



[Photo of Tom Kielbowicz Courtesy of Tom Philo]

The 8th Air Force Historical Society, Oregon Chapter

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Speaker: Specialist Tom Kielbowicz

Transcribed and Edited by Joan E. Hamilton

[Notes: Descriptions for clarification in brackets are not on the audio tape. *Modifications and additional information from SPC. Kielbowicz who kindly reviewed this transcript.]

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Introduction

By Jerry J. Ritter Jr. in the *Oregon Chapter, Eighth Air Force Historical Society*
 Newsletter Summer 2010

“Tom Kielbowicz was born and raised in Oil City, PA, which was also the hometown of Col. Francis Gabreski.

In 1962, Tom Kielbowicz joined the Army and was subsequently stationed in Grafenwoehr [Grafenwöhr], Germany when he volunteered to fly medivac missions as a medical specialist. The 421st Air Ambulance Co., 3rd Platoon was said to be the busiest air ambulance platoon in the USAREUR, flying up to 8 missions per medic each day. Grafenwoehr was the U.S. and NATO arms training center as well as the nearest base to the Fulda Gap.”

[Speech starts at ~4 minutes]

Tom Kielbowicz

I'm Tom Kielbowicz and I think the first thing I want to say is I'm honored and I am humbled to be with this group of people. I am humbled to be with this group of people. I really look up to you and what I did was nothing compared to what you guys did and really do appreciate your group and appreciate what you did for this country. I don't have anything really prepared for this. I'm just going to kind of do a stream of consciousness thing on this. Interrupt, make a comment, ask a question, that's fine.

Growing Up in Oil City, Pennsylvania

The Gabreskis

First of all, I'm Tom Kielbowicz. Last name is Polish. I come from a small, Polish community in Oil City, Pennsylvania. That may sound familiar to some of you. My grandfather's, my father's house backyard was right backing up to a guy you probably know, Wally's friend, Gabreski.

My grandfather's house was here, the fence line was here, and Gabreskis were right there. With that said, I know just about nothing about the Gabreskis. Why not? I can only tell you that—[microphone modification]. Nobody talked about the Gabreskis back in Oil City. I basically when I found out that people knew about him here and wanted to know more about him, I knew nothing. I had to go back to my cousins and ask them what they knew. It's all over the place. Some of them hated him. Other people say he's great. You know, he's our hero, our Polish hero back in Oil City. And other people think that he's lower than doggie do. He had several brothers. One became an attorney and he's equally hated. The other one became a doctor and opened up a convalescent home and probably never saw a patient the whole time. At least that's what they say back there. So it's a controversial family to be sure. I will say this, my dad, and my Uncle Butch was a WWII Veteran who went all the way from North Africa, Sicily, Italy. They always spoke well of the Gabreskis and I ain't going to argue with them. You can find any story about the Gabreskis you want. That's about the only thing I know.

The neighborhood was extremely rough. I mean at the Gabreski house, if you walked out the front door, went down the steps, across the cobblestone street, about 10 yards over was an open sewer which ran right through there. If you got across that, you had the junk yard. On the other side of that was the Pennsylvania Railroad Switching Yard. So it was not a nice, pleasant country scene. That's kind of typical of the neighborhood where I grew up at. I was up the street just about four or five houses. It was a rough neighborhood, so I could see why the man would have some issues. A lot of prejudices and believe it or not probably most of it came from the Polish community. I cannot explain it. I don't know why, but it was there.

Enlistment in the Army in 1962

Basic Training

Now, getting beyond that, first question I heard was, "Why did you become a medic?"

My answer to that is I didn't want to become a medic. In 1962, when you graduated from high school, you had two choices: you went into the military or you went to college. Now, if you didn't have a college degree or if you hadn't been in the service, nobody would hire you. So I decided to go into the Army. It was three years. I didn't want to go into the Navy. That was four. I'm going to do three years and out. I enlisted and I wanted to be the lab technician.

Well, I got through Basic and I learned a lot about the military. Things change and they said, "Well, first of all, you have to go to Med School."

Training at Fort Sam Houston

Great. *So I had seven weeks at Fort Sam [Houston] where it was pretty basic medical training. I mean very, very basic. After that, I was supposed to go to lab tech school. Now, I'm getting more and more upset with the military and I knew they were going to do with me whatever they wanted.

But the last day, they called us out and started giving us orders and telling us where we're going to go. I expected to be called out to go to lab tech school. They called out, "Kielbowicz."

I said, "Here."



SPC. Tom Kielbowicz, 4th MASH, Ludwigsburg, Germany 1963

Stationed in Germany

4th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital [MASH] Unit

They said, "Germany."

Look, I'm going to do three years, right? I might as well go to Germany. That's how I ended up in Germany. I ended up in a MASH unit, 4th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital. And it was a pretty good unit, but it was a garrison. *There were no patients. We were waiting for the Russians to come through the Fulda Gap. We were going to set up our emergency hospital and take care of casualties, but really not exciting.

I did get to go TDY to the 5th General Hospital at Stuttgart where we actually had patients. Basic nursing care. Nothing elaborate. You're making beds, bed/baths, bringing in meds. It was not real demanding. I worked at a dispensary for three months after that. That was a little bit more intense. We did get people coming through that were hurt. But most of the time, it was pretty quick to get them to a doctor. So there wasn't a whole lot I had to do there most of the time. Then I went through orthopedic OJT, on the job training [and] became an orthopedic specialist. And I loved that. Then they decided, "Well, we don't need you there anymore. We've got a for real one here now."

421st Medical Company [Air Ambulance]

I was walking past the nurse's station and I heard her say, "We need medics over in the 421st."

Well, that was a pretty elite unit. That was the air ambulance company. I stuck my head in the nurse's door and I said, "I want to go."

I did have a good reputation as a medic and she said, "Well, you know, we can't keep a medic in that unit very long."

I said, "I want to go."



“Huey” at Veterans Memorial, Canby, Oregon [courtesy of Joan E. Hamilton]

UH1 B *Huey* Helicopter

So that afternoon, they put me in the jeep and sent me over to the headquarters which was near there and I signed in and from there they put me in a *Huey* helicopter. Now, I’d never even seen a *Huey* [Bell] until that point. *Huey* is a UH1, and at that time, “B” model which is barely able to get off the ground. At any rate, they call them *Hueys*. You see them all the time in these stories on Vietnam. The “B” model was brand spanking new. Prior to that, they used a helicopter called the H-34 [Sikorsky *Choctaw*].

Does anybody here know what those are? Yeah. How long does it take to get one of those up in the air from cold start?

[Audience member response: That’s a round engine piece. It depends on your altitude. [Inaudible]]

Yeah, that was the basic problem with it as a medivac helicopter. With the *Huey*, we could be airborne in five minutes. With the H-34, the *patient could walk in. It was that slow. So we had the *Hueys* and I thought they were the greatest things going.

3rd Platoon, Grafenwoehr, Germany

Then I got to my unit and that was the 3rd Platoon over in Grafenwoehr, Germany which is pretty close to the Fulda Gap and it's the big training area over in Germany for artillery, armor, infantry. They're always training. NATO trained over there. [In the *Stars and Stripes* the training area in Grafenwoehr was described in "Aerial Ambulance" 21 Oct 1964 as "Military Reservation Training site for thousands of American and NATO troops in Europe".]

There was always something going on. Something went bang all the time and we got to be pretty busy.

First Day

My first day there was kind of interesting. They flew me in. I went over to see my CO and he said, "Yeah, good to see 'ya. Why don't you go out there to the operations *building and talk to them over there. See what you need."

I'm going, I felt a little bit uneasy about that. I mean this is my greeting? Where's the medic. Who's going to show me what to do? I went over and there was a crew chief over there. *Groner just says, "You're new, huh?"

"Yeah," I said, "Well, what do I do?"

He said, "Well, you're the medic."

I said, "Okay. Well, I'm not real familiar with this."

He says, "Look, the big thing is don't get the stretcher caught in the props."

"Okay." I said, "Is there any medic around here?"

"Nope."

So I figured well maybe I'd better see what I can figure out myself. Now, I knew what a stretcher was. I knew how to open it.

They did have a helicopter sitting on a pad. We had four ships. By the way, at that time, it's not a *chopper*. It's a *ship* and it's referred to as *she* like a ship. I learned that real quick. As soon as I said *chopper*, I got smacked down for that pretty quick.

Anyway, they showed me where my medical bag was, basic standard medical bag. You know, a bunch of 4 by 4 bandages in it. It had some tape to keep it on. I had a pharyngeal airway which is a thing that you stick down somebody's throat when they can't breathe. And tourniquets and some Band-Aids. No splints. Okay. No morphine. That was, "Oh, my God, morphine?" That was something that a doctor or a nurse had to give. Starting an IV, no way. You will not start an IV. You know what that is with the intravenous needle into the arm? You don't start any IVs. You don't give any shots. No morphine. No splints. Okay.

A medic did come in. I believe it was Pate [who] came in later on from a flight. Things were kind of strange in this unit. I said, "Are you and I the only medics?"

We had five pilots. We had about four crew chiefs and mechanics and one medic, maybe two. Where are the medics? I said, "I'm looking at the reports."

I said, "Where's Brackins?"

He said, "Ask the Captain, the CO, he'll tell you."

The Captain says, "Oh, Brackins is back in the States going through a divorce."

"Oh, okay."

[*About two weeks later, when Spec Brackins returned from his divorce in the States, I asked, "How did your divorce go?" He looked at me like I was crazy. He gave me a "What the hell do you mean?" look; paused, and after a pause said, "Yeah. OK". My first indication that there was more than met the eye.]

First Flight

I think it was the next day when I went on my first flight. Believe me, it was primitive. I mean, we put somebody on a stretcher, flew them on a helicopter, flew them to Nuernberg Army Hospital. I mean there was nothing. We never put a brace neck on. We never strapped them down to the stretcher. We just put them on the stretcher, threw them in the helicopter, and went on our way. It was, from Grafenwoehr to Nuernberg was a half an hour and basically, I just looked. That's about all I could do. Maybe put an extra 4 by 4 on somebody that was bleeding. I think I used a hemostat one time to clamp off a bleeder.

*Normally, there was a pilot, myself, and patients. We had no co-pilot, no crew chief. I learned later why. The *Huey* is underpowered and by God the least weight we had, the better.

The OB Case

We did one time, this is a long story. I can't make it any shorter. I was upstairs. I was on duty to fly and I think I was the only medic around that day. They said, "Can you come downstairs?"

If there's a medivac, I mean, it's, "Hey, Medivac, get your butt going. Move!"

But this was, "Can you come downstairs?"

So I go downstairs and there's the rest of the platoon down there: the pilots and crew chiefs, and now I'm down there."

They said, "We have a volunteer mission for you. You don't have to go."

We had less than minimum flight conditions. In a helicopter that's 1/8th of a mile visibility and 500 feet ceiling. We had less than that. We had one pilot, our executive officer who was IFR qualified. I looked over at him and he was sitting over behind his desk and kind of looked like a Kilroy cartoon. That's all you saw of him. He wasn't about to raise his hand. Our CO, "chicken of the sky", was bad. I'm sorry. He was just a bad pilot.

He suddenly decided that he had to call *the colonel, back at Stuttgart and he left the room. He was the guy that was scheduled to fly and he just walked out.

It was, "You don't have to go."

I knew what they were up to because no medic, no flight. I very frankly got angry. I said, "I'm going."

It had nothing to do with bravery. I was just damn mad in watching all these guys who could've handled it, but didn't. Then my favorite pilot, Joe Fulghum says, "I'll take it."

His buddy, Joe Newberry, says, "I'll co for you." Co-pilot for you.

I said, "We're going to make this flight."

I mean, ultimate confidence. Got the warm fuzzies. Hey, we're going to go do it.

What kind of patient did we have? We had an OB patient, obstetrics. Woman's going to have a baby that's coming early. She's a bleeder. We don't have the facilities. Her only chance is going to be to get her to the hospital. So we got in the helicopter, went to the dispensary, picked up the patient, and we picked up a nurse who volunteered to go on the flight. Now, her name, Major Nellie Hightower. She never received the recognition she deserved. She volunteered for that flight. Now, Major Hightower was not exactly your athletic type, probably a little over 250 pounds. But anyway, we've got the patient on board and Major Hightower's trying to get on the helicopter and she can't make that step. What do you do? You know? You give her a hand. [Push from behind] I thought I was going to get court-martialed for that one. Fulghum's looking at me laughing. She's scowling, but we're all onboard now. As we're going—now both of these guys are named *Joe*—Joe Newberry and Joe Fulghum. So, I'm hearing things like, "Okay, Joe, let's follow the railroad track."

"Okay."

"Yeah, I can see it down there. Yeah."

"Hey, Joe, we've got a tunnel coming up."

We slowly went over a mountain. You could actually see the trees. Came down on the other side and we're going on. "Oh, Joe, we dropped into a valley. We did it now."

In the meanwhile, I've got this patient here and she's pretty much in pain. She's starting to go into labor. I mean, she's any second now she's going to have birth. I was very, very thankful that I had that nurse with me. I mean, because I wouldn't have known what to do. I don't know, something about biting off the umbilical cord, but that's about all I knew.

Anyhow, we managed to get her to the Nuernberg Army Hospital where we got her as far as the elevator and she gave birth in the elevator. She did lose a lot of blood *but she made it and so did the baby. *We stayed at the hospital that night. I had a good buddy down there at the hospital and I called him up the next day and I said, "Hey, Sam, how are they doing?"

He said, "Oh, they're doing fine."

I talked to Fulghum. I said, "Well, sir, you saved a couple more lives."

He goes—he had a tendency to drawl—he goes, "Hell, Kielbowicz, it weren't me. It's you boys in the back that do the work. I'm just the taxicab driver here."

I said, "Sir, for the most part, I've only got one procedure back there that I follow."

He said, "What's that?"

[Catholic tradition: crossing oneself.]

He said, "Don't quit, Kielbowicz, it's working."

"Okay"

Audience question: Did the nurse fly back with you?

No, the nurse, Nellie? The last I saw her, she was running across the field to the jeep. She was probably the sanest out of all of us. She was scared. I can't say enough for her. She was rightfully scared. Now, I am in contact with one of the people that worked with her. I've got a good buddy. He's now back in New Jersey, retired, another Joe, Joe Stella, and Joe said that she was a fantastic nurse at the dispensary also.

The Secret Mission

Joe's another case that I kind of want to talk about. We kept running out of medics and I was in charge of the morning reports. I knew that things were happening in other parts of the world, but nobody ever talked about it. Like one guy walked up to me and he said, "Well, I know you weren't in Cyprus."

I asked him, I said, "How do you know?"

He says, "Well, I didn't see you there."

I said, "Well, what side of the island were you on?"

"Oh."

That's Greece and Turkey and--. But I kind of squelched that. But I did get orders to go on one and Brackins and I were both scheduled to go. They said, "Be ready to go in half an hour when **they** come for you. I packed one bag full of civilian clothes, one bag full of military clothes, and I put them on top of my wall locker. My room commander told me to get my stuff in order or else. I said, "Well, let's go talk to Brackins." The other guy that's suppose to go.

Brackins was the barracks commander. We went over to Brackins' room, "He won't put his foot locker *in order and his wall locker display is all out of whack."

Brackins says, "Is it like mine?"

*Groner said, "They don't tell me nothing around this place, do they?"

He was a little bit upset, but I was working in operations one day *about a week later and I pretty much knew where everybody was. There were four helicopters and I knew where they were. Nobody was out flying. Nobody was scheduled to come in from headquarters. I heard a *Huey* coming in. It lands on our helipad. My buddy Nesbitt comes running in and he says, "Kielbowicz, they want you now. I don't know who they are, but they want you."

I knew what it was about. I ran upstairs, grabbed my two duffel bags. They never shut down the helicopter. I ran out there. There's a pilot standing out there. He had his visor down. He had no rank, no name. There were no markings on the ship. He says, "Kielbowicz?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Get in."

Later brought me back fortunately. It was one of these things that we were asked not to talk about and I'm not going to. But that was what was happening.

Now Brackins is kind of an interesting story because between the time we were told and the time that I left, Brackins disappeared. I never saw the man again. I have no idea where he was, where he went, what happened to him, or anything. That's why they were having problems keeping medics over there.

Long Hours

I would like to say, when we were on flights, we had a lot of them. I went as many as eight one-hour missions in one day. I remember being woken up at three o'clock in the morning and finally getting to bed at eleven o'clock at night and spending most of my time being with a patient up in the air. That time with a patient, that's not fun. I ain't going to ruin anybody's lunch by talking about it.

Pilot Joe Fulghum

On the other hand, we had fun. Now, it all depended on who you flew with. If you were going to fly with our CO, that was hell. We went on one flight and he landed seven times before finally getting to the hospital. He'd land and shake his hands and shake his head. Finally got us there.

Another time, he actually turned back, picked up our executive officer, Captain Webb, and asked him for some help because there was lightning off in the distance. I could've flown the damn thing. I mean it wasn't bad at all. The weather was great, but he just couldn't do it. Our executive officer, Captain Webb, was a good pilot. He was an old man. He was thirty-four, thirty-five. Pretty stodgy type. Pick up a helicopter, put it down, pick you up. He was okay.

But the two favorite pilots of mine were Joe Fulghum and Joe Newberry. Joe Fulghum brought his parents over there one day for a vacation. I got to meet his parents. And they're typical Tennesseans. Very, very polite, just salt-of-the-earth types and very friendly.

When you flew with Fulghum, you had fun. You didn't care what was going to happen. If he said, "Hey, we're going to fly into hell. Any questions?"

"Cold beer when we get back?"

"Yeah, why not."

I mean nobody cared. We were going to have some fun and we did. He did too.

One of his claims to fame was that he got permission to fly an H-13 out of the airfield nearby. We didn't fly out of the airfield. We had our helipad, but they had an H-13 out there and Fulghum wanted some stick time in the H13 which is, if you ever watch the *MASH* movie, it's a little helicopter with little baskets on the side. Well, he took off and comes back about, well, he didn't come back. That was the problem. He's way overdue. It's just not going to stay up in the air that long. "Yeah, well, where do we go look for the man?"

"Well, you're the rescue party, you know, go look for him."

"Where do we start?"

About three hours later and at least two hours out of fuel, Fulghum flies in, “Yeah, my oil light came on. I had to keep dropping down and letting things cool off. Boy, I just, you know, I couldn’t contact you guys by radio.”

So they took the helicopter apart and said everything was okay. Fulghum took it back up again. The second thing happened. It happened again. Two or three hours overdue. Came back, same story. Now the helicopter really went through some high maintenance. Well, Fulghum took it on a third time and by God that oil light came on again. So they asked him to stop flying it.

Okay, end of story, right? Well, one day, we had to make a special flight down to Munich Army Hospital and we’re flying back along the Danube. The Danube River has all of these really beautiful cottages along it. We’re flying down along the river and all of a sudden this young lady, beautiful, black bikini, blond hair, comes out waving a towel doing one of these numbers and the Captain looks down, “He says, somebody must know that young lady down there.”

Now we know where Fulghum was. I mean, it was just in-your-face. That’s what happened. Fulghum never ever admitted to it.

*If we had a patient, this man, *Fulghum, was dead serious—he was one of the few pilots that was actually concerned about the patients. We’re coming back; he did things like flying along the autobahn about a foot over the autobahn. We passed a couple of cars, over them.

We buzzed a nudist colony down there. They were upset. They called it in, but they didn’t get a tail number.

We were coming in for a landing one time and Fulghum said, “I’m going to do a ground-controlled approach.”

Weather was good, but, “It’s good practice.”

We’re going to be coming into the airfield, not our little helipad off of the side.”

This is the airfield in Grafenwoehr. So he calls in, requests a ground-control approach. They put him on a vector, “Turn left at dah-dah-dah.”

I don't understand all that stuff. I'm a medic. On course. On glide path. He's coming in and then all of a sudden the guy starts to laugh. And he drops pitch and we just sank like a rock. Now the airport itself is on a little hill and we're coming down below the hill. Tower is going nuts, "Where in the hell are you? We can't find you. You're not on radar anymore."

Fulghum's just laughing. We're just flying real low to the ground. He pulls up and we go right past the tower. I mean *Top Gun* type stuff. This is the original. He went full speed. He wasn't throttling back or anything. He was going as fast as he could, as low as he could, as close as he could. We landed on our helipad. Fulghum went back to the operations room. We had to tie down the helicopter and take care of the stuff back there. Walking past the orderly room and there's the major from the airfield. This guy has Fulghum standing at parade dress. If you know what parade dress is, this is parade dress, okay? This major is just chewing him up one side and down the other. And I happen to walk behind Fulghum and he's got his fingers crossed. He is just like a five-year-old boy that's been chewed out, "No, sir. I'll never do that. No, sir, that was stupid. I agree, sir. I will never ever do anything like that again."

Right. I mean, what did they do? You know, he was the best pilot they had. He was going to be the only one that was going to volunteer when things got hot and heavy and they weren't going to do anything to him now.

He did fly in Vietnam. He made it through one tour and his second tour he was killed in action. 2-2-67 he was shot down and crashed and burned. I didn't find out about it until 1987. I called up his mother. Really a sad story. When he got killed, he was the only son, the only child. His father suicided and his mother, God bless her soul, is a very, very strong woman. We talked for a while. Of course, you have to mention about the baby born on the helicopter. You know, that's the way the story got told was that the baby was born on the helicopter. It wasn't, but I wasn't going to ruin that for her. I did let her know that her son had saved lives. There were people and are walking the world today and wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Fulghum.

Flight Physical

Now for me, they finally grabbed me by the ear and said, “You’re going to go take your flight physical. I hadn’t taken a flight physical yet. Been flying for about six months. Got a chance to go in and get my flight physical. The doctor came back in and he says, “I can’t pass you.”

I *said, “What the heck is the matter with me?”

He says, “This is the stupidest thing I’ve ever seen, but I’m going through the regulations here and it says if you’ve ever had a history of eczema”—skin rash—“you can’t pass the flight physical.”

He said, “Here, read it.”

Yeah, there is was. So went back and I explained to my CO that, you know, that I didn’t pass the flight physical. Well, they wanted to keep me, but I wasn’t going to get any flight pay. I wasn’t going to get any recognition for any time in the air. Very frankly, I had seen enough. I’m not the first medic. I’m not the only medic that has said this, I’d burned out. I’d seen enough and I said, “I want to go back to another unit.”

Unit Transfer

At that time, I did transfer back to another company. But I spent about six months in that unit flying. I think I counted up 500 hours of flight time that I had. So we were busy. It was an adventure. Would I do it again? Yes? No? I think you guys that were pilots of WWII; I think you know how I feel. The excitement. You probably remember the excitement of the engines turning over, rushing out to the field, the sounds, the excitement. Then comes reality. But there was a lot of adventure to it. I don’t regret that I did it. As a matter of fact, Tom Philo’s here.

***Stars and Stripes* Article**

“Aerial Ambulance”

We made the *Stars and Stripes* centerfold [21 Oct 1964]. The story about my unit and this is the only copy that I got. I sent the original to Mrs. Fulghum, but I did manage to get a copy and that’s a copy.

We were a pretty elite unit. There were four platoons and we were the busiest. We were the ones that had all the action and we did. Anyway, that's my story. Anybody got any questions, comments, [inaudible] or anything like that?

Questions

Lack of Morphine and Primitive Equipment

Charlie Gallagher: Did you ever get morphine?

Answer: No, not there. No, sir.

Audience member: If it wasn't for a helicopter, it sounded like you could easily have been in a wagon back in the Civil War with the type of equipment you had.

Answer: Thought about that. You know--.

Audience member: Why was it so primitive?

Answer: Okay. I can look at this two ways. When I think about what we had and what we did, I can get sick to my stomach.

On the other hand, we were the pioneers. Nobody knew what the heck to do. It was a totally new concept. I was probably one of the first fifty helicopter medics.

My sister who's an RN, by the way, was also a civilian flight nurse down in Southern California. She saw what I did and she wanted to do it too. But she had a lot more expertise, a lot more equipment, the whole nine yards. Yeah, you're right, what do you do?

Audience member: What year was this?

Answer: 1964

Francis Gabreski Recognition

Tom Davis: Wally's brother, Francis Gabreski, hometown hero. Did they ever erect a monument to the guy?

Answer: I'm glad you brought that up. Yes, they did. Now, the VFW wanted nothing to do with Gabreski. I'm serious. They would not build a monument to him. The city fathers would not build a monument to him. I talked to my cousin, Mike, no, this was Dave [correction], two days ago. He said, "Yeah, they did, but they painted a mural on one of the buildings, of Gabreski and they put a statue out in front of the building. If you drive through town, you can't see the statue because it's kind of in the back there down a side street off to the, you know.

Now the mural on the wall, you have to take the bypass. If you go through town, you're not going to see the mural. But if you take the bypass and if you're real, real quick"—my cousin Dave says he's missed it a few times—"you'll catch a picture of Gabreski."

That's it. I don't know why the man is so controversial. I really don't, but that's all they'd do for the guy. Go figure. I can't. Anybody else? Comment?

Polish Athletes and Accomplishments

Lt. Col. Fisher: I'd like to compliment you for sticking with those underpowered *Hueys* as long as you did, but I have a question. It seems that, in addition to furnishing good medics, that those Pennsylvania Polish towns furnished the National Football League with a hell of a lot of good players like Bronko Nagurski. What was it? Something in the water?

Answer: It had to be in the water. There was a Catholic school in town and they wouldn't bring in any Pollocks except for Eddie Wojtowicz because he could play football. I mean he was kind of like, you know, the black players coming into the baseball thing, but they brought in Eddie. In 1962, when I graduated high school, seven out of the eleven starting players were Polish. This is the Fighting Irish. [*Ed Wojtowicz became a POW in North Africa. He worked with my Dad at Pennzoil and was a good friend of the family.]

Very frankly, that little corner of the world where Gabreski and my father grew up produced two of the most decorated war heroes out of WWII. My Uncle Joe is one of the most decorated heroes out of WWII. Part of the armory is named after him. Yeah, we did a lot. That's one reason that someone wants to call me a Pollock, I know who I am. I'm not bothered by it. I've done my job. I know a lot of my people have too. So, we're pretty proud that we're Polish, but thank you.

Lt. Col. Fisher: You're welcome.

Duties

Dwight Gruber: For a [inaudible] with no action, what was keeping you so busy?

Answer: Okay, that was, we must've had about four or five filing cabinets filled with old regulations and we were updating our regulations. That was one way. My primary job in the morning was to do a morning report.

Dwight Gruber: No, I mean your medic business in the air.

Answer: What was I doing?

Dwight Gruber: What was keeping you so busy? Why were there always injured people do deal with?

Answer: Oh, well, first of all Grafenwoehr was a training area and we carried just about anything imaginable. Example, during a training session, some training officer put out a Claymore mine and a lot of you guys know what it is, but it spreads out like a shotgun. Well, he went out in front of the group and put the mine out there and faced it the wrong way. There was one killed and nineteen wounded. That kept us busy.

They had the jeep at the time called the M1A151 [M one A one 5 one] and those damn things just rolled like you would not believe. There were usually one or two of those a week. Now, contrary to what other people have said, the personnel carriers also rolled over.

We did carry civilians if they were dependents. As a matter-of-fact, one time they actually carried a German civilian little boy who needed to get to a hospital real quick. We took him, I can't even remember what hospital we took him too, but he had been, it was a case of electrical shock. We carried him and his dad.

Gunshot wounds. We carried those. Anything that might cause not only loss of life, but loss of a limb. Like maybe a severely broken arm, severely broken leg. Saw one case where guys had put their sleeping bags underneath a tank. Someone moved the tank. I mean, very frankly, a lot of them I forgot and I'm glad I did. A lot of them, all I remember is going to the helicopter, getting in, putting in a patient, getting them off, and that's it. If I had to med them, I couldn't. That was, what can I say? I don't remember. I did document about 500 hours of flight time. Again, a lot of days, I was the only medic there.

My buddy, Joe, out at the dispensary, I want to mention him. Now, he was used, I mean they could call the dispensary and say, "Hey, we've got a casualty. Will Joe take it?"

Joe always volunteered. He got absolutely no credit. We're good buddies now. He said, "I don't even know the pilots who I flew with."

He said, "They never said a word to me."

Anyway, that's the way it was in 1964 in the 3rd Platoon, 421st.

Audience member: Thank you!

Thank you, sir!

[Ends at 52:12]

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