

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Gene W. Blade

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

Interview # VRC-A-L-2012-046

Gene Blade, a veteran of the Cold War military who served both on active duty and with the Illinois Army National Guard, including as the USP&FO, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Dec 28, 2012; Jan 18, Feb 1 & Feb 14, 2013

Location: Blade residence in Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: Pat Freeman, ALPL volunteer

Edited by: Patty Maynor and Jan Culp, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 177 pgs    Total Time: 2:14 + 1:48 + 2:15 + 2:01 / 2.23 + 1.8 + 2.25 + 2.02 =  
8.3 hrs

Session 1: Growing up on an Illinois farm, & training in National Guard & Army

Session 2: Active duty experience and early career in the Illinois Army National Guard

Session 3: Experiences as the IL Army National Guard Legislative Liaison in late '70s

Session 4: Experiences as IL National Guard U.S. Property and Fiscal Officer in 1980s

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on April 11, 2013.

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

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# Abstract

Gene W. Blade, *Veterans Remember*, VRC-A-L-2012-046

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Gene Blade was born on September 12, 1934 in a farmhouse in Mercer, County, in Illinois. Gene grew up on the farm, attending a one room schoolhouse near Cameron. In 1952 he graduated from Monmouth High School. He soon found work at an Admiral plant in Galesburg and joined Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery, a local National Guard unit, in March 1954. He enlisted in the Regular Army in 1956, and attended training at Fort Carson, Colorado. He was placed in a leadership role due to his previous National Guard experience. In April, 1957 he shipped to Hawaii, and was assigned to E Battery, 8th Field Artillery Battalion, 25th ID as a wire (communications) team chief. He was assigned as the unit Fire Direction Chief, and had both an enjoyable and successful tour. His experiences included computing firing data for an 8 inch howitzer nuclear spotter round. (No nuclear round was fired.) Blade returned to the farm in 1958 due to his father's health. He was discharged from the Regular Army but immediately rejoined the local Guard unit. In 1960 he completed the IL Army National Guard OCS program and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant.

Blade farmed and worked in a factory in Galesburg. He then purchased a Firestone tire business. In 1964 he became a battery commander in Galesburg. In July, 1971 he attended the Regular Army FA Advanced Course at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, and in May, 1972 he began working full-time for the National Guard. In 1977 he became the first legislative liaison for the National Guard, and worked closely with General John Phipps, Illinois' Adjutant General, aggressively pursued a program of armory maintenance and upgrades. He is a graduate of the Army War College. In 1980 he returned to active duty as the USP&FO-IL (United States Property and Fiscal Officer). In that capacity he answered directly to the Chief, National Guard Bureau, and was responsible for all equipment, property and funds that came from the federal government. He was instrumental in many equipment and facilities upgrades that Illinois National Guard units enjoyed over the next fourteen years. Colonel Blade retired in 1994, but remained an active promoter of National Guard concerns.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Illinois Army National Guard; Field Artillery during the Cold War; growing up on a central Illinois farm during WW II & beyond; United States Property and Fiscal Officer; General John Phipps; armory maintenance and construction in Illinois; Colonel Lou Myers; Cold War duty in Hawaii; firing a nuclear spotter round; Lincoln's Challenge in Illinois

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