

ORAL MEMOIRS  
OF  
GARRY WAYNE REED  
An interview conducted on  
February 7, 2016

Interviewer: LeAndra Reed

Angelo State University  
West Texas Collection

“War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present”

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Garry Wayne Reed are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on February 7, 2016.

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The electronic file and complete transcript of this interview were processed in the Department of History at Angelo State University and are available at the Dr. Ralph R. Chase West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

L. REED: What is your name?

G. REED: Garry Wayne Reed.

L. REED: When and where were you born?

G. REED: I was born in East Texas—Sulphur Springs—in 1965, June.

L. REED: Where did you grow up?

G. REED: Uh . . . mostly East Texas but we grew up all over Texas and Oklahoma. Daddy moved around a lot so . . .

L. REED: How do you define West Texas?

G. REED: Umm . . . Ha . . . umm... Sandy, desert, barren.

L. REED: Where does it begin?

G. REED: Uh, Probably Odessa.

L. REED: What do you think the difference is between West Texans and Texans from other regions of the state?

G. REED: Uh . . . I think it's a . . . it's a . . . it's a . . . West Texans are like a more . . . more . . . umm . . . nitty-gritty work, you know, a . . . more country as opposed to East Texans, North Texans, and South Texans.

L. REED: How would you characterize West Texans' relationship with the military?

G. REED: I think it's got a good relationship, especially . . . umm . . . far West Texas and El Paso cause it's such a big part of that culture down there and the town itself. I guess it's a good relationship.

L. REED: When and where did you enter the armed forces?

G. REED: I . . . I went in right out of high school in . . . in the end of May of 1983 and uh . . . it was here in Abilene where I joined.

L. REED: Which branch did you serve in?

G. REED: The U.S. Army, regular army.

L. REED: What were your years of service?

G. REED: I was in from '83 till, let's see . . uh . . . June of '83 to July of 1987 active duty and then I was, from '87 to . . . uh . . . '89, in active reserves.

L. REED: During your years of service were you primarily in the enlisted ranks, a non-commissioned officer, an officer, or a warrant officer?

G. REED: Mostly enlisted. I went into the enlisted and then . . . umm . . . I . . . I was an NCO, a sergeant, the last 18 months.

L. REED: In which military conflict did you take part?

G. REED: There was no conflict at the time I served.

L. REED: Why did you enlist in the armed forces?

G. REED: Oh, I went in for opportunity, for an education . . . umm . . . to . . . to try and get college and . . . and, to be quite honest with you is . . . is, we were real poor, so I thought there would be opportunities there for a career.

L. REED: What was your training like?

G. REED: The training was . . . was really good. I had . . . uh . . . they had gave me a significant bonus to be a part of uh . . . to uh . . . to uh . . . to do . . . turret mechanic and . . . and . . . it was really extensive, hands-on . . . I really enjoyed it. It was something unique.

L. REED: What were race relations like when you enlisted?

G. REED: Really, it was . . . it was . . . Race wasn't an issue. Umm . . . You know . . . there was . . . there was all kinds of ethnicity and . . . and . . . and some of . . . some of my friends and what not . . . you know . . . were . . . were . . . black, Hispanic, I mean just really . . . there. It was just a non-issue when I was in there. There was a lot of minorities. I served with a lot of minorities, so.

L. REED: Did you find your service challenging?

G. REED: Uh . . . No, actually not.

L. REED: What conception did you have of the United States at the time of your enlistment?

G. REED: Really . . . you know, I was 18-years-old, so . . . [Laughing] so, I didn't . . . I didn't think a whole lot about it. It was more about . . . umm . . . When I served, it was more about what they could do for me as opposed to what I could do for the . . . my country. I mean that's . . . that's . . . I'm going to be honest with you, that's what it was.

L. REED: Umm . . . What did America symbolize to you?

G. REED: Uh . . . At that time, I mean it was just . . . I . . . I really . . . other than . . . than, you know, history or . . . things I read or . . . or . . . umm . . . you know, I had some . . . My dad didn't serve but my grandpas did but they had passed away early so I really didn't know anybody . . . So, anyways to answer your question . . . it didn't. I mean . . . My country . . . I was proud of it but I kind of took it for granted, really didn't put a whole lot of thought into it at the time.

L. REED: Were you deployed overseas? If so what did you understand about your mission or where you were located?

G. REED: Actually I did. I went over to Germany . . . uh . . . for a little bit and I went to Korea for a little bit just for training but . . . uh . . . uh . . . Actually, when I went to Germany, I really didn't think about the war that we had served . . . that we were a part of over there until after I got there and . . . and the military did a really great job of giving you some history of our mission there and, so, once I got overseas I kind of understood the importance of it and why we were there and why . . . why the military had bases there and our goal was, you know, to keep the peace there. So . . . So, before I went I really didn't have a clue. After I got there I kind of understood.

L. REED: Did you follow the news before you entered the service?

G. REED: Uh . . . very little.

L. REED: What did you know about the role of the military in current events before you joined?

G. REED: Very little to be honest with you.

L. REED: Were you able to follow the news during your time in service?

G. REED: Yes, actually I was.

L. REED: How did you receive information about events in the U.S. and abroad?

G. REED: Umm . . . newspapers. To be honest with you, they had . . . umm . . . umm . . . I think it was called the Armed Forces Network. That's . . . that's . . . umm . . . that gave you all the news and local news and current events that was going on . . . So, that's with TV and newspaper.

L. REED: What unit or units did you serve in during your deployment?

G. REED: Uh . . . I was in the Armored Division . . . 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division. Uh . . . which . . . uh . . . was a cavalry unit but. . . uh . . . it was also an armored division but . . . uh . . . That's what I served in both overseas and in the States.

L. REED: Did you serve in direct combat during your deployment?

G. REED: Uh . . . No.

L. REED: Were you wounded in action?

G. REED: No, ma'am.

L. REED: Did you become a prisoner of war?

G. REED: No, ma'am.

L. REED: What did you think of the local inhabitants that you encountered?

G. REED: Uh . . . Actually, in Germany, it was . . . uh . . . the older generation was very tolerant and appreciative, cause I think . . . think that . . . that they knew why the military was there and the young . . . younger generation was very tired of us and felt threatened by us and was ready for us to go but uh . . . but . . . uh . . . for . . . you know, for overall, they were very nice . . . and . . . tolerant.

L. REED: When you interacted with the local inhabitants, what did you think their conceptions were of the United States?

G. REED: You know, again, like I said, I think the . . . the . . . the older generation, what I experienced was very appreciative and understanding of what we were doing there . . . younger generation was a . . . wanting to get over it and move past it.

L. REED: Did you ever engage them in a conversation about what America meant to you?

G. REED: Oh, absolutely . . . Absolutely I . . . I dated a German girl and talked with her folks extensively about it.

L. REED: How did you stay in touch with you family and friends during your service?

G. REED: Umm . . . Well, actually, we didn't have Internet or anything then, so . . . uh . . . It was through a . . . We had to go to a what they called a bundapost . . . a bundespost and it was a post office and you had to pay in advance to call home and you had to do certain times.

L. REED: How did your service influence or affect your family at home?

G. REED: Uh . . . Well, my service, actually the . . . the . . . The time that I served in the service, cause I had so many siblings, it affected mom and dad at home and the family because we actually still supported them. The money that I made what not . . . actually still supported my family at home. Uh . . . Again, since it was peacetime, I don't think that it . . . uh . . . umm . . . I think they were very proud of the fact that we were serving. There was newspaper articles and what not but a . . . but . . . uh . . . I really don't know how it affected them too much because I wasn't really that close to my family at home.

L. REED: What are you most vivid memories of you time in service?

G. REED: Well, seeing country but . . . but my . . . the relationships that I made with my . . . with my fellow . . . umm . . . soldiers, friends that I created relationships.

L. REED: What sorts of technology did you use in the service?

G. REED: Technology . . . umm . . . my . . . There wasn't a whole lot of technology when I went as far as modern technology . . . uh . . . We didn't have Internet or . . . or . . . cell phones or anything like that but . . . So, really not a whole lot of, you know . . . a . . .

L. REED: Did you expect to face any challenges when you returned to civilian life?

G. REED: No, not really . . . umm . . . I was hoping that . . . that . . . that maybe perhaps my service would open doors for me . . . uh . . . you know, opportunities with my training and what not and be able to utilize it but other than that not really.

L. REED: Did you face any challenges when you returned to civil . . . civilian life?

G. REED: Uh . . . No, not really. I mean, it wasn't a transition. I was pretty much ready to get out when the time come, so . . .

L. REED: After your time in the military, has your conception of the military changed?

G. REED: Oh, absolutely . . . I was . . . I was definitely more patriotic, more understanding of our . . . our purpose and . . . and the importance of a military and . . . and was even more . . . You had asked earlier about the news, keeping up with it, but now I keep up with it daily and monitor it and . . . and, you know, concerned about, you know . . . I have nieces and nephews over there and . . . and, anyway, pay more attention to the news and the current events and what's going on and how it affects the role the military plays and, you know, to include prayer to our soldiers and their families.

L. REED: How do you feel about your military service looking back?

G. REED: Well . . . Well, I'm glad I served. I'm very appreciative of it and . . . uh . . . You know . . . umm . . . very proud of it . . . that . . . that I was able to . . . to, you know, serve and to . . . to . . . be a part of that. Perhaps even though it was peacetime, make a difference and be available and . . .

L. REED: Do you have any advice for young men and women who are just entering the service?

G. REED: Umm . . . Not really . . . do . . . umm . . . other than just, you know, make the best of it, keep your nose clean and, you know, learn . . . umm . . . you know, just . . . just . . . uh . . . give 100% to it and . . . and understand, cause there is a lot of young people . . . Well, anyways, understand your role or the importance of your role there.

L. REED: Do you have any items, objects or correspondences you wish to share with this project?

G. REED: I . . . I really don't have a whole of lot of stuff . . . You know that . . . my whole baggage got lost, so I don't have really too much other than a few pictures.

L. REED: Would you like to share anything else about your service?

G. REED: Uh . . . umm . . . You know, maybe . . . maybe that I was a little disappointed. You know, I think I shared this with you before that . . . that I was actually a little disappointment because I was hoping it would be more . . . I . . . I wanted to be more of a soldier and that's not necessarily the military's fault. Probably mine because of the . . . the career path I took going in . . . but I . . . I wanted to be . . . I wanted it to, you know . . . I really enjoyed the discipline when I went in the . . . the basic training and AIT but . . . when . . . when, after I got to my first duty station, it was more like a 9-5 casual, you know, perhaps because it was peace time too, you know . . . but . . . but, you know, I think looking back, the only regrets that I have is . . . was I wish I went in like the marines or infantry or something like that because I did want to be a soldier because I felt like those were important to be able to save lives and, you know . . . and not to belittle the support, you know, the mechanics, welders, and cooks, medics, and what not. I kind of wanted to be a soldier. So, if I could have done it different, I would have . . . I would have . . . umm . . . probably went in a different branch and . . . and . . . umm . . . because, you know, when I went in, they didn't let me . . . you were a soldier first and school was . . . I told you the reason I went in was for schooling but it was very challenging and hard to take classes . . . they . . . They just didn't want you to do it. I'll be honest with you . . . so . . . so I . . . but you know . . . other than that everything is cool.