

Joseph D. Hutchison: And we went on the train from there to Fort Custer. And on the way, I met two old retrainees from WWI. And one of them, I don't know why he was there - he was from California, and this was the 6th Corp area; that was, I think, the 9th. But anyway, he was on the train with me and he became friends. And when we got to Fort Custer, we stayed together, because he had also enlisted as an aerial gunner. And then we went to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri and there I ran into... both of us ran into difficulty. He did first; they told him he was too old to be an aerial gunner - he was 42 at the time. And he told them, "Well, that's the reason I enlisted as an aerial gunner," he says, "you either have to let me be an aerial gunner, or I can go home, 'cause I'm not eligible for the draft." So they sent him through, and he told me about it.

And shortly thereafter I ran into the problem. We were being instructed [on] how to be a soldier [Chuckle] and stand at attention. And this Private First Class was running the instruction, and he said to stand at attention with your fist closed. [Chuckle] And I told him, "That's not right." And he immediately blew his stack and marched me off to the Lieutenant. [Chuckle] And the Lieutenant balled me out for a few minutes, and then he wanted to know what he was giving me hell for. And I told him, "Well, this guy was trying to teach us to stand at attention with our fists closed, and it wasn't right." He said, "What do you know about it?" I said, "Well, I know that you're supposed to stand at attention with your thumbs along the seams of your trousers, and fingers curled naturally." He said, "Where'd you learn that?" And I said, "Well, I was in the ROTC." He said, "What else you know?" And I said, "Well, what do you want to know?" I had memorized the manuals, because my instructor didn't like me. And so he kept asking me questions, and I knew all the answers; I spit them right back at him. He says, "I'm going to make you a drill sergeant here." And I said, "No, you can't do that Lieutenant." I said, "I don't want to be a drill sergeant." He says, "I'll get you three stripes, right now." I said, "I don't want to be a drill sergeant." He says, "Suppose I order you to?" I said, "You can't even do that, because the way I enlisted, I mocked it from learning from the older guy." So he says, "If you, [Chuckle] if you don't stay here," he says, "You'll be overseas in three months." And I said, "Well, I guess that's the reason I enlisted." And so ... that's the way it happened. [Both laugh] And I was on the next train. But it was nice; I had a private compartment from Jefferson Barracks, Missouri to Harlingen, Texas. It was the best train ride I've had in my life.

Janis Kozlowski: Really?

Joseph D. Hutchison: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Was it a troop train?

Joseph D. Hutchison: No, it was a regular passenger train. But, they had gotten me a compartment; I was in there all by myself.