

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Stanley Nikulski

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

Interview # VRK-A-L-2007-038

Stanley J. Nikulski, a U.S. Army Korean War veteran, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: December 18, 2007 Location: Nikulski residence, Rock Island, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Technical Support (cameraman, etc): N/A

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteer

Total Pages: 37 Total Time: 2 hrs 21 min / 2.35 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 1/23/2008.

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

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Abstract

Stanley Nikulski, *Veterans Remember*, VRK-A-L-2007-038

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Stanley J. Nikulski was born in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania on March 2, 1932. As a young boy he ran a news stand across from the steel mill where his father worked. He dropped out of high school in 1947, then had a variety of jobs before enlisting in the Army in September of 1949. Following Basic Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, Nikulski was posted to Fort Benning, Georgia, where he served until his unit was called up for service in Korea. He arrived in the Pusan Perimeter on August 1st, at the time the North Koreans were pressing the American and South Korean forces hard. He was immediately assigned to Company F, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, having received very little training for combat. For the next several weeks he served in the front lines near Masan, South Korea overlooking the Naktong River, until he was injured in the leg on September 1st, during what was possibly a friendly fire incident. Nikulski was moved to Camp Drake, Japan for his recovery. During this time, the Army lost track of his whereabouts, but in late November he was sent back to his unit, then fighting in northern North Korea.

Days later, the Chinese entered the war, pushing the UN forces, including Nikulski and the 35th Regiment, south in what was the longest retreat in U.S. military history. Nikulski recounts the horrors of this campaign, including the extreme cold, rugged terrain and scarcity of supplies, all while the Army had officially lost track of him. As a result, Nikulski went several months without pay, and was never promoted while in Korea. The 35th Regiment suffered heavy casualties during this campaign, but Company F performed well throughout, a fact which Nikulski contributes to his company commander, Captain Samuel Holliday. The unit fought back and forth through Seoul several times. Nikulski rotated home in the spring of 1951. He returned to the states, but decided to stay in the Army, eventually making it a career. Nikulski also discusses the challenges of adjusting back to civilian life after the Korean War.

Topics Covered: U.S. Army infantryman during Korean War; Forbes Field, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; Fort Benning, Georgia; Pusan Perimeter; Company F, 35th Infantry Regiment; 25th Infantry Division; casualty during the war; Camp Drake, Japan; Chinese entry into the war; the 'Big Bugout'; Captain Samuel Holliday; extreme cold and rugged terrain during campaign; fighting in and around Seoul, South Korea;

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