

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Richard Bowen

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

Interview # VRC-A-L-2010-009

Richard Bowen, who served in the U.S. Army in Germany from 1967 through 1968, 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: Mar 3, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: Mar 11, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Cheryl Wycoff & Rozanne Flatt, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 73 pgs Total Time: 2:05 + 2:18 / 2.08 + 2.3 = 4: 23 / 4.38 hrs

Session 1: Early life through completion of Army Basic Training and AIT

Session 2: Service in Germany from 1967-1968, and life after the service

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on 9/30/2010

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in
Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Richard Bowen, *Veterans Remember*, VRC-A-L-2010-009

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Richard Bowen, Jr. was born on April 20th, 1942 in tiny Colp, a mining town in southern Illinois. He grew up in a racially mixed community in an otherwise predominately white region of Illinois. He attended a segregated grade school in Colp, then the integrated Herrin High School, where he excelled in sports. Through sports he was sometimes exposed to racial prejudice. Following graduation Bowen attended the Vocational Technical Institute of Southern Illinois University at Carterville, then found work in Chicago. He returned home in 1964 and split his time between work in his father's restaurant and tavern, and business and accounting classes at SIU.

In November of 1966 Bowen was drafted into the Army, and attended Basic Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and then Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in heavy equipment maintenance. This was during a rapid troop build-up for the Vietnam War, and many of Bowen's fellow soldiers were there because of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's 'Project 100,000'. Bowen was originally on orders to go to Vietnam following AIT, but because of a stint in the hospital, his orders were changed to Germany for service in Company E, 10th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Infantry Division, which was stationed near Kissingen, Germany. His unit First Sergeant soon discovered Bowen's clerical skills, and he spent the bulk of his tour serving as the unit's clerk. He made the most of his opportunities to travel in and around Germany, even getting the opportunity to travel into East Berlin. Bowen also shares his astute observations about life in the Army in Germany during the height of the Vietnam War, when discipline and morale problems were beginning to build. He returned home in December of 1968 and soon completed his bachelor's degree at SIU-Carbondale before heading to Purdue University for graduate school and a lifelong career in education.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Colp, Illinois; Herrin, Illinois; racial climate in southern Illinois in the 1950s and 1960s; Southern Illinois University-Carbondale; Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; Basic Training experiences; Robert McNamara's 'Project 100,000'; training at Grafenwoehr, Germany; East Berlin during the Cold War; the Berlin Wall; discipline and race climate in the Army during Vietnam War; draft board practices

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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