

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Isaac Mercer

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

Interview # VRK-A-L-2010--54

Isaac Mercer, an African-American infantryman with the 45th Division during the Korea War, 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 29, 2010 Location: Mercer residence in Dixon, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston MA

Edited by: Cheryl Wycoff and Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 55 pgs Total Time: 2:26 / 2.43 hrs

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

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Abstract

Isaac Mercer, *Veterans Remember*, VRK-A-L-2010-054

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Isaac Mercer was born on May 18th, 1927 in Metter, Georgia. The family moved to Detroit, Michigan when Isaac was very young, but in 1933 Isaac's mother moved in with relatives in Georgia, working as a cook to keep food on the table while insuring her children were regulars at the local Baptist church. Following high school, Isaac returned to Detroit, then moved to Sterling, Illinois in 1946 where he found work at the Northwestern Steel and Wire Company.

In late 1951 Mercer was drafted, and was inducted into the Army in early 1952. Following Basic Training, he was posted to Ft. Sheridan, Illinois, and married Earlene Kinney just weeks before he shipped to Korea. He arrived in Korea in February of 1953, and was assigned to an infantry company in the 45th Infantry Division, which served in the middle of the front lines near Heartbreak Ridge. Mercer's unit, like others, lived in the trenches that traced the hilltops of Korea, and conducted frequent patrols into no-man's land. Being the 'old man' of the platoon at twenty-five, he was put in charge when the lieutenant was injured. As the armistice approached, the Communists increased their pressure on the UN forces. In June, Mercer earned the Bronze Star for valor, and after a desperate hand to hand struggle only days before the armistice on July 27th, he earned another award for valor. By the end of 1953 he was back in Dixon, Illinois, and already working at the steel mill in Sterling.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Isaac Mercer; Earlene Kinney Mercer; Metter, Georgia; Sterling, Illinois in the 1940s and 50s; Northwestern Steel and Wire Company; labor relations at the steel mill; Dixon, Illinois; 45th Infantry Division; Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri; P.W. Dillon of Northwestern Steel and Wire CO;

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