

**Thomas Harry Jenkins** interviewed August 7, 2007

Sergeant, US Army, June 1948 – June 1952 (Active and National Guard)

Before Tom joined the National Guard, he worked as a meat cutter at Acme markets. He enlisted in the National Guard in 1948, and he figured that it was going to be a way to do some



service for the country and make some money. His enlistment was for 3 years, and at that point, there was no war. Tom was assigned to the 967<sup>th</sup> armored field artillery. They had training every week at the armory in Kingston, PA.

Train Tragedy...

During the Korean War, the 109<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, a fellow National Guard unit in the area, was federalized for active duty. When the 109<sup>th</sup> Battalion train was travelling through Ohio in September, 1950, there was an accident and over 30 soldiers were killed. Members of the 967<sup>th</sup> Battalion served as the honor guard when the bodies were brought back to Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Tom's unit was later federalized which tacked an extra 13 months onto his three year enlistment. The 967<sup>th</sup> was sent to Fort Sill, OK which is the Army's Field Artillery Training Center. The training in the National Guard had been quite limited – only a few hours per week and two weeks of training at Indiantown Gap, PA. Upon arrival at Fort Sill, Tom was assigned to temporary quarters which turned out to be an eight man tent with a cement floor. During their stay in temporary quarters, a tornado came through. Everyone had to evacuate to a permanent building because temporary quarters were not very sturdy.

Tom was at Fort Sill for about three months until he went to Fort Harrison, IN for nine weeks of Adjutant General School. There he learned procedures for serving as an Administrative Assistant. Tom did so well there he graduated with a rating of superior. When Tom was done with school there, he returned to his unit at Fort Sill.

Easter Pageant...

One thing that really impressed Tom was an Easter Pageant, birth to crucifixion, put on by the churches of Oklahoma just outside the base. He happened to be on Guard Duty that night and was able to see the whole play. What he really liked about it was the fact that there were three big stages, and each one lit up in turn to show the different parts of the Easter Story. There were many people involved in it, even horses, which made it all the more real. The play was long – it went until early in the morning – but he got to see the whole thing, and he was thankful for being on guard duty that night.

The scariest thing at Fort Sill was the Infiltration Course. When you went through the infiltration course, you had to keep your head low and stomach on the ground because there were guns firing above your head, and you had to crawl while keeping your own gun clean from the mud.

Tom had two stays in the infirmary at Fort Sill, once for a spider bite and a longer stay for the measles. These were the two times he missed attending church where he sang in the choir. Sometimes, Tom would go into town for church such as when he was at Fort Harrison and would attend church in Indianapolis.

One person who always stood out to him was the chaplain on base. This young man just had a way about him. He impressed Tom. He had a magnetic personality that made Tom feel that he'd like to be a minister. The way he handled people and talked with people was great and inspiring. He took the edge off when you were there and made people comfortable.

He admired all of his officers. He never encountered one that he could find fault with. They were all fair, and you respected them. They cared about the men they commanded. Before Tom was to be discharged, the Colonel asked if he was going to re-enlist. Tom explained that he wanted to go to college to become a minister, but he would like to return to the Army as a Chaplain. The Colonel was very understanding even though he would have preferred for Tom to re-enlist.

Even though he served stateside during the Korean conflict, Tom said of his service that war for him was almost like peacetime. Men were sent to Korea based on the jobs they did, rather than whole units at a time. Tom had no worries of bombs dropping or attacks. It was very secure. There were good meals and you felt safe, so it was good.