

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Francis Merkley

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VR2-A-L-2016-045

Francis Merkley, a truck driver during World War II who helped deliver supplies in Persia and later over the hump in Burma to China, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember – WW II* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: September 28, 2016 Location: Merkley's home in Princeton, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:50 / 2.83 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 9, 2016, 2016.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Francis Merkley, *Veterans Remember*, VR2-A-L-2016-045

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Francis (Frank) Merkley was born on October 11th, 1920 in DePue, Illinois, and grew up there and later in nearby Princeton, Illinois, the fifth of ten children. He dropped out of school after seventh grade to get a job and help support the family. He worked with his brother, driving a truck as soon as he came of age. In November, 1942 he was drafted into the Army, and received training at Camp Robinson, Arkansas and at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi. The Army classified him as a truck driver.

He traveled by train to New York City, and was then shipped out on an English ocean liner to Persia in May, 1943, where he was assigned to the 3949th Quartermaster Truck Company. The voyage to Persia was his first, and it proved to be a memorable experience. Once in Persia, his unit ran convoys from Khorramshahr (now in Iran, near the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers) to Andimeshk, Iran, delivering supplies destined for the Soviet Union. In January, 1945 the unit was transferred to the China, Burma, India (CBI) theater of operations, traveling across India. The 3949th's trip to China over "the hump" took several days, and because of a unique set of circumstances, Merkley drove much of that alone, and not part of a convoy. On two occasions on the same dark night he described incidents where he is convinced that God intervened to save his life. Frank's experiences also included a memorable leave in Calcutta. Following the Japanese surrender, Merkley came home on a liberty ship, surviving a near catastrophe in a cargo plane, and a three day typhoon in the South China Sea. After his release from service, Frank returned to Princeton, where he eventually went into a successful business of his own, retiring at age ninety.

Subject Headings/Key Words: truck driver during World War II; 3949th Quartermaster Truck Company; delivering war supplies in the Persia theater; Burma Road; driving the 'hump' in the China-Burma-India theater (CBI); conditions on World War II troop ships; Tokyo Rose; liberty ships; Ledo Road

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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