. No lights, no nothing; you kind of felt your way on the roads. And those back clay roads and everything were very tricky and very—and all you had was this little light which—it gave you just a little bit of light ahead of you. If you were in convoy, you followed the tail lights of the vehicle ahead of you.

Brooks: Tricky.

Krueger: It was quite an experience, doing that. You went by feel. You could feel when that front wheel on this side hit the shoulder or this side, it hit the shoulder.

Brooks: Wow.

Krueger: That was the way you drove.



Brooks: I'm going to pause for one second.

[Break in recording] [22:54]

Brooks: Okay, so we were talking about your basic training and your experience in the south.

Krueger: And we went back to Camp Swift, after maneuvers, and we were back for just a very short time, and we went to Yuma, Arizona. And there we lived in tents and right alongside of Imperial Dam. And what we would do is, we would build a bridge across, below the dam, Colorado River, and then they would open the dam to see how much stress the bridge would take. We started also experimenting with bridges, and then they would take and run a tank out on the bridge, also, to see how the stress—and after a couple of tanks went into the water, they decided they would be better off to build a water box and reel that out on the bridge because it would be easier to get it back out. Then also we had to cross the river in town. In Yuma the civilian bridge wouldn't really carry military traffic, so we built a bridge across the river there and a manned bridge, twenty-four hours a day. You had people on each side of the bridge and you had a group there that would take care of the bridge. And it was strictly for military traffic, which was kind of a guard thing, you see - after you built it, you had to take care of it. So, we would—that was the other part of why we were there, and we were there until, hmm, must have been January, because again it snowed there. And we were all set to leave.

Brooks: This is 1944?

Krueger: Yeah. Yeah, this would have been right in the beginning of '44. And we were getting all set to leave, and it snowed, and we were in our pup tents. So, everybody went to town to buy candles because we had snow on top of the tents and it was cold. So there was no candles left in town by the time we got done because everybody wanted candles to heat their tent with.

Brooks: So why didn't you stay in barracks or anything? Why did you have to stay in a tent?

Krueger: There wasn't any barracks. In the beginning we were in what they call now, an eight-man tent or a ten-man tent. And that was an experience out there in the desert because to try and keep warm at night when you were sleeping because we didn't realize that the cold air comes from down below. And because you put all of the covers you want on top of you, but the cold air is coming up from the bottom. So we found out that if we put the comforter and everything on the bottom and slept on it, we were warmer than if we put it over the top. And it was amazing; you could be walking out there at night and, say, from your ankles down it would be cold, but up on top you would be warmer because that cold air just kinda—as soon as the sun goes down it just kind of sweeps in. And so then we left there and took a train from there to Boston, which took us, I don't know, ten days, twelve

days, or something like this, because they would sidetrack troop trains for the other traffic and they'd go back and go again. So it, I think it took us about ten days to get to Boston. And Camp Miles Standish, I think it is, in Boston where we were processed. And it takes about five days to get all of your shots and everything, and there they hurried up: when you go through the line you have one guy on each side of you.

Brooks: Sticking you with needles?

Krueger: Yeah. So, about five days and we boarded the boat. I think the boat was the USS Exchange if I'm not mistaken. I called her a row boat with a corkscrew in it. It was just a small boat. They had about four thousand men on it, I think. We were stacked up in the bottom, and it was a Merchant Marine boat. And so we went over to England.

Brooks: So when you were traveling over, were you with just your companies? Were you with infantrymen too?

Krueger: Oh, it was everybody.

Brooks: Everybody?

Krueger: Yeah, there was about, I think about four thousand on that little boat.

Brooks: So, what was the mood on that boat?

Krueger: Everybody was in such—packed in there, close quarters, and what have you. And you only got two meals a day and the mess hall was tables along like that, and you stood up at the tables and eat, if you could stand up. You'd go out in the ocean in the winter time, and these big storms and it was a rough as a cob. And it was really rough and they wouldn't allow us on deck or anything like that. In fact, we had problems standing up. And that was one of the few times in the Army I volunteered. They came in the hold when we were going to leave out the dock and they said, "We need some volunteers. Anybody want to volunteer for kitchen duty?" "Yeah, instead of sitting down here, sure." So we go down there and he said, "Well, we're going to peel potatoes." I thought, "Peel potatoes for all of these?" You know. So he said, "Come over here," and they had about ten bushels stacked there. So they said, "Well you come over here and you take the bushel and you pour in the machine and you push the button and you watch them and when you are done you get this other pan here, you put them in there and bring them in the kitchen." Bring them to the kitchen. I thought, "Well, that's not too bad, you know?" I had the idea of sitting there and peeling.

So he said, "When you are finished with all of these, you come to the kitchen and we'll feed you." Ah, sure. I said, "What can we have, you know?" "What would you like?" Well one of the guys I was with said, "I'll have a T-bone steak." He

said, “Okay.” So, whatever we asked for, we'd get. So we finished and went into the kitchen and sure as heck, there it is. The merchant marine ate like kings. They had everything. Poor guys in the hold had beans and all of that kind of junk, and so they just got two meals a day. And so what we would do, we would be down in the kitchen all day long and doing odds and ends, and so when we would go back into the hold at night, why, we would take them—make a whole bunch of sandwiches and put them in our shirts and walk in the hold, the guys and just open our arms like this. [laughs]

Brooks: They must have loved you. [Krueger laughs] That was a good decision for volunteering for KP.

Krueger: It took us fourteen days to go across. We were in convoy. They go this way and that way and what have you. And the ship broke down twice on the way over. So we would sit there and they would circle us with a destroyer and they'd get it going and we would catch up to the convoy and then it would break down again. They were using just about everything at that time to transport men and supplies and what have you. So it was quite an experience. And to be—I think we were about five—they had them stocked about five high down there in the hold. So if the guy on top got seasick—

Brooks: Those are like the bunk beds, right?

Krueger: Yeah. They were canvas.

Brooks: Oh, like a hammock, almost?

Krueger: A hammock, yeah, that's what they were.

Brooks: Wow.

Krueger: And they just had them, you know—

Brooks: So, if you were—How did you get to that top hammock, if you were the fifth—

Krueger: Climbed on the other ones.

Brooks: Really?

Krueger: Because they were only, you know, that far apart so that you could get in and sleep you had the guy who was right on top of you.

Brooks: So if you were on the top one, then there were other people already sleeping, you had to climb on top of them?

Krueger: They had metal pipe on the edges of the canvas, something between. So you would just step on and climb up. It was different [laughs].

Brooks: And so, what was it like getting to England?

Krueger: Very different. We were got of the boats and we were transported by truck to an area near Hereford in England. It's in the Wales section. And we had barracks. In fact this was a—would be in the future a hospital. They called it Camp Foxley., and they were building this actually for a hospital, and so—but in the meantime, we would use it to train and so we—they had barr—well, they would be hospital barracks after a while, but they were used as a barracks, the bunk beds, and things like that, and they were still building it when we were there. And so the English are very slow and committed to their style. They would arrive at eight o'clock in the morning. Well, ten o'clock would be tea time. And twelve o'clock would be lunch. And then at one o'clock they'd go back to work and two thirty would be tea time, and four o'clock they would go home. They weren't really accomplishing too much. And so we said, "Boy, it would take these guys from now until doomsday to get this hospital done, you know." And then all of the sudden, one morning, they arrived at seven o'clock, no tea time. Twelve o'clock, they had a half hour for lunch. Back to work and they were working until six, seven o'clock at night. So, we said, "Uh-uh, invasion's coming." They had to get it done. So we—then we would help. They would ship the hospital equipment in by train, so we would go to the station with our trucks and haul hospital equipment to there and unload it, beds and all that sort of stuff. And they moved us out into tents, and—while they were preparing that hospital.

Brooks: So what were you doing besides helping transport things? Were you guys just waiting? Were you still training?

Krueger: No, we were still training. No, we were training. We were practicing, building bridges and stuff like that. Had night problems and it was all blackout at night. You got to practice at night.

Brooks: Do you want me to pause it?

Krueger: Shut it off.

[Break in recording] [38:50]

Brooks: Let's talk a little bit about how you found out about how the invasion was coming. When did you learn about D Day?

Krueger: Well, as I said with the building of the hospital, because see, there was an English—British airfield not too far away, just down the road. So, what they would do was the critically injured, they could fly into this airfield and then bring

them to this hospital. That was the idea. So when they started hurrying up and building this thing, why, we had a pretty good idea of what was happening. So—

Brooks: When did—

Krueger: —they moved us out of it and into tents. Still on the property, but into tents, and we still did training, but we were on the edge of the property.

Brooks: When did you get the official word?

Krueger: Actually, we were still there and we saw the planes going over – a lot of planes. It's coming. So, we didn't move out of there for, oh, it must have been three or four weeks. Because they would have no room for us on the beaches or what have you with all of our equipment and what have you. And they didn't need us then anyhow. So we didn't go in until later.

Brooks: So when you were in England, were you stationed with men who were gonna be a part of the invasion? I am just wondering what that mood was like?

Krueger: Well, no, you were separated. I mean, we had a tank group down the—among some of the other barracks, but they left a little earlier, and we were just kind of there, biding our time, would you say, and waiting.

Brooks: Were you—did people—was there any way to find out what was happening on the beaches? Was there any way for you to—

Krueger: Well, you got the news and what have you, yeah. By radio - you would listen, and get the news as to what was going on.

Brooks: So then when did you—

Krueger: We moved out of there a little bit later and got prepared. Just trying to think how long it was after that we went there, to the coast, and we went over on LCTs [Landing craft tank], very small landing crafts where the door just drops down, and we went to Omaha Beach and proceeded from there.

Brooks: And do you remember what day-ish you landed on Omaha Beach?

Krueger: Not really, no.

Brooks: Sometime in June, though.

Krueger: Days and weeks and times didn't really make too much, too much difference, you know, it's just—we took it day by day, and whatever. And so, prior to getting really involved, we did a lot of—they used some of our equipment to transport

engineer stuff, to bring it up, and then when they started to get to the larger rivers and stuff, then we got active.

Brooks: So do you remember that, the first time you got called up?

Krueger: That was on the Moselle River, by Pont-à-Mousson, which is a short distance from Nancy—

Brooks: This is in France?

Krueger: Nancy, France, Yes. We bridged it about four times, four different places. And then in between bridging, they would use us for—at times for transporting materials to bring it up - kept us busy. And then when the winter time came, we became lumberjacks. And we got into Germany. See, Germany was kind of ahead of this country, with their forests and everything, they did selective cutting way, way back, and so they had a lot of timber, a lot of trees and stuff, big stuff, cut down, all set to be used. They did this over a period of years, and so—and they knew that they were going to need all this lumber after the war to rebuild, and so, they would put us out there, seeing as how we had a crane and all these semis and flat tops. We would snake all these big trees out of the woods, load them up, and haul them to the sawmill. And that was one of our sidelines - kept us out of mischief.

Brooks: And what did they use the lumber for?

Krueger: For homes, and for bridges, for, you know, bombed-out stuff and what have you that they were gonna rebuild, and it was a start of what was going to be, you know, after the war, you might say, which was good. I mean, it gave them a basis to start out. So, that was our part-time job.

Brooks: When you were in Germany, did you ever interact with any Germans, like any regular German citizens?

Krueger: Oh yeah.

Brooks: Any impressions of them?

Krueger: They were all, in most cases friendly. A lot of these small towns of—it was something to get used to because much of the smaller towns would have a barn with the cattle in it attached to the house, and found out that there was a reason for that: 'Cause the cattle produce a lot of heat, and so, this is how they heated their homes. And the barns that were attached to—you'd walk in the door and you'd walk into hay, and cattle, and what have you, and you'd turn around the other way and there would be the door to the house. And this is where the heat came from. It was kind of interesting to see what happened and what they did, and then they would take these cattle out to the fields outside of town, and leave them graze

there, and then they would bring them back into the barn again, and then in many cases they were milking cows, what have you, and they would milk them there, and then the next day they would bring them out, which was difficult at times when you're trying to drive through these small towns, 'cause you had to wait for the cattle to get out of your way, and they were just at times rather independent. They just, you know, didn't care whether you moved or not. Go through slow, but got to be a pain. So, since in my vehicle, I carried the combat squad, and for the building of the bridges and the—also once you built the bridge, you had to wire it so you could blow it up in case you had to. So when I would go and get the explosives, I would always put a sign on the front bumper, “Explosives”. And I found that if you—when you went through these towns, and they were walking with the cattle and everything, if you went out and put that “Explosives” sign on there, they ran pretty fast, you know. [Brooks laughs] So it was a—

Brooks: Useful?

Krueger: —a good method of getting through, and—

Brooks: And so, you said that you carried the combat squad. What does that mean?

Krueger: Well, if the group that would—were trained to build a bridge, especially—outside all the drivers, and—when we built the bridges, everybody pitched in, get it done, get it out there, and get it over with. But this group was the bridge people, they would just—that was what they totally did. They didn't drive, or they didn't do anything like that, that was their specialty, you might say.

Brooks: So, I know it's going to be hard to answer this, but I'm just wondering, how fast can you build a bridge? What was the fastest?

Krueger: Well, it would all depend upon the length.

Brooks: Right.

Krueger: I mean, how wide the river was, and how, you know—and what kind of thing you had to do to build the approach to it. That was another thing, because you were building a bridge where—out in the wild, where nothing was prepared, and you would have to build some sort of a road and the approach to it, so that the vehicles could get across. So it would all depend on what was necessary, also. So to know exactly how many [inaudible] nothing to—you just had to see what—

Brooks: It was different every time.

Krueger: —what had to take place, like at Dieulouard [France] there where we did four different times, why, you had to build approaches and there was a—in town, there was a part of the Moselle and then there was an area that was kind of like an island, and so you had to go across on this island to the other side where the

Moselle main—the Moselle was, and then bridge that also. So, it was just a matter of—one company would do one part, and another company would do—A Company would do one part and then B Company would do, you know, the other.

Brooks: And what Company were you part of?

Krueger: B.

Brooks: So you, in the winter of '44, you were in Germany, back in the woods. Were you close to the Battle of the Bulge at all?

Krueger: Yeah, mm-hm.

Brooks: How close did you come to combat, ever?

Krueger: Well, in France and Dieulouard and that, we were there, you know, we were getting shelled. And we were in a—but you went forward and you went back to do this other stuff, and then you go back up there again.

Brooks: So, what was that like, that experience of being shelled?

Krueger: It was a new experience. First time it was dramatic, you know, they'd always say that the shells you hear coming in are good - they're safe. It's when you don't hear them come in—that means it's not off to the side, it's coming directly towards you—those are the ones you don't hear, those are the ones that you wanna [laughs]—hope doesn't come. Yeah, it's a great experience, you know, the first time. You don't quite know what to expect, or what, and then all of a sudden it's there.

Brooks: Do you think you got used to it?

Krueger: Well, you kind of—you have to ignore it. You can't run and hide, you just gotta continue on. You just take it for granted that this is part of it. So you just keep on building, and you keep on doing it. Gotta get it done and—'cause generally they're waiting for you. Generally, the Fourth Armored [Division] or what have you would be up in the woods waiting, camouflaged up there just waiting to go through, to go up there, so you do your job.

Brooks: And as being part of the bridge outfit, did you folks carry any weapons?

Krueger: Oh yeah. We carried—it was small, it's a thirty caliber carbine—well, we also had machine guns and everything too, but I mean—

Brooks: So you didn't feel too exposed? At least you had something—

Krueger: Yeah—



Brooks: —to protect yourself?

Krueger: —it was just one of those things where, you know, you did what you had to do.

Brooks: Did you lose anyone from your company?

Krueger: Yes. A few, but it's one of those things, you know, where you gotta expect it's gonna happen. You go along with it.

Brooks: Did you have any—anything that you personally did that was superstitious, or anything you did for luck, or anything to try to keep yourself safe?

Krueger: No. You just had to hope that you weren't the one, 'cause you never know when these things are going to happen, and you—I did a lot of traveling from one engineer dump to another in the meantime, when we weren't busy. At the time of the Bulge I went from around Nancy area and from into Germany up into Liège, Belgium. And this was several days travel, you know, and you had—I would go, and they would give me an assistant, and we'd take off, and we had to deliver some D8 Caterpillar tractors up there, they needed them. So we just brought them up to them. It was no fun, 'cause as you realize that we ran into big snowstorms at the time of the Bulge, and the roads were not plowed, you know, they had no plows. So we just—we went—it took us—I had a six-by-six and it was six chains on, and—the roads were greasy and you got a twenty-ton \_\_\_\_\_[??] trailer behind you, with a Caterpillar tractor on it, and you get up the hill, and when you start going back down, that trailer likes to come around and meet you, you know, it's—so you try and stay ahead of it. It gets a little bit—a little interesting.

Brooks: That's one word for it.

Krueger: [laughs] But yeah, and it was cold, you didn't have any heaters in the trucks or anything. No defrosters, no heaters - the heat came from the motor. And you had all this cold weather and miserable weather and what have you, but all I had was isinglass on the side. It was a convertible with a tarp roof, you know, canvas roof, so that was cool.

Brooks: So what about your uniform? Was it adequate?

Krueger: Well, they didn't have any insulated clothing. All you had was—your dress-ups were wool, but you had like the overalls, coveralls, what have you. That was, you kind of put everything on you could to keep warm.

Brooks: So what was it like I'm interested in a little bit of the down time when you weren't on a job or building something, like the food that you guys had, and in any way entertained yourselves, anything?

Krueger: Oh, we had—we had a mess—we had a kitchen, a mess convertible—we had a mess kitchen and everything, and cooks. We had cooks, and then if you goofed off you got KP. But they had portable ovens and what have you, with gas burners, burned regular gas, for fire. The food was pretty good; it was, same thing you know, but when you were out—when you were not really stationed and in one position, you had K-rations, and you lived on K-rations, which was this pretty thick stuff that—can of eggs or a can of this and a can of that. What do they call it, these cans of meat?

Brooks: Spam?

Krueger: Pam?

Brooks: Spam.

Krueger: Spam, yeah.

Brooks: Probably.

Krueger: That was a lot of spam. And also, they had very good cheese, which was kind of a laugh for me, seeing as I had worked at Kraft's cheese—we did this stuff on those lines there, and I'd go over there and get these K-rations, and here's the little cans of cheese in there that—we did it at Kraft. But it was really good cheese, I mean, it was the top cheese, I mean, but just the idea that here I am eating this stuff that—maybe some of the stuff that we worked on at the factory [laughs].

Brooks: And what did you do for—do anything for fun, or for entertainment?

Krueger: Well, actually, at times they would sit there and play cards, or you'd have card games or dice games or what have you; did a lot of reading if you had—were able to. Spare time, you did some letter writing or what have you, and you also made sure that the vehicles were all set to go. Any time you move from one place to another, you had to check the vehicle, gas it up, make sure it was all set, ready to go in an instant whenever you had to move, 'cause you never knew when you'd get the call to do it, so it was a—it was busy, we always had something to do. So they would have another job, or have another training project, or have another something else to take care of, and then at times you had a Bailey bridge to build, but not over water but over two areas here, say if you had a hill here and a hill there, what have you, with high areas, and you had to build a bridge between the two. A Bailey bridge you would build on land, and you would shove it out, and you had to keep more on land than you had out there. And you could take it and roll this thing out, and it was like a platform with these metal sides on it, and if it was going to be for heavier traffic, you would build a double Bailey, which would be two sides things on it which would take the weight. So all this was, you know—so we would have to take and drop our pontoon bridge, which we'd carry with us all the time, and go back and pick up a Bailey bridge, and bring that up,

and build that. After we'd finished that, we would pick up our pontoon bridge and then—we never took any of the bridges down; all we did was build them. Somebody else had to take them down.

Brooks: Did you—you said you had to wire them for explosives—did you ever have to blow any of them up?

Krueger: No. We didn't.

Brooks: It was just in case?

Krueger: We were lucky.

Brooks: So, you said you were writing letters home during some of the time?

Krueger: Yeah, corresponded. Not often enough, but—

Brooks: What did you miss the most from home?

Krueger: Good home-cooked meals, nice warm bed with sheets and what have you, 'cause all you had was army blankets, you might say now, wool blankets, and any time you got anyplace, well, all you had was a cot or what have you, Army cot, and which was not the best in the world, most comfortable.

Brooks: And what did your parents and your sister think about your time in the service?

Krueger: They would write to me, and tell me all about what was going on home and who was doing what, who was getting married, and all that sort of junk, you know, and we couldn't tell them where we were, what we were doing, or anything, so you had to kind of ask a lot of questions, would you say—you know, about football games, or baseball, or what have you, 'cause you couldn't tell them the everyday things that were—what was going on and where you were, what you were doing, so that kind of limited the writing as to—the letters were short and—All they wanted to do was hear from me, and let them know you were okay, and— but you couldn't do too much, you couldn't say too much. You could mention the news, or that which you heard on the news, something like that, but it was limited with what you could do. 'Cause it was censored, which—I'm surprised nowadays, 'cause they—what's going on over there, more of the newsmen are not censored as to what they are blabbing about. They give away a lot of secrets.

Brooks: Yeah. So, after winter of '44, where were you moving around next?

Krueger: Well, we were into Germany, and as I said, in the wintertime we did a lot of logging and stuff like that, and then when spring would come, we would just continue with our bridges—see, in the wintertime, most of the rivers were frozen over anyhow, so that kind of eliminated a lot of the bridge building. So they had

other things for us to do like hauling stuff and all that kind of junk. And summertime would come, and we'd go back to our regular routine. We were kind of looking for bridging the Rhine is what we wanted to - this is what we were trained for, 'cause when we trained in Colorado, on the Colorado River and everything, this was the idea, because the Rhine is a very fast-flowing river, and so they wanted us to get experience so that we could do it, and we were all set, just waiting for the Rhine to come. And then some politician in Washington got a brilliant idea: "Wouldn't it be nice, for history's sake, so that the Navy could also participate in the crossing of the Rhine?" So what do they do? They send about twenty or so Navy personnel, and the Rhine was supposed to be our bridge. So what do they do? They give us these twenty or so to go back and train to build a bridge. In the meantime they put somebody else in charge of the crossing of the Rhine, which kind of teed us off. 'Cause this is what we were looking for, you know; this was the important one. And so we trained these Navy personnel to build the bridge so they could participate in it. Great idea, you know. But we did participate in the crossing and building of the bridge, even if we were not in charge of it. So, it's kind of a—

Brooks: Not what you were hoping for?

Krueger: No.

Brooks: So, after the bridge was built to the Rhine, do you remember when that was, ish? This was before V-E Day, I'm assuming?

Krueger: It was in the—must have been in April or May, or something like that, and—no, it was before—it was prior to that.

Brooks: Just somewhere in the spring, right, of '45?

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: It doesn't matter. I know, I don't need the exact date.

Krueger: Yeah. Then we went up into—through Germany, and did the usual stuff and what have you, and we were—after the war, which was in—the war ended in about May, May 5 or so over there—then we operated as Army of Occupation of, and—they started rebuilding some of the stuff, and so we would take and go to the—where they held the POW's, prisoners of war, and we would get these POW's, and make them—duty at the sawmill, move the lumber and what have you, and also take and they started rebuilding some of the stationary, smaller bridges with some of the lumber. And we were up around Kepps[sp??], Germany, at that time, I think, and we'd pick them up in the morning and be with them all day, and putting them back at night, and—

Brooks: And what were they like?

Krueger: Some of them were very good, and some of them had a chip on their shoulder. You had to kind of encourage them at times to move, you know, they figured that they didn't have to, and so you sort of had to encourage them to move, 'cause they didn't want to be there. But a lot of the German people were real pleasant – they—they felt that Hitler had gotten them into a mess and they had to live with it, but they'd been through wars, how many times, and this had been going on for years, so they just took for granted, you know. It's just one of those things that they were used to it, used to living with it, and was just a way of life, which is, I'm glad it was over there and not here.

Brooks: So, do you remember your feelings and everyone's reactions when the war was over, in Europe at least?

Krueger: Oh yes, we were—when the war ended, we were gonna go the other way; they had us training and preparing, we knew the rivers in Japan, we knew all about what was going to happen. So, we started training, I think it was on the Danube River, and when they dropped that bomb, there was a big party, 'cause everybody was so happy we didn't have to go, and so we did some celebrating there.

Brooks: Did you celebrate VE-Day, too, before that?

Krueger: Oh yes.

Brooks: What was that like?

Krueger: It was a big party. We would—a lot of people made wine, and they would have it by the barrel at their home, and then we would run across some of this, why, we would, we would borrow it and take it with us, 'cause we had these trucks, and we could store it. So we had stored a little bit, and so, everybody brought it out, and contributed to the cause, and, we had a big party. In fact, it went on for about three days, and we were living in tents at the time, so they would go in and get the cot of the individual, and put him on the cot, and haul him back to his tent, and maybe six or seven hours later he would wake up and come back out again, and—

Brooks: Keep celebrating?

Krueger: Yeah. We were so glad it was over with that—we were so sick and tired of it that, you know, anxious to get home—which took forever. We started home at the end of August, and they had these Cigarette Camps down near the—in France, near Le Havre and areas where the ships would come in. Well, we were happy we were going home, so we went by train down there, and got there, unloaded, and they had—we were living in tents, you know, these ten-man tents, and so we got there, and—but it was supposed to be a five-day stay, that's all the camp was prepared for, a five-day stay. Well, in the meantime, the longshoremen in New York went on strike. So the month of September and the month of October, we sat at this

Cigarette Camp. Uh, they were not prepared for this, because the ships were not coming in to take the guys home. So we sat there during this period. We left there the twenty-eighth of November, on the ship the *USS West Point*, and got to Boston—let's see, we left there about the twenty-eighth, we got there in the beginning of December. It took us five days. And then they processed us again at Boston, and then to Fort Sheridan, final exam at Fort Sheridan, and then we went home.

Brooks: So—

Krueger: I think I got home on the sixth or eighth or something like that—I can't remember exactly—in December.

Brooks: So, when you were in the—and they're called Cigarette Camps? When you're in the Cigarette Camp, what did you do with your time?

Krueger: There wasn't—you just, you know, just goofed around, you might say, or what have you, and because it was cold, and all you had was a little pot-bellied stove, and they did not have the fuel for it for an existing time - you just got there two days and you left. So we did about everything we could to heat the tent up, because when you get into November, the weather gets cold. We had snow, and cold weather, and—and the kitchens—a lot of the food would come in—was shipped over by boat, and it would come in wooden crates, wooden boxes, and what have you, and so what we would do is we would watch the kitchen so that when they unpacked these boxes and threw them out the back, we would get them and break them up and use them for fuel, 'cause they had run out of the briques—bis—the little coal nuggets, what have you, that they had there, they didn't have enough. We would burn anything up. We'd go out in the woods, and pick up branches and—you name it. It was a long stay.

Brooks: And what was the mood like in that camp?

Krueger: Well, we were lucky - there was a USO Red Cross and I had more donuts and coffee than Carter had little liver pills. We just—that was our sanctuary; we'd go to the Red Cross, they had a building there, and we'd go in there, and have donuts and coffee and at times they would have a little entertainment or what have you, somebody playing the piano, or something like that. These were stationary buildings that they had, and so that would be our spare time, entertainment and—

Brooks: —donuts.

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: [laughs] So, before we talk about you coming back home and what happened after service, are there any other stories about when you were overseas that you want to

tell? Anybody who you met that was really interesting, or anything funny that happened, or anything sad?

Krueger: We got to be rather a close-knit organization; being small, you had to be able to trust everybody who worked with you. And so, you got to know each other pretty well. And we had a lot of guys from Chicago, who were in the Polish neighborhood. And they kind of stuck together also. But we got to know each other, and we had—after the war we had reunions every year, in a different city and a different place. Somebody would take it over, and they would have—throughout the Midwest like Ohio, and Michigan, and Illinois, and—every year we would have a reunion, and we would get to see the guys, and, you know, get to know what they were doing, and—they're married and what have you, and their jobs, and—so, it's kind of interesting, after a while, to get to know the guys, and there was a lot of guys who came home together, from in Green Bay, who—We would meet at noon at the Huddle Bar down on—downtown, and when we first come home, 'cause this was a—what would you say? “Getting used to civilian life again,” they call it? And go down there and shoot pool and shake dice, and just stick together, and—'cause nobody wanted to go to work exactly the day after they got home. I made an agreement with my parents: I said, “This first month, just don't depend upon me for anything.” I said, “I'm gonna go when I want to, come home when I want to,” I said, “I've been told for three years where I'm gonna go and what I'm gonna do.” I said, “I'm just going to enjoy this month.” [laughs] So that's what I did. I said, “Don't wait for me for meals, or anything; I'll eat, but I'm just gonna try to enjoy things.

Brooks: And you were twenty-two when you came home?

Krueger: Yeah. So, it was another way of life, it took a little getting used to. A different routine, and, you know, different thing. Things had changed in the meantime. People back here continued with their life, and you had to catch up, would you say? Being single, you'd call your old girlfriend up, and she'd say, “Oh, I'm married, and I got kids.” [laughs] It was a different world. But it was kind of fun catching up, and going out.

Brooks: Did you—was there anything about being in the service that you missed?

Krueger: Yeah, the whole thing back home, you know, it just, it kind of took three years out of your life, you might say. But you could—you were just transformed into some other place, some other thing, and then all of a sudden you come back, and you sit your back - not exactly where you were when you left - but you might say you started over. And that was a difficult thing at times, you know.

Brooks: Did you—

Krueger: You had to get used to it.

Brooks: Did you ever miss being in the service, though? Did you ever—did you consider going back into the Army ever, or—

Krueger: I thought about it at times, when things were a little difficult, but, no. I decided that I had to, you know, get on with it. It was a great experience, it—it showed you—you sure got up and learned in a hurry. It was not a slow process, and it was a great experience. You've seen what the rest of the world is like, and how other people live, and you might say how cheap life is. Those were things that were hard to accept.

Brooks: What do you mean by that? “How cheap life is?”

Krueger: Well, when you see—when people pass away out there in the battlefield, they have to be picked up, and when you see a two-and-a-half-ton truck with a trailer behind it, and you see two guys out there, one picks them up by the hands, the other picks them by the feet, swing them back and forth and throw them up in the truck, and the bodies are piled up - pretty cheap, you know? Like, you know, just like a piece of wood, cords of wood, you know?

Brooks: So when you came back to civilian life, did you talk about those experiences with anyone? Was there any way for you to share that?

Krueger: Not really. We talked about the good times, the things that happened, when we get together, you know, down there, and shoot the bull, and talk about the good times, things that happened, what that happened, and what have you, and some of that stuff we just, you know, couldn't talk about. Just kinda, you know. It was there, it happened, and it was an experience.

Brooks: Have you found it easier to talk about as you've gotten older?

Krueger: A little bit, yeah, mm-hm. It—after you'd thought about it for a while, you know, you accepted it, and when you were, you might say, a young kid, it was a shock. I mean, you couldn't believe this stuff was happening. You just, you know—to see what went on and what the stuff did, and you—it was not easily acceptable. It was a different way of life, would you say, and it—things felt kind of cheap with life, you know, and with death. It's another person, another thing, another object. Almost an object, not a person. That's a really different way of looking at it, to accepting it, which—sort of stretching things a little.

Brooks: And when you came back, did you start over at Kraft?

Krueger: Yeah. I went back there, Kraft.

Brooks: Did you use the GI Bill at all? Did you take advantage of—



Krueger: I—I went to Kraft, I worked during the day at Kraft, and then I went to the University Extension at night.

Brooks: Using the GI Bill?

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: Taking advantage of that? What did you study?

Krueger: Generally—those were general studies in at UWGB [University of Wisconsin-Green Bay] at the University Extension. They didn't have UWGB or anything that—and it was in a little Quonset hut by East High School, and I would go there at night and study, and then—I stayed there for two, two and a half years. Then I went down to Madison, that's where I met my wife—

Brooks: How'd you meet your wife?

Krueger: —and we got married in 1950.

Brooks: How did you two meet?

Krueger: Hm?

Brooks: How did you two meet?

Krueger: I gave her a ride home. She was going home on a weekend, and she had a friend, and—who was riding with me, and he said, “Do you mind if this gal rides home with us?” and I said “No.” So I started seeing her, and later we got married. 1950, and we came to Sturgeon Bay, in 1951.

Brooks: Why did you decide to settle here?

Krueger: Well, this was her home town, and we just kind of decided that we were going to go someplace, we didn't know exactly where. We thought, “We either go to California, or Alaska, or we go to Sturgeon Bay.” We kind of flipped a coin, and ended up in Sturgeon Bay.

Brooks: Wow.

Krueger: Then I had a sporting goods store, and a liquor store. And they were in the building where Pip Printing is now, on the corner of Jefferson and Fourth Avenue. And we were there for thirty-four years.

Brooks: So—and you mentioned this before, but was there anything else you wanted to say about how you kept in touch with people you served with, or any other veterans' organizations you were a part of, or—

Krueger: AmVets [American Veterans], yeah, and—we had a reunion every day and we—every year, I should say, and then I kept contact with a lot of guys from Green Bay. One of them would come up here all the time, and every time he'd come up he'd give me a buzz and we'd go out to—for lunch, or what have you, and then I—when I went down to Green Bay, I would see some of them, and we'd get together. We got to be—as I said, it was kind of a close-knit organization, because, under the circumstances, we—the way we operated, you had to be able to know somebody, trust somebody, that he wasn't going to let you down. He was on the other end of the thing line, you know. You had to trust him. But it was a friendly one; we would—as I said, we'd go to different cities, different places, every once a year, and take over a hotel or what have you—'cause there would be all three companies, you know, that would get together, so you had quite a gang.

Brooks: Is that still happening now?

Krueger: It happened until about—about five or six years ago, and it got the—it got limited as to how many people, and so we used to have—In the last few years we had it in Green Bay all the time, and so they—the hotel would no longer take us 'cause we didn't have enough people. Yeah, we had used the hotel for years, but they just decided that we were not enough people to make it worthwhile. So it got passed by the wayside, 'cause the amount would start to get limited, some of the individuals no longer could travel, could not drive, and what have you, so—

Brooks: Do you still keep in touch, though, with the people who are alive, still?

Krueger: With some of them, yeah. There's a few of them, get Christmastime, Christmas cards, what have you, and just to, you know, contact and say “Hi”, and what we're doing, and, yeah, I get Christmas cards from Michigan and all over some of the—In fact, one of the wives who was on our trip—Betty and I formed a trip, and sent letters out to all the people we had contact with, and we organized a trip to retrace our steps through Europe. So we started out the same place in—in England, visited the Camp Foxley where we were stationed, where they had the hospital, which it was torn down after a while. And then we went across to Germany, and through Germany, and back home.

Brooks: What was that like, being there?

Krueger: Oh, it was fun, you know, seeing how things had changed, what had happened, places we were, you know, what we did, and—it was very interesting. And to go down to the beach and see what it was like at the beach. They still have a lot of stuff down there they left. Some of it is partial. It was kind of interesting to go through, and—we were in England, at the town of Hereford, and we were staying at the motel there, and we went to this one store, and the gals were shopping in there, and—the wives were shopping in there, and we were kidding, joking about, you know, how things had changed in the time and everything, and so there was

one gal behind the counter who was waiting on the gals, and they were buying cards and stuff like that, and so we walked out and were gonna go down the block, and see if this pub was still there, and so the gal asked the—the waitress asked the gals, “Were they actually here during the war?” and they said, “Yeah, they were stationed here.” “Oh my goodness,” she said. “If I’d have known that, I’d have asked them, ‘Have you got any gum, chum?’” When she was a little kid in England, that used to be the same thing: “Have you got any gum, chum?” ‘cause they couldn’t get gum like that, you know. So we had our rations, so we would always have a package of gum with us and we’d give it to the kids, and—

Brooks: So she—

Krueger: [inaudible] was always asking, “Got any gum, chum?” you know, little kids. She said, “I used to ask them for gum.”

Brooks: Wow. So she might have met you, before?

Krueger: Yeah [laughs]. Kinda be cute, be kind of fun, be kind of peculiar, you know, to go back and to think, My goodness, these kids were running around at that time, and to see something, you know, that they’re—couldn’t believe—So we went down to this pub and the same guy was still there. He still owned it.

Brooks: Really? Wow.

Krueger: So we walked in there, and started shooting the bull with him, and we told him, “It took us a little while to get back here,” we said, “but we finally got back.” He said, “No kidding.” he said. “You mean you guys were here then?” “Yeah.” “Oh,” He said, “Here, the drinks are on the house.” [laughs] So we sat there and we were having a beer with him and then took off and visited Camp Foxley and to see what happened to it and—it was, they had torn down all the buildings and everything - the only thing that exists was the heating plant, and it was fun to go back there and see what, you know, what had happened to it, and then we were in France, I think it was in Paris, and we came down to the hotel to dinner, and we’re sitting there talking and the guy at the next table hears us talking about Camp Foxley, and he looked over there and he said, “What about Camp Foxley?” he said. And we said, “Well, we were stationed there during the war,” and he said, “Well, I stayed there after the war!” They were using it then for a camp for displaced persons, and he said, “I lived there for a little while!” And that’s how we knew what happened to the thing after the war, after the hospital had disbanded and got out of there they used it for people who had been displaced persons by, I don’t know, by shelling or what have you, where they lost homes, and they—

Brooks: Was he French, this gentleman? Was he French?

Krueger: No, he was English.

Brooks: He was English.

Krueger: But he was there, you know, here's this guy at the hotel, and he knows all about Camp Foxley. I said, "What goes on in this world?"

Brooks: What are the odds?

Krueger: Yeah, the odds of having something like that happen.

Brooks: So how many people went on that trip?

Krueger: I think we had about twenty-five.

Brooks: Wow.

Krueger: It was a fun thing, you know, going back and, and we had a fantastic driver and a fantastic guide. His father actually owned the bus line, so—and when we were going through France and Germany, any time there was any event or any little thing happening, we could just—you know, didn't have to stick to a schedule or what have you, we could do it. And so we—a lot of these little villages have their own festivals, you know, and this kind of a festival, and that kind of a festival—so we would see one of these going on and we'd go in there and join the festival. And they'd be glad to have us, you know, just—and we'd try the food they had and what have you and stuff like that, and it was really great.

Brooks: What year was that?

Krueger: It had to be in the late eighties—late eighties or the early nineties.

Brooks: Okay, that's very neat. So I just want to ask if you have anything that you want to add that—a little bit more general about your whole experience, about anything you would say about the experience of serving and being a part of World War II?

Krueger: Well, as I said, it was a great fast growing-up. It sort of changed your life; it changed your outlook on life. Before that, you were just a happy-go-lucky young kid, and you sort of came back as an, an adult. And it was a great experience—I mean a great learning experience to—to see the world, you might say, and to see how other people lived and what happened, and other people's attitudes and, just, you know, it changed you. You couldn't really go back to what you were before. It—it was amazing, you know, and I think if you talk to most veterans, they'd say, well, it changed their life. I feel fortunate in a way that I was in a war that you knew who the enemy was. I just cannot visualize what they're doing now, and not knowing who you're fighting. I can see why they're having so many mental problems, because this has got to be pressure to walk down the street and you don't know whether you're going to get blown up or not or what have you, and it's got to be a real pressure thing on your thoughts and on—you don't know what's

going to happen tomorrow. At least we knew who the enemy was. But they don't. That's gotta be hell. I can see why they get, you know, when they come home, it's gotta be tough on—it's just, it's entirely different.

Brooks: Anything else to add about your veteran experience before we talk about your—the things you donated?

Krueger: No. That's it.

Brooks: Okay. I'm going to stop this for right now.

[End of file 1]

[File 2]

**Interview Note: Mr. Krueger donated additional materials to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum and the following is a transcript of the discussion of these materials.**

Brooks: This is part two of an interview with Emery Krueger, and we're gonna talk about some of the material he's donated. So, I'm just gonna show you the pictures to jog your memory a little and if you can just tell me what they are and any stories about how you got them that you can remember.

Krueger: Some of these it's gonna be difficult as to what time, you know, what—

Brooks: Sure. This is a German first aid kit, this is the cover, and that's on the inside. So.

Krueger: I think I got this out of a half-track that was blown up partially. And I needed a box to keep my writing stuff in. And so I figured this'd be a good thing to do it, it'd keep it dry and keep it together and what have you. And also letters that I had, you know, you throw them in a barracks bag and it just—they get all mixed up and crumbled, so I picked up this box and it's a German first-aid kit that they had in there. So I just decided that was, "Hey, that'd be a good thing to have. I could keep things together and my stationary and what have you, if I wanna write a letter." So that's why I picked it up and took it at that time.

Brooks: When you picked it up did it have anything inside of it?

Krueger: Ah, well, the cover was kinda blown off, up, you know, open. And there was a few things in there but not, you know, not—it didn't amount to much really of anything, 'cause the explosion kind of took care of anything that would be—few old pieces of bandage or what have you, but nothing much there.

Brooks: Nothing useful?

Krueger: [laughs]

Brooks: Do you—and you don't know, like, when it had gotten blown up, do you?

Krueger: No.

Brooks: You just came across it?

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: After it had happened. So, and did it work out well as—

Krueger: Yeah!

Brooks: —for your stationary?

Krueger: It was great. Kept it dry and if you were living in a tent or what have you or, you know, you had a place to put it and you could keep track of things, it was great [laughs].

Brooks: So, then this next one is the Nazi banner. And we have a note that said it was taken from Nuremberg Stadium.

Krueger: Mm-hm.

Brooks: So can you tell me about that?

Krueger: Ah, date-wise I don't have the slightest idea when. We were going by the stadium. I was on one of my little excursions for the headquarters service and we noticed these banners on the stadium. And said, "Hey, that'd be pretty nice. Let's go up there and get one." So we did. And then after I realized that, you know—when I got home with it you can't display it or anything, or put it out or, you know, it just—so I actually kept it in this box for years. Kept it safe. And, but we didn't—I couldn't put it out or do anything with it. Just one of those things that—but I thought it was a, you know—at the time you don't think about consequences or anything, you just say, "Well, that'd be pretty nice. So let's take one down and take it with us." So we did.

Brooks: And what was Nuremberg Stadium like?

Krueger: Nuremberg Stadium was the—you might say the big thing for Hitler. This is where he did a lotta his speeches, where his Nazi—he had a big parade ground there and everything. And this was a big center of his promotion, would you say, or what have you. And it was the first stadium I'm seen, um, and you might say a lot of U.S. has copied this—first stadium I've seen where you actually had—you could use it—you had your bleachers and everything, but in back of it the basis of it was built so you had rooms in the back. That were used for meetings and stuff like that. Could be a regular headquarters, and everything. And this was a big, big deal for the Nazi party. And when we went back to our trip through Europe we went to Nuremberg Stadium. And as I recall, when they signed this peace agreement and everything, I think there was some wording in there that the stadium could not be used for any celebration or any meetings or any group what have you. And so, um, when we went back there the stadium was being used just like a city garage. They got their trucks parked in there and everything, but it can't be used for any, anything.

Brooks: Interesting.

Krueger: I don't know if it still exists right now but it did at that time. I was kinda surprised, you know.

Brooks: So—

Krueger: The guide there was—[inaudible] was telling us, all about, it can't be used for anything or.

Brooks: So what was going through your head when you were so close to Nuremberg Stadium and so close to all this Nazi paraphernalia? Do you remember?

Krueger: Well, it just was one of the, you might say, the rah-rah things that was a big deal for the Nazi party. You get people who are dedicated to a something, and they're really dedicated. Found this out on the trip to Russia also, how the—this is before they changed over there—and how dedicated these party members are, you know. It just—that's it, that's their life, that's their—

Brooks: Yeah.

Krueger: It's amazing.

Brooks: So, being a kid from the U.S., what did you think of that?

Krueger: Well, we didn't have anything like that here, you know. Well, you got politicians but that's [laughs] beside the point. But anyhow, it's a—for the U.S. to be involved in this and to be dedicated to it, was a little amazing, you know, how they could be brought in to this group. And perform and do whatever they had to do and be so dedicated to it. 'Cause they just—even after the way, why, they just—there was nothing like Hitler and his ideas and his ways. Sure.

Brooks: Okay. So, then the next thing we have is the German belt buckle. Do you remember where you got that?

Krueger: No, I just picked up some of the stuff as I—I would find it or what have you, or come upon it, or, you know. I just figured it was something different. Young kid attracted to it, you know, just—it was something I thought I could probably use. But after a while decided that [laughs] might not be wise to—on some of this stuff, to—you might—some people get the wrong idea.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Krueger: And they just can't accept it. And, um, you—especially some of the Jewish friends would not think too highly of it [laughs].

Brooks: Same thing with the cap that you picked up?

Krueger: Yeah. I thought it was nice, it was clever, it was clean, it wasn't all beat up. And so I decided, "Hey, that looks—it's pretty attractive." So. I thought about wearing it once, and then I thought, "Nah. Let's not push things too far." [laughs] Thought if I went to an AmVet meeting or something like that and came in there with this cap on. I thought, "Well, that's not—" [laughs] That'd not be too wise.

Brooks: Yeah. People might get the wrong idea.

Krueger: They were just, you know, souvenir like, something to have.

Brooks: Were most people picking stuff up? Was it kinda like, get whatever you can—



Krueger: Well, you could get things, you know, but you were limited as to what you could do. All you had was that one barracks bag and you had all your clothes in there so you had to have something that was—I picked up a German helmet but then when we went home I found out I didn't have room for it so I gave it to somebody and he said, "Well, I'll take it and I'll send it to you." He never did. [laughs]

Brooks: Never did. Oh. And you also have an ammunition belt.

Krueger: Yeah, that was another one like the belt [buckle]. We saw it and the guy didn't need it anymore so I took it.

Brooks: Was it on someone when you took it?

Krueger: Mm-hm [laughs].

Brooks: Well, we'd like to know. I mean, I can handle it.

Krueger: Well, yeah, it's, it's—he didn't need it anymore. So we just borrowed it.

Brooks: Did you ever use it?

Krueger: Ah, no. We had our own, you know. So I just took it to have a—I liked that it's leather and it's got good pockets on it, I thought maybe I could use it for something, to carry, besides ammunition.

Brooks: So when you found stuff like this, was there ever any arguing over who got what—

Krueger: Mm, no.

Brooks: —did you ever have to fight over them?

Krueger: No.

Brooks: Nothing. Just whoever found it first?

Krueger: Yeah, got it, and that was it.

Brooks: Yeah. When you found the ammunition belt was there other stuff around that other people took?

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah? Do you wanna—can you go into any more detail for me?

Krueger: Not really, no. Whatever they could—whatever they wanted or, you know, depends on what their mood was, you might say. Or how they felt, or—

Brooks: Sure. Okay. And then there's the—two things on here: one of them is the patch. That's the patch I think and then that's the pin. That—was that pin on the flag, do you remember? Or, you can just tell me, I don't know.

Krueger: I don't remember [pause]. I think this is just something they wore. They wore on their uniforms, if I'm not mistaken.

Brooks: That pin?

Krueger: Mm-hm. A Division or a group or what have you, signified what they were in.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Krueger: You know, like a—we'd have a patch, like, 3rd Army or something you had done or what have you, to designate that—what you had done or accomplished or something like that, I think that's what that basically is.

Brooks: And this one, do you remember the cloth patch?

Krueger: It was just something they have on—wear on their clothing. They could take and wear this if they had—not really in uniform they could just, you know, put it on to designate the—

Brooks: To identify themselves?

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: So I'm assuming you came across several dead Nazis?

Krueger: Oh, yeah.

Brooks: Did you ever encounter any live Nazis?

Krueger: Oh, yeah.

Brooks: You personally?

Krueger: Oh, sure.

Brooks: Like, that had been taken prisoner, or—

Krueger: Well, taken prisoner and also other ones.

Brooks: And what was that like?

Krueger: Well, they, you know, they were enemies [laughs]. But there was a—like any other human being, you know, just we got along together.

Brooks: Okay. I don't wanna push you but if there's more story here—

Krueger: No, it's, um—we didn't get contact, too much of it. We—we also had contact with the Russians at times, you know. And they were happy to see us. This was my first—we met some Russians, and they had to sort of salute and celebrate. And so, they had this—it was like a canteen and they wanted to give us a drink. And so—I thought it was water they were pouring out. It was pure white, you know. So, sure, you know. "Salute!" Well, I didn't know it was vodka. Hundred proof vodka. I thought I was gonna die. And stuff got down about here and splashed and I just thought, "Oh!" I wanted to die about that time, because it just—I had never had vodka, you know. It just—I thought, "What do these guys drink?!"

Brooks: And this was in Germany?

Krueger: Yeah, mm-hm.

Brooks: So you picked up most of this stuff after the war ended?

Krueger: No, most of this stuff was picked up during the war.

Brooks: But when you were interacting with the Russians, that was—

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: —after?

Krueger: They started to filtrate when we were up in Kipsun[sp??], they started filter, and this was going to be part of their territory. And so they started to filter in. So we got to—they were not too happy with us for being there. And they wanted to take over, as Russia did, and everything.

Brooks: Right.

Krueger: But these two came into Kipsun[sp??] and they were happy and, you know, they were gonna celebrate with us.

Brooks: [laughs] So then we have these, the matchbooks. Which—I don't know if there was a story behind that but—

Krueger: No, those I think, um, probably came from the USOs or the Red Cross, or something like that.

Brooks: Did you smoke?

Krueger: I did when there, yes. I started, when I went into the service. We had breaks, you know, we'd be training and they'd have a break and everybody'd sit down and smoke and I'd just kinda look around and didn't smoke at all so finally I decided, "Ah, well—" and then at times they would so call "police the area" and they'd go around and pick up all the butts and everything and get rid of them. Well, I said, "If I'm gonna pick these dog-gone things up I might just well contribute to them." You know. So I started to smoke, and when we got overseas cigarettes were free. And so got to be a habit. But then also I found out that, when we got to Paris, um, it was rather an expensive habit because you can get—for a carton of cigarettes you can get twenty five dollars. So, it was time to limit your smoking and time to sell. So we—if you went to Paris you always asked any of the guys, "Do you have any extra cartons you wanna get rid of?" So when you went to any of those towns like that, why, there was usually a motor pool where—you went by truck, you'd have a whole bunch in the back of the truck and so usually the motor pool where you could park the truck, well they would hang around the motor pool, the French or German or what have you, and they would hang around there. First thing you got off the truck they'd say, "Cigarette, cigarette." You know. "Chocolate, chocolate." And what have you. And so, you could say, "Yeah." And then you'd bargain. Generally about twenty five dollars for a carton. They were really happy to

get it 'cause they sold them for more than that but it was just the idea that twenty five bucks was twenty five bucks [laughs].

Brooks: Yeah. That's a lot of money.

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: So then did you stop smoking when you came back to the States?

Krueger: Shortly after that, yeah. I just decided it was a filthy habit. And if you went out at night and drinking and smoking, got up the next morning and your mouth tasted like a [laughs]—so I just decided, “Ah, I had it.” And I quit.

Brooks: So, these were—but these were free right? They handed out—

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: —this stuff for free? The matchbooks. And then—

Krueger: Yeah, there was lotta war bonds, stuff, you know, during the war. They were selling bonds.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Krueger: For financing the war and that. And there was signs all over, "Buy, buy war bonds." A big thing.

Brooks: And then the last thing is this, um, which I think was probably yours? Or, I don't know, it says—

Krueger: No, that's from—it's like the same, here. Um—

Brooks: Oh, from the hat.

Krueger: Like that, see.

Brooks: Okay.

Krueger: Same basis.

Brooks: Uh-huh.

Krueger: It's just a loose one from a—

Brooks: So did this—this pin come off of another—

Krueger: Another cap.

Brooks: —Nazi cap? Ok. Do you remember where you got that one?

Krueger: No.

Brooks: Just picked it up?

Krueger: Just picked it up some place and threw it with my junk, it was small you could carry it.

Brooks: Do you remember, what was the—the neatest thing that anyone picked up and got to bring home?

Krueger: Well, they—must of them wanted the 9mm handgun.

Brooks: The Nazi handgun?

Krueger: Mm-hm. Lot of them, that was a prize if they could fine one, take it off of somebody.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Krueger: They'd go looking for those. Walk amongst them and see if they could find one.

Brooks: Did most people find one?

Krueger: Ah, quite a few guys did, yeah.

Brooks: They were hard—not too hard to get?

Krueger: Mm-hm. It was kind of a good souvenir.

Brooks: Did you send anything back while you were out there? Were you ever able to—

Krueger: No.

Brooks: —send anything home?

Krueger: Mailing things was kinda difficult. Number one, finding a box to put it in. Number two, getting it so that you could send it home, was kinda difficult. And you also understood that a lot of stuff never got there. Some of these people in between there and here accumulated some war things. They never got home.

Brooks: Did you get anything from home while you were—besides letters—did you—were your family able to send you anything?

Krueger: Oh, yeah. You'd get some fudge, you'd get some—from some friends I'd get, you know, fudge or cookies, or you know, stuff like that. At times the cookies were a little stale by the time you get them, but, you know—because they'd been on the road for a month or so and they were a little bit hard, little crusty, but, eh, they still tasted good.

Brooks: Better than nothing.

Krueger: Compared to K-rations and stuff like that. And at times, in our close group, at times you got a box from home and you would just set it down and everybody enjoyed themselves and then when someone else got a box they would share it, and it was, you know, kind of a good thing to walk in and have somebody getting a box at mail call. Sit down and enjoy it. Especially if it was fudge, something like that [laughs].

Brooks: Wisconsin has good fudge, huh?

Krueger: Yeah. Or homemade cookies, or what have you. People tried cakes but they were so stale and so hard by the time they got there and they got thrown around, bounced around, you know, you didn't have any frosting left on there, it was all on the sides of the box container. And there wasn't too much there, but some hard crumbling stuff [laughs].

Brooks: [laughs] Not very appetizing.

Krueger: No.

Brooks: Alright, do you have anything else to say about any of this stuff?

Krueger: Uh, no.

Brooks: No more—

Krueger: I wish I could give you dates or what have you but I just don't have the slightest idea. Haven't thought about that for years, I just—you know.

Brooks: Yeah.

Krueger: And it's been a while.

Brooks: It's been a while.

Krueger: A few years.

Brooks: Yeah. Yeah, and we're less interested in the dates and things than we are about the stories of how you got them.

Krueger: It a—it's a—time flies. And it's been a little while since I been there. In fact, I was trying to remember some of the cities and places and what have you and when we went back there we tried to get to places like Nancy, which was a popular—it's a big, large city, a big city in France and it's—they have good places, good food and stuff like that. And it was kinda fun to see how things had changed. Cleaned up and built up again and when we went back to—up into Brussels and that area, up in Belgium, it's amazing how they have re-done a lot of the buildings and work and they pride themselves on the age of the building. I mean, when you look at the cornerstone of some of these buildings and they're from fifteen-something. And you just look at the building itself and it, you know, looks like it was built ten years ago. But they pride themselves on their—they don't just come up with a bulldozer and knock it down and rebuild it, they try and keep it.

Brooks: Right. Preserve it, yeah.

Krueger: Preserve it. Fix it up and, and lot of the—most the stuff over there is old, but well kept. Which is really nice, you know, compared to here where they got that bulldozer handy and they just knock it down and it's just, you know, seems like there's no pride in their building.



Brooks: Yeah.

Krueger: It's easier to knock it down and re-do it.

Brooks: It's a shame.

Krueger: Yeah.

Brooks: Well do you have anything else to add about anything? Any—this stuff or any of the things we talked about before, or anything I forgot to ask?

Krueger: Nothing I can think about, no.

Brooks: Okay. All right. I'm gonna turn this off now if that's okay.

Krueger: Okay.

Brooks: Thank you.

[End of interview]