

Transcription: Kenneth Gandy

Today is Wednesday, May 15th, 2013. My name is James Crabtree and this morning I'll be interviewing Mr. Kenneth Gandy. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Today we're at the Courtney, Texas, State Veterans Home in Temple, Texas. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to our program today, it's an honor for us. Sir, the first question I always start off in any interview I do is please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went into the military.

Kenneth Gandy: Well, I grew up on a farm, and let's see, age – I wasn't quite old enough to be in it, but anyhow went to the 3 C's.

The Civilian Conservation Corps?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, it was.

Now where did you grow up? What town were you from?

Kenneth Gandy: Cameron, Texas.

Cameron, so not far from here.

Kenneth Gandy: Right.

So you went into the Civilian Conservation Corps, and you said you were under 18?

Kenneth Gandy: Well, something like that, and I did six months in that in New Mexico. Of course that let me know a little bit about military life.

Sure, and was that the first time you were away from home?

Kenneth Gandy: It was, yes sir.

What were your thoughts about that?

Kenneth Gandy: They weren't real good at first.

You were kind of homesick?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, very much so, because I had never been around, away from home before.

Now you grew up on a farm you said?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

Did you have many brothers and sisters?

Kenneth Gandy: I had two sisters, and there was four of us boys.

So was it your folks' idea for you to go in the Conservation Corps, or was that something you decided to do?

Kenneth Gandy: That's one thing that I sure did want to do.

You wanted to do it, and they said OK.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

So what did you do in the Conservation Corps?

Kenneth Gandy: Well, I went in there and I learned a lot, I sure did.

Did you do a lot of work, a lot of projects?

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, I didn't. I never went to the field.

OK, because when I think of the Conservation Corps I think of all the different things they built, all the big projects and that sort of thing.

Kenneth Gandy: But that was out in the field, you see, and I never went there. What they did, that very first morning I was in there, they wanted a volunteer, something they told us never to do. Well I did, and believe me it was a dream to me.

What did they need you to do as a volunteer?

Kenneth Gandy: They needed me to pump water, run a water pump, down in Miami. And I knew something about pumps and stuff like that, so I stayed in there.

So you were in there for six months. Now had the war, had World War II started at that point?

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, I got out of there after six months and drove a tractor, a farm tractor for a fellow.

Back in Cameron, or still in – back in Cameron.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, that's right.

So where were you then, were you in Cameron then when the war started?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

Do you remember that day? Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh Lord, yes.

Tell us sir your memories of that day.

Kenneth Gandy: Well, OK, we heard it on the radio I guess, and me and my oldest brother was over visiting some neighbors, and I never will forget that.

Did you know or did you think at that point that it meant that you'd be going to war, too?

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, never gave it too much thought, I really didn't.

So the war started, you're working on the farm at Cameron, how long was it before you got into the Army yourself?

Kenneth Gandy: Let's see, what was it -

Did you get drafted?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, I was drafted right off of a tractor.

So I guess you got a notice in the mail then that you'd been drafted. And how long do you think you had before you had to ship off?

Kenneth Gandy: It wasn't very long.

Yeah, it wasn't long. So what were your thoughts at that point, knowing that there's a war going on and now you're going in the Army?

Kenneth Gandy: Well, it didn't bother me too much because I had that CC training, and knew a little bit about the military, pretty close there to a military thing. It didn't bother me.

So where did they send you to first for your basic training? Did they keep you in Texas or -

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, they did.

Did you go to San Antonio, Fort Sam Houston?

Kenneth Gandy: That was the first, yes sir, and then we went out to, gee, it's been a long time ago, that basic training started.

What were some of the other recruits like in your platoon? I'm sure they were all pretty young, right? A lot of them from Texas?

Kenneth Gandy: And there were some older ones, yes sir.

What do you remember about boot camp? What do you remember about some of the guys that were with you in your platoon or your drill instructors?

Kenneth Gandy: They weren't as strong or anything like that as I was. I was off the farm and Lord, they couldn't lift this or lift that. I was surprised at people.

The ones that hadn't grown up on a farm I guess.

Kenneth Gandy: I just was so surprised. They would fall out in a march and it didn't bother me one bit.

So you didn't have any trouble with any of the physical training at all.

Kenneth Gandy: No sir.

You mentioned before we started the interview that you were in the infantry. When did you find out you were going to be going into the infantry? Was that during boot camp that they told you you're going to be an infantryman?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, it was.

What did you think of that?

Kenneth Gandy: Well, I didn't know much about it. Went in there, was sent in the infantry.

I imagine then you went through all of your basic training, was it about 12 weeks long or something like that?

Kenneth Gandy: It wasn't very long until we were shipped overseas.

Where did they send you to? Did you go to the Pacific or Europe?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh, we went to Europe.

I imagine going over there you probably went aboard ship.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes.

Do you have any memories of that voyage?

Kenneth Gandy: Not too much, it was all new to me.

What I've read and from veterans I've talked to from World War II, they always talk about how the ship was completely packed with men, and it took at least a week or more to get across the Atlantic to Europe, and at the whole time, a lot of guys were either sea sick or you were just waiting around in line to eat because it was so many men on that ship.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir. That's just about the way it was. But there again, it didn't bother me too much.

So you never got sea sick.

Kenneth Gandy: No sir.

Tell me, sir, what some of the other men were like that were serving with you.

Kenneth Gandy: Well they were pretty down on it, you know, feeling, well they were just down, that's all it was.

Do you think they were down because of being on the ship or do you think a lot of them were down worried about going to war?

Kenneth Gandy: That's right, that's what every one of them was. And I was, too, I mean I was concerned about it.

Yeah, you've got to be a little fearful going into the unknown and knowing you've got potential facing combat.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

When you left Texas, what if anything did your family say to you? I'm sure it probably had to have been hard on your family when you left.

Kenneth Gandy: Sure, mom and dad, they just never was in a situation like that, and certainly they were not feeling good about it.

Do you remember what they said to you when you shipped out?

Kenneth Gandy: Not anything really.

You said you had three brothers or four brothers?

Kenneth Gandy: Three.

And did any of them go in the service, too?

Kenneth Gandy: Two of them, another one finally got in there.

But you were the first one.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

So when you shipped off to war, that had to have been a big thing for your family, your brothers and your parents, you're the first one going off to war, and I'm sure in the back of their mind they had to have thought there was a chance they might not see you again.

Kenneth Gandy: That's right. It was tough on my mother and dad.

Yeah, it's got to be tough for everyone to have something like that happen. I think a lot of people today can't relate to that experience, it's a unique experience.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

So when you get to, where did you arrive in Europe? Did you go to England?

Kenneth Gandy: Went to England.

Tell us, sir, what you remember about England.

Kenneth Gandy: Well the first thing there, one of the guys in my outfit committed suicide there. That kind of shook us up a little bit. How he got by with it, I'll never, I don't even know, how could he shot -

And that was right after you got to England.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

That had to have been a difficult thing to learn about.

Kenneth Gandy: Well yes sir, sure.

What did they have you do in England? Did you do much training or was it just a lot of kind of sitting around and waiting?

Kenneth Gandy: Just wait, yeah, and then when we invaded France, that was something else.

Were you part of the D-Day?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

What was that like because I know a lot of people have seen movies about it and they've read about it, and it's a very famous moment in the history of the world? But when you were there, did you realize how momentous that was going to be? You realized the gravity of it.

Kenneth Gandy: Sure.

What was going through your mind then if you remember?

Kenneth Gandy: I don't know, just trying to live from one second to the other, yes sir.

Did you have any soldiers you were close to in your outfit that were buddies of yours?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, but you know we weren't together that long. I mean you just get in there with a fresh bunch of troops and you don't know them and they don't know you or anything.

Sure, so this then is in June of '44, the D-Day invasion. Did you have an idea, or when did you first have an idea of how big it was going to be, or you knew that you were going to be taking part in the invasion?

Kenneth Gandy: Well you see, I didn't know nothing about invading something, you know, but we hit right on that Omaha beach and that was a tough spot. Of course, that's the first time I ever learned about a pill box that the Germans had, and they were hard to take, my goodness. No telling how many people we lost there. And then we dug in or something there on the beach, you know, and went on from there.

When was it though, sir, that you knew you were going to be taking part in the invasion because I know they had to keep all that secret for a long time, but at some point they had to have told you, OK, we're going to invade France. Do you remember anybody telling you?

Kenneth Gandy: No sir.

So you got in the landing craft, you were on a ship, and did you guys use the nets on the side of the ship and climb down in the landing craft?

Kenneth Gandy: Sure did, that's right.

And then you were going towards shore and then at some point though you had to realize hey, we're making an invasion, right?

Kenneth Gandy: Sure did, well, yeah, we knew what we was doing, following through everything, you know, what people told us to do.

So who did you follow, did you have a platoon sergeant or someone you were supposed to stick with? I know you moved as a unit, or tried to.

Kenneth Gandy: I don't really remember that that well. I've forgotten now.

Do you remember landing on the beach?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, there was dead people everywhere.

And you just had to keep moving I imagine.

Kenneth Gandy: Just had to go right on.

How did you know where you needed to move to though? I mean if you didn't have a platoon sergeant or someone telling you where to go –

Kenneth Gandy: You know, I really don't remember that. I was so excited. One of the first things I noticed there, there was an airplane that had been over strafing I guess ahead of us, and I looked up and seen it in the air, and I'm not going to say it's the same airplane, but it was a fighter of some kind. I looked up and he come flying back over and part of me was waiting for a shot off, but he was still going, and he even gave us that thing that he was all right.

OK, the wave of the wings, tip of the wings.

Kenneth Gandy: What was left of him.

Wow.

Kenneth Gandy: I never will forget that.

I bet.

Kenneth Gandy: And come to find out later on, well years after that, I met up with a fellow that was flying over.

Really, was flying on that day during that raid.

Kenneth Gandy: That's right. And I was in this, well, he was the cause of me going out to that thing that I got in recently, and he was telling me about their ship. He was in the Air Force, but their ship went aground out there and they didn't get going until we were already in France, that's right. And I was surprised. He told a real good story about him flying them old planes back, getting them repaired.

When you were there in France and you were going through all that fighting, it sounds like you were saying, you're just trying to live from one moment to the next –

Kenneth Gandy: One second.

I'm sure it had to have been pandemonium.

Kenneth Gandy: Oh sure.

I know everybody reacts differently to different pressure. Some people, they get scared, other people they have the adrenaline. Do you remember what your thoughts were going through that? Were you afraid, were you excited?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh, certainly I was afraid. I believe anybody would've been. I mean a person that tells me he wasn't afraid, I just can't believe it.

Yeah, they're probably lying.

Kenneth Gandy: I know I was scared, scared to death nearly because you never knew when you was going to meet up with one of them bullets going off, because there was a lot of it, like a hailstorm around there.

Yeah, it was just pure fate I guess that you don't get hit and get through something like that. It's not any one thing you can do to avoid it.

Kenneth Gandy: The only thing you can do is just pray, yes sir.

So when did you first realize that you were going to make it through that invasion and that we were gonna be successful in pushing the Germans back?

Kenneth Gandy: We got successful there and started to move on just a little bit, you know, and it got a little bit better it seemed like.

I'm sure I guess the firing kind of let off a little bit, and the resistance started to let off, started getting a feel that hey, we're moving -

Kenneth Gandy: Once we took that pill box there, it went better.

Did you see any German soldiers that had surrendered? Did you have any dealings with any of them?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh yes sir.

What were they like?

Kenneth Gandy: Well, they were all around when you took ‘em.

Did any of them speak English?

Kenneth Gandy: Not that I know of, no sir. It was strictly enemy, and that’s all you could see. They’d get us if we didn’t get them.

Oh that’s right. Then I imagine at some point then your unit had to have kind of reformed.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, they did. Now that’s the first time I ever had a sergeant that I followed.

OK, what do you remember about the sergeant?

Kenneth Gandy: He was a good guy.

Where was he from, do you remember?

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, I don’t. That’s something you don’t, where are you from – just hoping you’ll be there after a while.

Where did you move onto next then after the landing?

Kenneth Gandy: Well sir, after we were in there for a little while, I’m not gonna say how many days or anything like that, but first thing you know our whole unit just about got wiped out.

Where was this, was it in France still?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

Tell us about that.

Kenneth Gandy: We was taking this hill, and we didn’t have but very few people left in our outfit, and at night, I remember we would, a few of us would go back and get rations, you know, when it was dark, and bring them up where we were at. We would go back and get ‘em and bring ‘em over. That’s about the best I can give you on that. But we knew that we was liable to get wiped out any second then, even though it was dark. You see them bullets coming at you with tracers and all that kind of stuff, you know. But I lived through that. And then finally, let’s see, it wasn’t too long after that until I got hit in the head with some shrapnel.

Tell us about that, sir, when and where that occurred.

Kenneth Gandy: I had on a wool net cap there and when I got hit, that wool net cap I think kept me from dying right there or something because only thing I knew was blood was all down my face and they put me in an ambulance, and went off to a hospital. It wasn't long in that hospital until I was out and back on the front line.

So some fragmentation from artillery round do you think?

Kenneth Gandy: That's what got me, sure did.

Did they give you your Purple Heart?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, in the hospital, sure did.

I imagine you had to have felt pretty lucky.

Kenneth Gandy: Well, I guess what I care, whatever, but I never paid any mind to that, you know that Purple Heart, I never thought anything about it. I just knew that they come in the hospital and gave it to me, and then I was immediately out of there and went back out on the field.

So it's good that you recovered then. It apparently wasn't as bad of a wound as it could've been.

Kenneth Gandy: I guess it wasn't, no sir.

They got you out of there, you weren't disabled and obviously you weren't killed.

Kenneth Gandy: No, I was right on the front line just in a few days. I kind of felt at home.

Yeah, you went from sleeping in a bed in a hospital to being back on the dirt.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, right. Going through that it kind of gave you a little bit of bravery there I guess you'd say. It took that long to get hit. But we had got wiped out there two or three different times before that.

Do you remember the name of your unit, do you remember what unit you were in?

Kenneth Gandy: Lord have mercy, oh yes sir, I remember the 80th Division. I'll never forget that.

The 80th Infantry.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

Do you remember what any of the guys said to you after you came back from having been wounded?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh they weren't surprised.

They weren't.

Kenneth Gandy: I was just Old Tex out there.

They called you Tex.

Kenneth Gandy: That's what my name was.

Just because you were from Texas I guess.

Kenneth Gandy: That's right.

So I'm sure they were glad to see you back.

Kenneth Gandy: Oh yes sir.

It sounds like you were glad to be back with them.

Kenneth Gandy: Oh boy, yes sir. I was with a little Mexican guy. I knew him, you know, after learning his name and all of that. He had come across to getting his head shot off, too, had a bullet, his old helmet had a bullet on either side of it.

I imagine you'd see a lot of that sort of thing in combat.

Kenneth Gandy: Well even my helmet was blown off, too, but I was lucky I guess. It had a hole in it that you could put a ___ right up here. And somebody says well why didn't you keep it? I says well, it wasn't any good anymore.

That's right, it wasn't serviceable anymore, that's right. And to lug around a souvenir the whole time.

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, you couldn't believe that. You could not believe that. Get a hole in your helmet right up along here.

Better to have it in the helmet than in your head I guess.

Kenneth Gandy: That's true, yes sir.

How often would your unit be engaged in combat? Did it seem like you were pretty much fighting the whole time with the Germans, or was there a lot of times that you were just marching across Europe?

Kenneth Gandy: Now we marched a whole lot, yes sir. But I got with a gunning automatic fellow and I carried all the ammunition, stuff like that, and found him, went up to something and he come up missing. What he did, he threwed that automatic down and took off back.

Oh, he went AWOL.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

Did they catch him eventually?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

I'm sure he went to prison for that.

Kenneth Gandy: He did, and I guarded him back there, sure did. But he was not a bad guy.

No, he just was a coward I guess more or less.

Kenneth Gandy: He just lost it, you know.

I know there's always been stories about guys that cracked under combat and in some cases they used to execute those guys, so I guess he's lucky, I guess he wasn't executed right, he was just discharged.

Kenneth Gandy: I guess now, I don't know what happened to him. But he was just as normal as I ever seen, and it caught up with him.

Couldn't handle it I guess at a certain point. During that time, sir, did you get any letters from home? Did you get any mail from back home while you were in Europe?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh yes sir.

So your folks were able to write to you and keep you updated on how things were going back home.

Kenneth Gandy: Right, they sure could.

Were you able to write letters to them?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

Did you have an idea during the war of kind of what the news was in the rest of the world or how things were going? Did you have the feeling that the Germans were going to be defeated?

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, not at that time. It went on and on, got up into Belgium, and I was in that Battle of the Bulge up there, and I never was so glad that it was over, yes sir.

What do you remember about the Battle of the Bulge?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh, it was terrible. Somebody got a guard out there got acid throwed in his face at night, and ___ that was happening.

I'm surprised they would throw acid and not just try to kill him.

Kenneth Gandy: Well that's true. But that's what happened.

What did you find to be the more intense fighting, the Battle of the Bulge or the invasion?

Kenneth Gandy: I don't know, either one of them was really tough.

Did you feel that by the time you were taking part in the Battle of the Bulge, were you used to it, or could you get used to something like combat after having been through Normandy?

Kenneth Gandy: Well, kind of, yes sir, it kind of wore off, just say it's a tough job and that's it. But I was first scout in our outfit also. Old Tex had to go out there on the front.

Tell us a little about that and how they picked you for that.

Kenneth Gandy: Well, I always thought that that sergeant was pushing me too far ahead because I got cut off up there between our people and the Germans, but every time I looked back I'd see that hand going, the sergeant says go on. Well somehow it happened that the Germans got between him and me, so I just had to live with it and get back the best I could.

How did you get back?

Kenneth Gandy: Well, I snuck out of there at night, yes sir, sure did. You finally got to where you'd just try anything because I knew where they were and I'd be all right when I got back there. I guess the good Lord just took care of me. That's all I know.

Yes sir. After the Battle of the Bulge, then where did you go after that? Did you eventually make your way into Germany?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

What was Germany like when you saw it?

Kenneth Gandy: Well things started looking up back there then, nobody shooting at you or anything. So I felt like well, we must've done a pretty good job.

You had to have felt that at that point the war was going the right way by the time you got into Germany, that the Germans obviously were losing and falling back.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

Did you see many German civilians?

Kenneth Gandy: I did, after things quieted down, I even had dinner with them, with a family of them.

I guess they were friendly.

Kenneth Gandy: Me and another soldier out of my outfit.

How did that come about?

Kenneth Gandy: I don't know. Everything just settled down and we paid no mind to them and they didn't pay any mind to us.

How did you and another soldier get invited to dinner? Do you remember how that happened?

Kenneth Gandy: Well they invited us.

They invited you, you and one other soldier.

Kenneth Gandy: That's right.

Did they speak English?

Kenneth Gandy: A little bit.

Because you didn't speak any German, right?

Kenneth Gandy: I did a little bit. I had learned some, yes sir.

And they invited the two of you to dinner.

Kenneth Gandy: Sure did. I couldn't hardly believe it, but that's the way it was. Fighting 'em one day and eating dinner with them the next.

Do you remember what they said to you if anything?

Kenneth Gandy: Not anything bad. Didn't allow that to happen there. We were friends then.

How much longer were you there in Europe before you came back home then?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh gee whiz -

Did you have enough points to come back home when it ended?

Kenneth Gandy: I did, had plenty of points, no transportation. That's true. I don't know, it's about like, it was kind of like getting back well in where I'm at now. I waited a whole year for that, my name to come up to get back here.

You had to wait a long time to get out of Europe then, too, I guess.

Kenneth Gandy: Oh my Lord, and you know I was hauling people to get out at that time, driving a truck. And I had no transportation.

So finally they get you out of there and they sent you back on a boat?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

On a ship back to the U.S.? That had to have been a good feeling I would think.

Kenneth Gandy: It sure was.

To know that you lived through the war and getting to come back home.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, oh, that was a good feeling.

Where did you first arrive when you came back to the United States? Where did your ship come into port?

Kenneth Gandy: Camp Fannin.

Where is that?

Kenneth Gandy: It was a dismissal place here in Texas.

Where did your ship come into? Did you come back to the east coast?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh, it was New York.

You went into New York. Did your parents at that point know that you had gotten back to the U.S. yet? I'm sure they probably didn't.

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, I don't reckon they did. It was all a big surprise to me, too.

And then eventually you take a train back to you said Camp Fannin?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

And that's where they discharged you.

Kenneth Gandy: That's right.

And then you got back home to Cameron. How did you get back to Cameron?

Kenneth Gandy: By bus. I almost lost that thing two or three different times. I thought it would be just like it to go through all that and then get on a second bus and the driver was no good.

Yeah, that would not have been good.

Kenneth Gandy: Oh my goodness, that was sickening.

Did your folks know that you were on that bus back to Cameron, were you able to let them know?

Kenneth Gandy: No sir.

So it was a complete surprise when you showed up.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, it was.

Were they still living on a farm?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

So you went out to the farm to see them when you got back.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, sure did. Well see, they were living then in a little old town called Bucko, Texas, and that was all new to me because they had been on the farm when I left.

So when you showed up, do you remember what time of day it was?

Kenneth Gandy: It was all right.

Was it in the middle of the night or was it day time?

Kenneth Gandy: Well it was I believe at night, yes sir.

Who was home? Were your mom and dad home?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

And any of your siblings?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh yes.

Tell us what that was like. Did you just go up and knock on the door?

Kenneth Gandy: I did. I couldn't hardly believe it because they had moved and everything, but they didn't say much of anything, just glad to see me, yes sir.

I bet. I imagine your mom probably gave you a hug, right?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh yeah, sure, the whole group did. Because they were all there safe and sound.

Did they ask you many stories about where you'd been?

Kenneth Gandy: Not too much. They really didn't.

Why do you think that was?

Kenneth Gandy: I guess they figured I didn't since I made it through there they didn't want to bring it up or something.

Afraid of maybe stirring up bad memories.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir.

And you said at that point some of your brothers had gone into the military.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes, my youngest brother, but he never left the States.

OK, so you didn't have to worry much about him.

Kenneth Gandy: No sir, I don't know where he, Philadelphia or somewhere, they had him up there. I forgot what he was doing.

Now when you got back home, did you bring any of your items back with you? I know you mentioned, somebody asked you about your helmet that had the hole in it, and you left that behind, but did you bring anything back with you in terms of souvenirs or items that you had? I'm sure you still had your uniforms.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, but they tried to get me to stay in the military, but I said no thank you. I'm out of here.

You were ready to get out. What was your rank when you got out?

Kenneth Gandy: PFC. No sir, I could've been a Tech Sergeant, but I turned that down.

Because you wanted to get out.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir. Well, and they offered that to me while I was still overseas.

Why did you turn it down?

Kenneth Gandy: I wanted to get home.

Makes sense. Now you weren't married at that time, so you get back home, you're out of the Army, and you're living in Buckholts?

Kenneth Gandy: That's right.

And your family had a farm, did you go into farming?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir. I was lucky enough, I was old enough then to get on the county road thing, so my uncle was working for them and first thing you know, I was driving a road maintainer.

For the road crews.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, and I thought that was really something.

That's great. Did it feel good to be back home? Did it feel like nothing had changed, it was still kind of the same?

Kenneth Gandy: Well in a way, but I never had the chance to run a road girder before, but it didn't take but just a short time until I was on it dragging roads around there, yes sir.

How long did you end up doing that for?

Kenneth Gandy: Let's see, months I think it was, and my dad knew the commissioner and he got me on there. Everybody liked my family and everything. I never had trouble or anything like other people. Everything worked out real well for everybody.

Did you end up spending your whole life then there near Buckholts and Cameron?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, sure did.

And you did some farming I guess later on?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, a little bit.

What did you farm, what did you grow?

Kenneth Gandy: Cotton and corn, that was the two primary things.

Did you ever get married?

Kenneth Gandy: Sure did.

Did you have any kids or grandkids?

Kenneth Gandy: Well I do have two kiddos. This lady that I married, they were good friends from our family, and so she was a country girl and they were used to raising cattle and stuff, mostly cattle. They lived on a farm, but anyway they run cattle and I knew how to farm.

That's great. Did your wife or any of your kids ever talk to you much about your time in the Army or ask you much about your time during the war?

Kenneth Gandy: They never questioned me or anything.

Why do you think that was? Were you reluctant to talk about being in the Army or was it just something you think they never thought about?

Kenneth Gandy: I guess they never thought about it. They knew it was bad. They didn't ask me any questions or anything like that.

I know some folks are eager to share their stories and memories and then there's others for whatever reason want to keep it bottled up or they're just not as talkative about certain things I guess.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, it kind of stirs you up, you know, when you get talking about it. But I've been lucky. And the CC's helped me out.

Kind of got you started, right?

Kenneth Gandy: I learned something about military life right there.

I'm sure that was a good thing for when you went to boot camp. You kind of had a concept of how things work in that sense of having somebody telling you what to do and when to do it and how to do it.

Kenneth Gandy: That's true.

Did you ever do anything later on with the VFW or the American Legion or any of those sort of groups?

Kenneth Gandy: Well no sir, not much of anything.

What did you end up doing with your uniforms and some of the other things?

Kenneth Gandy: I kept 'em for years and years, but I finally just forgot about 'em.

Do you have any photographs from your time in the service?

Kenneth Gandy: Not but two or three.

I'd love to get a copy of some of those if possible. We can add those to our archive.

Kenneth Gandy: I have moved around so much, trying to get into where I'm at, and moving, you lose something every time, and I wound up with not hardly anything.

What we do, I don't know if they told you, but with our program, our goal is to do these interviews and save these stories for future generations. We have at the Land Office archives that go back to the 1700s. We have the land grant that was given to David Crockett's widow after he was killed at The Alamo, and we have the original Registro which is this big huge leather bound book that Stephen F. Austin kept of the original settlers that came to Texas, and so our goal is to do these interviews and add them to the archives so that years from now, decades from now, people can listen to these stories and perhaps learn something from them that they wouldn't have picked up otherwise in watching an old news reel or reading a book, to actually hear the story directly from the veteran themselves. So that's why we're really grateful that you'd take the time to come and share some of those memories with us.

Kenneth Gandy: Yeah, I don't mind at all.

I know everybody at the Land Office from Commissioner Patterson on down is very thankful for your service to our nation, so this is also just one small way of saying thank you. What we're going to do in about a week or two is we're going to send you a package from us and it's going to have a bunch of CD's of this interview so you can give it to your friends or family or whomever that might want to listen to this interview, and we'll also have a nice binder that has a letter and certificate signed in there from Commissioner Patterson. So again it's just a small way of us saying thank you for your service.

Kenneth Gandy: I see, yes sir.

And you mentioned, sir, you've been here in the home now for about a year.

Kenneth Gandy: No sir.

Oh less than that? OK. I think you said you waited a year then.

Kenneth Gandy: I waited a year for my name to come up.

So when did you first move in?

Kenneth Gandy: Last Tuesday 10 o'clock. I'm brand new.

Yeah you are, you're the boot. How do you like it so far? Is it pretty good?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh it's pretty good.

How is the food?

Kenneth Gandy: Oh, it's out of this world.

It is? Good.

Kenneth Gandy: It is good.

Well that's good to hear. I know they try to make the food good. You never know what people are gonna say.

Kenneth Gandy: They do. That's true about that food.

And everyone's been nice taking care of you?

Kenneth Gandy: Everybody I've met has been awfully nice.

That's great, that's good to hear. I've always heard nothing but good things about the home here and some of the veterans I've interviewed here have always been positive about it. I always ask just because I'm curious and it's always good to hear 'em say that's it's good.

Kenneth Gandy: Well see, I'm trying to get a room by myself also.

I'm sure you'll get that eventually. Just got to wait until it opens up or whatever.

Kenneth Gandy: Because like it is, there's just not any room.

Yeah, these homes are pretty popular. I mean they're a great benefit to our veterans, and I'm not surprised there's a list.

Kenneth Gandy: But Katie here, she just takes care of everything.

That's great.

Kenneth Gandy: She's helped me a whole lot.

That's excellent. And do you have family nearby?

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, I have two brothers right here in town. One of them is a barber, got his own shop here, and the other one, his family is a painting bunch. They paint places here in town.

That's great. What about your children? Where do they live?

Kenneth Gandy: Well now that's what's bad. One of them lives in Plano, my daughter does, and my boy works for that nuclear power plant here up in Glenrose.

But they're both still in Texas then, so that's not too bad. They're not around the corner, but they're still just a few hours away, so they can drive down, so that's good.

Kenneth Gandy: And I turned all my business stuff over to my boy.

That's good. Well sir, I really appreciate again, you taking the time to talk to us today and share some of these stories. It's been a real honor for us.

Kenneth Gandy: Well I was just glad to talk about it with you.

Yes sir, it adds to the archive, it adds to the collection of interviews, and someone will listen to this one day and pick something up from it, and hopefully your children and grandchildren, hopefully they can listen to it, too, one day and maybe it'll cause them to think of some questions they might want to ask you that I haven't thought of.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, I have a grandson that's getting out of the Navy I guess in about a month. He has his 20 years in.

Oh that's excellent, so he's retiring then.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, and he's already got a job outside.

Well that's good. Well if he did 20 years in the Navy, he's probably doing all right.

Kenneth Gandy: Yes sir, I think he's top man, he really is.

That's great. Well sir, again I really appreciate it. It was an honor to have met you and you've got my card as well.

[End of recording]