

A Veterans Oral History
Heritage Education Commission
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Gaylord D. Paulson
Narrator

Linda Jenson
Interviewer

2007

LJ: Do you want to state your name?

GP: Gaylord D. Paulson, I live at 2677 Meadow Creek Circle, Fargo, North Dakota, 58104.

LJ: Mr. Paulson, where were you born?

GP: I was born in Castlewood, South Dakota, which is a small town in eastern South Dakota, down by Watertown.

LJ: How big of a town was that?

GP: Well, I don't know, I suppose 2-300 or 3-400. I was not living with my grandparents [unclear] Christian Paulson and Evelyn Paulson and they lived in western South Dakota in Haakon County near Philip, South Dakota.

LJ: What did they do?

GP: Farmers, ranchers.

LJ: Where did you go to high school?

GP: Where did I go to high school? In Philip, South Dakota, which is between Rapid City and Pierre.

LJ: Did you go onto college?

GP: After I was in the military, I went for a bachelor's and Ph.D.

LJ: What did you do prior to entering the military?

GP: I went to high school and I graduated high school in 1955 ... May or June. I worked at the home ranch and I worked for neighboring ranches and I worked construction. I worked on oil wells in a variety of things and then I went into the Army in January or February of 1956.

LJ: Were you drafted?

GP: I volunteered for the draft because I knew I would be drafted and I didn't have the money to go college so I volunteered for the draft to get it over with.

LJ: What branch of the service did you serve in?

GP: In the Army.

LJ: What was your military training like?

GP: What kind of training did I take?

LJ: Where did they send you?

GP: Well first of all I went to Arkansas, that was just for induction. Then I immediately went to Fort Carson, Colorado, and that would have been I suppose February of 1956. There I took infantry training for two or three months, whatever that was. And then after that, I took artillery training in 105 Howitzers at Fort Carson, Colorado.

LJ: Any special memories of training?

GP: Well, not particularly, I mean it was what any person in the military would experience. I mean you go through the basic training and then we went through advanced training and in our case the whole division was going to be sent to Germany. So we took artillery training and then I think we took what they call advanced artillery training, unit training, and we did that through – well basic starting in February and then right after that artillery training and then after that advanced artillery training and that all ended I suppose in, I can't remember, July or August of 1956 and then we went to Germany ... the whole unit went to Germany.

LJ: What did you do in Germany?

GP: I was in what they called the combat ready. Our division was in during the Cold War and we were what I think they called TONE and I'm not even sure what that stood for but basically it stood for a division that is combat ready. In other words, if a war started we were supposed to be trained to immediately to go into action. When we were in Germany, we were constantly going on maneuvers, on alerts, you know, and we'd go to special camps, and we'd fire the artillery and all of that. But we were on maneuvers quite a bit. I don't know, 10-20% of the time we were on maneuvers or you know road marches, practicing war games, if you will.

LJ: Tell us about some of the people you met during your time in the military, any buddies?

GP: Well, yes, good friends. I was in with the same people for two years. There were people from all the U. S., maybe not every state in the union, but nearly. We took our basic training together. We took our advanced unit training together and then all of the same people, or basically with some exceptions, the same people stayed together and we went to Germany and we remained

as a battery in a field artillery battalion. So the same guys I was with for two years. So, of course, you made good friends.

LJ: Do you still talk to any of them today?

GP: Yes, we've had two reunions, and I talk to them not on a daily basis but still Christmas cards. We've had two reunions and so we talk back and forth. I've talked to quite a few of them on the telephone and of course we have reunions you know, just talk, talk, talk about that.

LJ: How did you feel about leaving the military?

GP: Well, I was glad to get out. I mean not to leave some of the people I knew but I didn't care for the military. I never went in with the intention of making it a career, I went in because I knew that I would be drafted and I knew therefore the sooner I got it over with the better and then I could get on with my life. I don't regret being in the military but I had no intention of staying in. It wasn't my idea a life career and all.

LJ: What did you do after you left the military? Is that when you went on to college?

GP: Then I went to South Dakota State and got my bachelor's degree and then I went to the University of Wisconsin and got my masters and Ph.D. in Biochemistry.

LJ: Did you teach?

GP: No, I did research for 31 years for the Department of Agriculture, the Agriculture Research Service in the Department of Agriculture.

LJ: And where was that?

GP: In Fargo, here.

LJ: In Fargo, do you have any final thoughts about what you went through while serving your country in Germany?

GP: Well, not really. I mean it was part of the scene and being relatively poor I knew that where I was from I was going to be drafted and it was in those days considered by some people at least that it was the patriotic thing to do and I did. Was that my motivation for going in? In part but probably mostly because I knew that I was going to have to serve and that's just the way it was. The people who had money at that time could go to college right out of high school and therefore most of them could avoid being in the military. I didn't have the money to go to college or at least I didn't think I did, so that's the way it was. And I went in and put in my time, and do I regret it? No, I guess I'm proud that I did, but I had no intention of making a career out of it.

LJ: Mr. Paulson, how would you like to be remembered?

GP: As it relates to the military or?

LJ: No, just in general. And anyway you want to look at it. When it's all said and done, how do you want to be remembered?

GP: Well, I suppose, everybody wants the same thing. They want to be remembered as somebody who has done something useful and being honest and straightforward and all those nice words they usually say at funerals, whether they are true or not. So I mean I'm no different. I mean I suppose one word would be kind of hard to put it. I suppose you could say I tried, you know, got something done. There is no simple answer to that. I mean you wouldn't want – everybody wants to be known as a good guy or a good lady as the case may be, so I guess I'm no different. Yes.

LJ: Well, thank you very much.