

# Mississippi Oral History Program

World War II Veterans  
National WWII Museum/103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry  
Oral History Project

An Oral History

with

William J. Krul

Interviewer: Guido Rossi

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*An Oral History with William J. Krul, Volume 1272, Part 3*

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<b>Time/ Counter</b>	<b>Topic</b>
<b>Part 1 of 1</b>	
0:01:37.2; 0:13:19.4	Father inducted into WWII
0:03:12.4	Genesis of Cactus Division, 103 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry
0:07:38.1	Importance of his Polish roots
0:08:54.6	Family in Poland
0:09:17.9	Emigration from Poland; immigration into America
0:10:03.2	Ancestral family of Polish farmers
0:10:29.1	Family in Poland, 2015
0:10:56.3	Great-uncle was Polish partisan
0:11:35.6	Poland's home army
0:11:58.8	Ukrainian Army massacres Poles
0:14:10.1	Basic and specialized training
0:16:36.4	Father ordered to take out German bunker on Siegfried Line
0:17:34.7	Father's death in combat
0:18:33.6	Demining team
0:19:13.7	Father's remains found with dog-tags
0:23:30.6	Military notification of father's death
0:24:10.4	Father's funeral
0:26:03.5	Twenty-one-gun salute
0:28:04.1	Vietnam War draft; sole-surviving son
0:29:03.1	Entering law enforcement
0:29:33.7	Insurance award from military
0:30:39.9	Standard of living after death of head of family
0:37:18.3	Connecting with 103 <sup>rd</sup> reunion events
0:39:53.9	Communing with other war orphans

0:41:18.3	Going back to father's route in WWII
0:42:49.4	Father's personal effects
0:44:20.1	Restoring father's watch
0:46:02.4	Wartime communication
0:47:14.6	Dream image of father

## Table of Contents

Personal history.....	1-2
Some history of the 103 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry.....	2
Polish roots.....	2-4
Father.....	3
Family's leave-taking from Poland.....	3-4
Polish partisans, World War II.....	4
Ukrainian Army massacred Poles.....	4
Basic training.....	5
The 103 <sup>rd</sup> Infantry in Europe.....	6
Father killed advancing in marching fire.....	6
Father's body found two years later, repatriated to U.S. ....	7, 14
Memories of father's funeral.....	9-10
Vietnam War.....	10
Career in law enforcement.....	10
Military benefits for him and his mother.....	10-11
Mother's work for the war effort.....	11
Influence on his life of his paternal grandparents.....	12
Father's legacy.....	12
Father's pocket watch.....	14-15
Correspondence from father.....	15

## AN ORAL HISTORY

with

WILLIAM J. KRUL

*This is an interview for the Mississippi Oral History Program of The University of Southern Mississippi, National WWII Museum/103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Project. The interview is with William J. Krul and is taking place on October 8, 2015. The interviewer is Guido Rossi.*

*Time stamps are recorded in the manuscript and the recording log using Express Scribe.*

**Rossi:** OK. Good to have you here. Welcome. Thank you for taking part in this interview. What is your name?

**Krul:** William Krull, K-R-U-L, but I go by Bill.

**Rossi:** Bill, OK. So what's your date of birth?

**Krul:** Date of birth is March 10, 1942.

**Rossi:** So during the full commitment of war—what month did you say?

**Krul:** March.

**Rossi:** But (inaudible) before the North African invasion, Operation Torch, which happened in November, but so how are you related to war?

**Krul:** I was born shortly after the war [World War II] began with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which was the seventh of November, 1941. I was born in March of 1942, shortly thereafter. So I was really just a baby when the war began, although the war originally began in 1939 with the invasion of Poland on September the first. But with the United States entering the war, I was born just four months, three months actually, after the war began.

**Rossi:** But you also have some much closer relationship to the war because of your father.

**Krul:** That is correct because my father was inducted into the war actually in 1942. I was only like a few months old when he was inducted into the war. 0:01:37.2 He received his papers on the thirtieth of November of 1942, and he actually was to report

Fort Custer, Michigan, on the tenth of December of 1942. So I was just very little at the time that my father was inducted into the military in World War II.

**Rossi:** So he got to know you before going to military training.

**Krul:** Yes. He certainly did get to know me. There's many pictures that we have of him, of my dad and myself together. And of course then after December when he had left, there was only one time after that that my father actually saw me, and that's when he came home on furlough in 1944, prior to him being sent overseas. So my time with him was mostly between March of 1942 through December of 1942 and for a short while in 1944 thereafter.

**Rossi:** Was he a volunteer or a draftee?

**Krul:** No. He was inducted.

**Rossi:** OK.

**Krul:** Yes.

**Rossi:** So the 103<sup>rd</sup> Division had about two years of training before being shipped overseas.

**Krul:** Correct. Well, the 103<sup>rd</sup> was actually in existence back in 1921, and then from the end of that time till just prior to World War II beginning with United States' entering the war; then it was reenacted, and then they came back into service, again. 0:03:12.4 But the original 103<sup>rd</sup> was started back in 1921 and included all those states; that's why it's called the Cactus Division. It included those states down in southern United States, southwestern United States, New Mexico, Arizona, and whatever. And then after a certain amount of time, they were deactivated and then reactivated again prior or just shortly after United States entered the war in 1941-42 actually.

**Rossi:** Um-hm. And you said you have Polish roots.

**Krul:** Yes, I do; that's correct. My father was born in the United States. But my grandparents on my paternal side of the family, my grandparents, my grandfather and grandmother on my paternal side were both born in Poland, and they immigrated to the United States. On my mother's side of the family, it's also Polish because my grandmother and grandfather on my maternal side were also immigrants from Poland. So I am actually second-generation American because my father was born in 1918, actually March the twenty-first of 1918, and he was born in Hamtramck, Michigan, which is very close to Detroit. It's surrounded by Detroit, actually. But so he's first-generation; I'm second-generation.

**Rossi:** So what did your father's service consist of? What happened that shaped your life, and that truly connects you very much and tightly to the war experience?

**Krul:** To me, having a father and losing him was very close to me because I was the only son; I was the only grandson on the paternal side. And then of course, after the war, after my father was killed, which we'll get into a little bit later, my mother remarried, and I had additional brother and sisters, half-brother and sisters. But it meant a lot to me because he was the only father, other than my stepfather, who was a great, fantastic man. I think I owed him that honor. And then of course very close to me, I owed him that honor that he defended his country, and he went overseas to fight. And the way it happened, his heroism, his valor that he demonstrated during the war, that meant a lot to me. But I didn't really realize that until I got older, and it was only until I got into my late teens and early twenties that I really took a more in-depth interest into what happened with my father. Before that time, I was a young kid; I was growing up. I didn't know much. You know, I had a stepfather; I had a mother. I had other brothers and sisters, and my stepfather was in the military, too. And he died back in 2005, but it just impressed me the way he died, what he did during the war, and because I've got his genes; I've got his DNA [deoxyribonucleic acid], along with my mother's, it's important to me that I give honor to my father who was responsible, along with my mother, in bringing me into the world. So that meant a lot to me personally, and I sort of carried that on. I didn't go into the military because I entered into police work, and I spent forty-one years in law enforcement. So I think I'm carrying on some of the tradition of my father, but it's just important to me that here's a man who dedicated his life to preserving the freedom that we have in this country and freedom elsewhere in the world. It's important that to me that I honor him with those memories.

**Rossi:** Does the fact that you have and that your family as a whole has Polish roots had a role for enlisting and fighting and keeping up the honor of having fought in the Second World War? Did that have a role for you?

**Krul:** I think only when I started getting into more the history of what was going on following my father's death in the war. Of course I knew that my grandparents from both sides were from Poland, but then I started reading the history and knowing the history of Poland and what those people went through, how difficult it was for them because the country was split back in the late 1700s, and then after World War I they became a unified nation again, and then lost again in World War II. 0:07:38.1 So it was just very important to me to know the roots of my family and what it was like for the ancestors that lived over there and what caused my grandparents to come here to America. So it is important to me to know my roots, where they came from and what it was like in the old country and why they left the old country to come here. So this all connected together.

**Rossi:** Some people, some American citizens, that had foreign roots, in some cases perhaps felt that they had a need to prove their right to live here or to be Americans. Was that also a case for your family, for your father, for yourself?



**Krul:** Of course my father would not have known because he was first-generation, but for my grandparents, I wish I would have had more of the intuitiveness to ask my grandfather more about his roots while he was still alive because he was killed, you know, quite a few years ago. He was killed in a car accident back in the 1960s. But I do know a lot about the family. I was in Poland, and I talked to the family. 0:08:54.6 And for my grandfather and some of the people that left, it was more like a push/pull type of situation. He was being pushed out of Europe because of the economic situation; things were difficult over there. My grandfather worked in a German coal mine; made enough money to come here. And it was also the idea that America was the land of the free; not quite the golden streets, but nevertheless the land of the free. 0:09:17.9 So in order to make life better for himself, and of course he was engaged to my grandmother at the time. They didn't get married until they came here, but he came to the United States, well, actually first to Canada; spent six months in Canada and came to the United States. But he came over here for the idea that there was freedom over here; he could do what he wanted, make enough money, send for my grandmother, and make a life for himself and my grandmother here in the United States. So it was more a push/pull kind of a situation: being pushed out because the economic situation difficulties there because he came here prior to World War I. He came here in 1913. The war didn't actually start till 1914 in World War I. But the economic situation was difficult over there. And we are basically a family of farmers, ancestrally. 0:10:03.2 We're all farmers. And he came here just to make a better life for himself and for his prospective wife who was my grandmother.

**Rossi:** Do you have any family relative in Poland that subsequently had to leave through the Second World War?

**Krul:** Yes, yes. I interviewed my cousin. I still have cousins living in Poland. 0:10:29.1 They live in the central/eastern area in the province of Lublin. And he, when I talked to my cousin George—in Poland it's Jędrzej. But he's George, and he doesn't talk English, so our communications are basically in Polish all the time. Mine is kind of broken, but I can understand. Anyway, he was telling me that his father, during World War II, because Poland of course, you know, was overrun by the Germans at the time. His father was what they call a partisan, much like the French Resistance. 0:10:56.3 And he was involved. And he would tell me his father told him he would blow up train tracks and do all this stuff that those partisans did because Poland, they did have a home army, which they called Armia Krajowa in Polish. OK? They did have a Polish home army that fought, you know, after the Germans had come into Poland because a lot of the military left, and they fought for other people. They fought for the British. They fought with the Royal Air Force, the RAF. So they had gone different places, but still they did keep the home army. 0:11:35.6 And that would be, I believe my great-uncle. It would be my great-uncle because his name was John Krul, also. And he was a partisan during the war. So I do know a little bit about it. I do know that the town right next to where they live, where they go to church, there was a Ukrainian Army unit that fought on the side of the Germans. 0:11:58.8 And they came into this town called Chaniów, and they killed a lot of the people and massacred a lot of the people there. There was one of the people that was on a list of

those killed; her name was Katherine Krul. Now, I've not been able to determine if she was a relative or not, but the Krul Family from that area were all very close-knit, so my guess is that she was probably some kind of a relative and involved as being killed in the war, you know.

**Rossi:** Did the fact that the war had gone to Poland, brought by the Germans, also, you think did that have an effect on your father for fighting in the war?

**Krul:** That's a good question because I would not know that. I didn't ask him that. I probably don't think so at the time. I think he was by that time pretty well Americanized because my grandparents, although they spoke Polish and English at home, they felt a very, very closeness not only to their ancestral home of Poland, but to being an American. So I think it was just a matter of my father just being in a situation where he was called up to service; he was drafted in there. 0:13:19.4 And I remember my grandfather told me many, many years ago when he was still alive; he says, "You know, I told your father that you're married; your wife is pregnant, and you're going to be a father. And now there's a war that broke out in Europe, and now you're going to be drafted." And sure enough, that happened, just, you know, a few months after I was born. And it happened.

**Rossi:** So your father was inducted in the service?

**Krul:** Yes.

**Rossi:** And he undertook training. Where did that happen?

**Krul:** He was inducted. First he had to report to Camp Custer, which was a very large reporting station in Michigan. A lot of the people, especially from Detroit area, they went to Camp Custer. From there he was transferred to Camp Claiborne where he did his preliminary training. 0:14:10.1 And of course we all know that the 103<sup>rd</sup> did a lot of training at Camp Claiborne, and he was assigned to the 409th [Infantry Regiment]. And then from there on the advanced training took place at Camp Howze in Texas, and that's where he went from [19]43 and [19]44, and then in [19]44 they went to Europe.

**Rossi:** Camp Claiborne is in Louisiana, right?

**Krul:** Yes, it is; Camp Claiborne is in Louisiana, near Shreveport, Louisiana, correct. And Camp Howze is near San Antonio, well, near Gainesville, Texas. So that's where Camp Howze is.

**Rossi:** And so what actions did your father participate in once shipped to Europe to fight with the 103rd?

**Krul:** In Europe he was—prior to being shipped to Europe, he was promoted to staff sergeant. 0:14:59.3 So by the time they got to Europe and the fleet, which took the

soldiers over there, arrived in late 1944 in Marseilles, France, actually October the twentieth. And then they made their way north, in through parts of France, and that's where a lot of the fighting took place, was from Marseilles all the way up through, actually Weiler, France, and it was in that area where the 103<sup>rd</sup> actually entered Germany in December of 1944. But there was a lot of hard fighting along the way, too, a lot of hard fighting. So I don't know if that answers your question or not.

**Rossi:** It does.

**Krul:** But it's close to it.

**Rossi:** It does. And what happened next?

**Krul:** Well, again, as I say, there was a lot of hard fighting because I did a lot of research on it. In fact I wrote a documentary of my father's life in the 103<sup>rd</sup>, and that is on a forty-five-minute DVD that we have published. But nevertheless it was in December where the 103<sup>rd</sup> was actually fighting their way from France into Germany, and they had been fighting in and near the Siegfried Line. They had entered Germany. They were the first; 103<sup>rd</sup> was the first United States Army unit, division that entered Germany. They were the first ones, and they were fighting at the Siegfried Line. And as I had mentioned earlier, I have a copy of the battle plan, marked secret, which is available now, and he was, again, platoon commander, assigned on December the nineteenth to take this hill. 0:16:36.4 And they knew that there was a bunker or a pillbox, and his assignment from his commanding officer was, "You take your platoon, and you take out this bunker. There's fire coming from this bunker." So they were advancing up the hill. And I have the original document, the letter, from the chaplain that was aware of how my father was killed. I have that. My mother saved all those papers for me. I have them all. And they were advancing up the hill, and then they encountered an additional pillbox or bunker that was firing upon his platoon. And in the manner of military training, if you are ordered to take a certain position, you have to take that position; you have to take out the bunker. Now, there were two. The only way they could do that according to the chaplain that wrote the letter to my mother: they were advancing, what they call marching fire; you're going against fire. And in the ensuing action, he was killed by machine gun fire. 0:17:34.7 And that was the story told to me by my grandfather, that they found his helmet, that where he was hit in the head with bullets. And his last comment was, "Oh, my God, I'm hit." And after that he died, but there's an additional story behind that, too.

**Rossi:** Would you like to share it?

**Krul:** Sure. The fact that he was pronounced dead or proclaimed as killed in action, originally he was listed as missing in action, but all of the evidence found, at least to my knowledge through my research, is that through interviews he was proclaimed killed in action. They couldn't find the body. People told what happened, and he was a staff sergeant. His body actually was not found for two and a half years after that. So he was killed in December 19, 1944. Two and a half years after that, after the war

officially ended, and there was a team that was checking out some of the area that may have landmines in the area. 0:18:33.6 They called them a demining team. And I got that information when I did research; I had sent a letter to the individual deceased personnel file in the U.S. military. I got a pack of information back; it was forty pages long. The demining team was looking for unexploded ordnance; they were looking for anything that was left after the war. And they saw some trees that were felled; they were down for whatever reason. So to check the area, they had moved the trees aside to see if there was any unexploded ordnance. They found two bodies there. One of them was marked Ora Emerick. He was a soldier, private first class from Ohio. And next to him was my father. 0:19:13.7 And his dog-tags of course were William J. Krul, staff sergeant. The helmet was bullet ridden. Of course the body was decayed. I mean, two and a half years, there wasn't much left on there. And of course all his uniform, everything, indicated United States military with his name on it, whatever. And then in Burgzabern, Germany, the closest town, they were notified that they had found two additional bodies. Very honorably, according to the report I had, they were placed in a casket or a container, taken back to the town. The United States military was notified; they came, and they identified the body. And one was of course Ora Emmerick, and one was William John Krul, was his middle name. William John Krul was identified as a staff sergeant, killed in action. Then they notified my mother, and the body was originally buried. It was transferred to Neuville, Belgium, which is now the American Ardennes Military Cemetery. They notified my mother and my grandparents, his parents. And they all indicated, "Please, repatriate his body." And the body was repatriated, redug because it was originally buried there, and they repatriated the body back to Detroit. And in June of 1949, quite a ways, quite a time later, he was buried in Detroit, Michigan.

**Rossi:** So the body was found in 1947 and reburied in Michigan, Detroit, Michigan, in 1949.

**Krul:** Right, 1949. So I have all the paperwork showing the body was transferred, how it came here. My grandfather signed for it, and there's some additional stories that go along with that, some interesting ones, but—

**Rossi:** And you mentioned that the chaplain from the regiment, I believe—

**Krul:** Right.

**Rossi:** —described the death of your father—

**Krul:** Yes.

**Rossi:** —and reported that back to you.

**Krul:** Reported back to my mother.

**Rossi:** Yes.

**Krul:** Well, to the family, correct.

**Rossi:** OK. What is name of the chaplain?

**Krul:** Harry Rynard, R-Y-N-A-R-D, Harry Rynard, Catholic chaplain.

**Rossi:** Did he personally see?

**Krul:** He did not. He was only going by reports because obviously he wasn't there, but going by the reports that he got, he described to the T exactly what happened. I mean, the way it was written, the way the report was written, it was almost like he was there. And it was really unusual because the way my grandfather told me, he received reports from other men about how my father was killed. So I'm sure there was some kind of communication between my grandfather and maybe someone that was there that learned about how my father was killed. So I'm going by the official letter that was sent to my mother, but then my grandfather told me other stories, too.

**Rossi:** What kind of stories did your grandfather?

**Krul:** Just that he heard from other people, people that were in that area at the same time my father was. Who those people were, I don't know. I was just probably a teenager, early twenties when my grandfather told me that, so. But who are those people? I do not know.

**Rossi:** Was writing death reports of this kind by chaplain a standard procedure for every American killed in action?

**Krul:** I don't know if it is for a chaplain. I'm probably guessing it is, but I do know it is for a commanding officer, that they have to—you know, they write letters to either the wife, the widow at that time, or the parents. So it is a procedure that somebody writes the letter. I don't know if that was required by the chaplain; I do not know.

**Rossi:** Was that a formal letter, or did it use an informal tone to talk about—

**Krul:** It did not appear that way. If you read between the lines, it appears as if it was written from the heart about somebody that he may have known. 0:23:30.6 So that's all I could tell you.

**Rossi:** At the time, how old were you when your father was killed?

**Krul:** Two and a half.

**Rossi:** Do you have any personal recollection of those moments when you first learned of your father's death?

**Krul:** Yes and no. OK. You're asking do I remember my father before he died? Any personal recollection?

**Rossi:** I am asking specifically of the moment when you were notified of his death, or the moments afterwards, immediately afterwards.

**Krul:** I don't remember being notified. I wouldn't have been because I was only young. I was just a young kid. I do remember the funeral; that was in 1949. 0:24:10.4 And I can tell you because it's part of the story that I wrote about my father. I remember the funeral as if it was yesterday, and I remember because it was tradition with many of the families that the bodies were—it's not the bodies, but the casket was displayed in the parlor or the home of the parents. It's not like now you go to a funeral parlor, and everybody comes there. They came to the home. I remember the casket sitting in the front, living room of my grandparents' home in Hamtramck, Michigan, and I remember my mother was already remarried, and she already had a baby from her second husband, my stepfather, who was a fantastic man. I'm sure he's got accolades from my father in heaven: "You took care of my son." And then they had more kids after that. But I remember my mother going on the back porch of my grandmother's house, and she was dressed in black. She had a white handkerchief, and she was crying, and I remember as a little kid—I was only seven years old—I remember looking up at my mother on the back porch, and saying, "Mommy, why are you crying?" And then that's all I remember. But I do remember the funeral, really long funeral procession from the Catholic Church in Hamtramck. That procession had to be eight, nine blocks long. I mean, it was huge. Everybody knew my father. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus; he was a third-degree member of the Knights of Columbus. He was honored by the Knights of Columbus after the funeral, but I remember going to the cemetery, and I remember being a little bit afraid of the gunshots because it was a twenty-one-gun salute. And I remember when they shot the guns off; I ran back to the car because the bullets, sounds of the bullets firing scared me, and I ran back to the car. But I remember the funeral and the cemetery very well.

**Rossi:** Who shot the twenty-one-gun salute? The military? 0:26:03.5

**Krul:** It would have been the military, yeah. He was honored; it was a military funeral, correct.

**Rossi:** Did they used to perform military funerals for every American fallen during the war?

**Krul:** It's a tradition, yes, that there is a twenty-one-gun salute or at least the military appear at the cemetery. That's correct, and most of the time, of all the funerals I've attended for the military, it's always been a twenty-one-gun salute, you know, for a fallen military man, yes. It's an honor. And I have the flag that draped my father's coffin. I still have the flag.

**Rossi:** And you said, you mentioned that when you saw your mother crying before the procession, you asked her why she was crying.

**Krul:** Yes.

**Rossi:** Did she answer your question?

**Krul:** If she did, I don't remember. I don't recall if she said anything or not, but the picture of her standing on the back porch with the hankie, dressed in black, the hankie at her nose, she was crying. And it's like I took a snapshot of that picture; I can still see it in my mind right now on the back porch of my grandmother's home in Hamtramck.

**Rossi:** Sometimes if—you mentioned that yeah, you didn't have any brother or sister.

**Krul:** Not from my first father.

**Rossi:** Yes, that's correct. Sometimes it happens that they allow fathers, families with only one son not in working age, in addition, not to be drafted.

**Krul:** Correct. I never pursued that avenue. I did not. When I was going to college, it was during the time that the Vietnam War was going on or just shortly before that because I started going to college around the early 1960s. The Vietnam War for the United States didn't really take effect till, you know, a few years later. 0:28:04.1 But by the time that happened I was already married in 1963, and I was eligible for a while, while I was going to college, but I was listed as "college" so they didn't draft me at the time. That was early 1960s, and then I got married in [19]63, and we had a child in [19]64, another child in [19]65, another child in [19]68, and so I didn't go. But I did in 1968 take an interest in law enforcement, and I felt that, "Well, maybe I should do something to honor my country and maybe do something like my father did." So I joined the police department as a reserve or an auxiliary, and two years later I found that I should do this full-time, 1970; I went to the police academy and got accepted and spent the next [thirty-nine] years, because two years as a reserve, next thirty-nine years in law enforcement. 0:29:03.1

**Rossi:** To get back to your father's death, the main topic, so of course you were very young at that time. And after your father's death, did the Army give your family an amount for insurance?

**Krul:** Yes. Yes. My mother had insurance benefits. 0:29:33.7 That's correct. She did, and she got insurance benefits, and so did I. So then what my mother did for me was she invested some of that money into United States Savings Bonds, and they remained in the family until the time that I was married. And then I cashed in some of those bonds and used the money for a wedding. And that was in 1963. So yeah, she did get an insurance award. I have those papers. Yes.

**Rossi:** Because I understand that getting by after death of the head of the family might have been not easy for a family, for you and your mother. So what happened then? How do you find money to continue with your standard of living?

**Krul:** Well, certainly we got some insurance money. And by the way, there is additional money that is provided by the government for your entire life. 0:30:39.9 I still get a very, very small check; it's only like, it's not even \$20. It's not a lot of money, but we've been getting it ever since that time, and of course I'm in seventies' decade. But my mother and I lived with my grandparents, my paternal grandparents, my father's mother and father; we lived with them. My mother went to work, and while my father was in the war, she was working in defense factories, so she did work. And she would be known as what we now call Rosie the Riveter, and she did those kind of jobs. Then of course she met my stepfather, and in 1947, they got married. And then we moved from Hamtramck. We still lived with my paternal grandparents, which was an unusual relationship because it's not like my mother was living with her parents. My mother was living with her husband's parents, and we stayed at the home in Hamtramck, and then after my mother was remarried in 1947, we stayed with those grandparents. Even my stepfather stayed with his wife's former husband's parents for a short period of time until they built a home in Warren, Michigan, and then that's when we moved.

**Rossi:** So what was the general reception like from your schoolmates, from people that you met, normally met in public situations because of your condition of being the sole-surviving son of a Second World War [soldier] killed in action?

**Krul:** If you're looking for a negative reaction, there's none. Everybody's just very interested in knowing, "Gee, your dad was killed in World War II? What happened?" And they're all interested in knowing the story, what had happened. So it's just an item of a lot of interest by people when you tell them, or they're amazed: "Your dad was killed in World War II?" "Yes." "What happened?" And then I would tell them the story. So I've never, ever, ever had a negative comment, and everybody will, if you read between the lines you might say, impressed that my father gave his life for his country.

**Rossi:** But since that time, you didn't have full understanding of what had happened to your father during the war, of the precise, of his precise death, of the action during which he eventually was killed, what did you answer to people that were asking for specifics?

**Krul:** You mean when I was younger?

**Rossi:** Yes.

**Krul:** I don't really recall anybody asking me when I was younger. I really don't because I was living with my grandparents, and then my mother got remarried, so there was not a whole lot of transition time. So I don't remember anybody. If



anybody did ask me, I can't remember now. You know, it's been so many years ago. But some of those stories do stick in your head. That's one that doesn't. So if anybody asked at that time when I was younger, I don't really recall. I don't.

**Rossi:** Do you recall in particular any of those times during which people asked you details about your father's death or also how you felt about the entire situation after the war?

**Krul:** Not when I was younger, only until I got older. It's like it was just a matter of fact, when I was younger, you know. Not a whole lot of people knew after my mother got remarried because we had another life to live, so there wasn't much talk about that. It was a very, very difficult situation for my mother. And I remember my mother telling me not too many—well, she died in 2002. But some years before that she says, "God was good to me. He gave me two great men to love." So it was just a matter of, like I said, very little transition. We moved from there into the new family with my grandparents. We had a very close relationship. And I do remember my grandparents talking about it every now and then. We would talk about it. It wouldn't be with friends, but it would be more with my grandparents. We would talk about that, and a lot of times if I would visit with my grandparents when I was younger—and all of this is starting to come back to me—they would tell me, "Your father wouldn't do that," or, "You got to be a good boy. Your father would want this. Your father would want that." So it was more like that, but as far as friends, not much. It was more like family.

**Rossi:** So you didn't really publicly share your story.

**Krul:** Correct. Not till I got older, and that's when I got more interested and when I started sharing stories with everybody.

**Rossi:** And so you are right now in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Association?

**Krul:** Yes, correct.

**Rossi:** And why did you want—what did you want from one point on to meet with your father's once-comrades-in-war and to get involved in the activities of this association?

**Krul:** I wanted to leave a legacy of my father with my children and my grandchildren and whoever follows them, great-grandchildren or whatever. I didn't want his memory to go away. I thought because he fought for this country; he fought for his family to preserve our freedom and the country's freedom, I wanted to write a story about him. So when I started researching that, knowing that he was in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, by then computers were well used by everybody. And I happened to look up 103<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division on the computer, and I got some good information. 0:37:18.3 I contacted one guy, and he is Zach Sigler out from Kansas, and I made contact with him and just asked questions about the 103<sup>rd</sup> because I was reading that

they were having reunions. So I said, "Well, how do I become involved and learn more about my father? I want to know about, not only the 103<sup>rd</sup>, but about his individual regiment, which is the 409<sup>th</sup> and more about his company, Company A." So Zach had told me the next reunion coming up is at a certain date, six or seven years ago, maybe eight years ago. And so I had applied for going to the reunion. And we went. And from that time on I got a lot of information from them.

**Rossi:** Did you get to meet any of your father's former fellow soldiers, specifically from Company A (inaudible)?

**Krul:** That would know him personally?

**Rossi:** Yes.

**Krul:** No. They were only a few that I found that were from Michigan, in the area, but right now all those ones that were in his particular company are deceased. He was Company A. Nobody in Company A. There are 409<sup>th</sup> still around, but a regiment is very big. There's thousands of soldiers. Even a company is very big. But all those soldiers by the time I got into it was trying to find soldiers in Company A that would have known my father, they were deceased at the time, so I had—I wish I would've. They could've told me something about him.

**Rossi:** And how about other members of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Association that are, just like you, people that lost their fathers during the war? Are there any other orphans?

**Krul:** Yes. One is with us; her name is Diane Hellend; that's her married name, H-E-L-L-E-N-D. Yeah, right, I think so. And she is here. Her father was killed in, I think it's called Climbach in the area where my father was. Not the same regiment, a different regiment but in that same particular area where the 103<sup>rd</sup> was. Yes. Yes, she's here, and we communicate quite often.

**Rossi:** And can you relate your experience to hers?

**Krul:** Oh, we do it all the time. 0:39:53.9 Yeah, we sit and talk about it all the time. I don't know all the particulars about how her father was killed. It was very close to the time that my dad was killed, but they were in different areas. So we do talk about what happened to [her] father. She knows about my father, blah, blah, blah. But the particulars you would have to ask her. She's here at this reunion.

**Rossi:** And have you ever come back to the places where your father had been, where your father went during his service, and did you go back to the place where he died?

**Krul:** Would I go back, or did I?

**Rossi:** Did you go?

**Krul:** No. I have not gone back, although it has been in the forefront of my mind. I would like to go back. It's a matter of economics and family, and it's very difficult. I have children, grandchildren, whatever, and again, economics just to go over there, finding a time to do that. Would I like to? If I had enough money I would probably go on my own, or at least with my wife; maybe one of my sons would go or whatever because I do have a son who spent time in the Air Force. But if there was a group going over, and I could find it financially affordable, I would probably like to go over there and follow the same tracks that he did. But I did talk to other people that had gone there in years past, and a lot of the places are—of course it would be different. That was 1944. 0:41:18.3 This is 2015; there's a lot of things that are changed. I know there's a memorial in St. Die. A group just came back from there. We looked at some of the video presentation that they had yesterday. So I followed that. I could see where they went. So since I couldn't be there, I watched some of the video that they had available when they went there a year ago, two years ago, something like that, maybe a year ago, something like that. But I would like to go back. It's just a matter of—because if I did go back now, it would be financially difficult because there's only two of us. You would find a tour guide and everything, just (inaudible) do it by yourself, but it's pretty tough to do.

**Rossi:** Is there anything you would like to tell specifically, or to share an experience?

**Krul:** I shared an experience, and I did it on a local Detroit-area PBS; they did an interview.

**Rossi:** Would you like—clearing up the term PBS.

**Krul:** Public broadcasting system, it was our local television station, which is WTVS in the Detroit area. Anyway, interesting story: when I was doing research on my father's life and I received the rather large report from the Individual Deceased Personnel File, in that report was the items that were found on my father's body, in addition to those items, which they had been left at the campsite prior to him entering, prior to the battle. 0:42:49.4 One of the items, not only was his prayer book, which I have, and some other items that I have from him. But when the body was found two and a half years after his death, there was a pocket watch that the military found on him. And in the report was listed the fact that this watch was found on him, and the report asking my mother, "What do you want us to do with this watch that was found on him?" And her response in the letter was, "Please, send me the pocket watch." Something that was found on his body, all those years. Apparently the watch must have been put away. When my grandfather passed away in the [19]60s I inherited his, a lot of items that he kept in his little safe. In that safe was a box with a pocket watch in it. I didn't know to whom that pocket watch belonged. It had been there for forty years or whatever have you, long time. And then when I got this letter from the Deceased Personnel File, I'm reading the description of this watch, and I said to myself, "I know what this watch is. I know where it is." I opened up the safe and took it out, and I looked at the pocket watch, and I looked at the report, and it was one and the same. And to myself, I said, "Oh, my God. This is the watch, same watch that

was found on my father.” 0:44:20.1 So I have a friend of mine that he’s another retired policeman, as I am. And he collects pocket watches. He and I went to a watchmaker that was able to restore the watch to its working order because the lens was broken on it; one of the hands was missing. He restored the watch, and I do have that watch in my home now, on display, so if anybody comes in, “Where’d you get this pocket watch?” “That was my father’s. It was on him at the time they found the body.” Now, where he got the watch, I wouldn’t have any idea. Only he would know that. I don’t have any idea, but it’s been restored. It’s a pocket watch, and it’s a real keepsake for me that just was found on my father, and it’s important to me, the whole idea of my father, too, and why I’m interested is because not only do I want to remember the things that he had, because things are not that important. It’s not the things that you leave behind; it’s how you led your life. And I wanted to know more about my father, what his life was like, and I studiously asked questions, interviewed people, relatives, “What was my father’s life like?” Before he went in the military—well, after he entered the service. After that, of course he was killed. But I do have pictures my mother took when they were on honeymoon, so I want to relate to my children and my grandchildren and anybody else after that what their grandfather or great-grandfather was like. This is his life, and this is what he’s leaving for you. So that’s just an interesting story about the pocket watch.

**Rossi:** Do you also have letters he wrote to your mother during his service?

**Krul:** I do have, not specifically letters. 0:46:02.4 I do have a birthday card, and he writes in the birthday card, “Billy, I’m sorry I can’t be with you on your birthday, but Daddy will be with you next year. You and Mom and I will all be together.” Well, that never happened. When I first read that card—my mother saved it for me—I could tell you now, I had tears in my eyes. In fact even talking with you here, sometimes I have to hold back a little heaviness in the chest. It’s a little tough. I do have pictures. I have some of his promotions that he received, to corporal; he sent it to my mother. I have those; my mom kept them. One of them, on the back of one of the promotions it says, “Honey, keep this warrant as a souvenir. Someday we’ll get together, blah, blah, blah. I love you, angel.” So I remember some of the stuff. But yeah, so I do have some of that stuff, but exact letters, no, only the birthday card that my mother gave me and a few other items. But again, it was very difficult for her. Even after she was married and years later, it was very difficult for her to talk about that. It was a tough time in her life, losing a husband during a war. But it was tough. And you asked me before, do I remember anything. 0:47:14.6 It just came to mind. Not specifically, but I do remember; for some reason this is sticking in my head. I remember a dream that I had as a little kid, and I remember my—in fact I remember—it didn’t happen, but it’s a dream I had. I was standing on the shore of a lake or a stream or wherever, whatever it is, and out in the water was a big rock, and standing on top of that rock was my father. It’s just an image that I have in my head. And that’s the only thing; it’s just like a flash picture. And that’s all I remember. He’s standing, looking, on a rock; looking out there and standing on a rock is my father. That’s the only thing I remember. Why I remember that, I don’t know. It’s just stuck in my head. It’s the only recollection I have of him.

**Rossi:** Well, thank you very much for sharing all your experience.

**Krul:** Absolutely, absolutely.

**Rossi:** It's a really nice thing for you to do.

**Krul:** It's quite an experience because oftentimes it's the veterans that are interviewed, but what's important is what happens to the family after you've lost a loved one. That's the important. That's the big thing to remember, not only the war, but what effect the war had on the families after that. What it was like. So some of the questions that you had: what was it like? What happened to your mother? How did you get along? And stuff like that, those are all important issues because life just doesn't stop when a person is dead. Life continues on, and people are never gone as long as they are alive in your memory. They're forever. That's why I wanted to write about my father and talk about my father because here's his life; here's what he did. And if I can continue those beliefs or those memories, he'll last forever. Nobody will forget about William John Krul. In fact my oldest son is William John Krul.  
(laughter)

**Rossi:** Oh!

**Krul:** I named him. I'm William James; he's William John. We named him in honor of my father. So it's kind of neat. He's got my father's name, so we're carrying it on.

**Rossi:** It's important.

**Krul:** It is, absolutely. OK?

**Rossi:** Thank you.

**Krul:** You bet.

(end of interview)